

Swordsman's Guild™



Steve Crow with Kevin P. Boerwinkle



Swordsman's Guild™



“The razor’s edge — that is where one faces the true test of honor.”

— Renato Marchello

Writing

Steve Crow

Additional Writing

Kevin P. Boerwinkle

Aaron Chusid (Kracken Jack)

Editing

DJ Trindle

Rob Vaux

KD Yates

Art Direction

jim pinto

Graphic Design

Steve Hough

Mark Jelfo

Line Developer

Rob Vaux

Layout

Dave Agoston

Brendon Goodyear

Cover Art

Carl Frank

Interior Art

Cris Dornaus

Carl Frank

A. Bleys Ingram

Dan Smith

7th Sea Created by

John Wick & Jennifer Wick

Kevin Wilson

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The Eternal Dance

Carleon – 1623

“Your king is an abomination upon the throne. He spits upon the Vaticine Church, and now he thinks he is more powerful than the Hierophant!”

Oswin looked at the Castillian foolish enough to mouth such an insult in an Avalon tavern. A richly dressed strutting peacock, like all his people. Apparently strong drink and the company of his fellows gave him the courage to speak his mind. Neither would give him safety.

Oswin shoved his way through the crowd, noting that several other Avalon fighters were preparing to engage the popinjay. No matter. He would be the first. As his father taught him, the best way to gain a reputation was to pick a fight. The foolish Castillian made it easy for him.

Before anyone else could move to engage the loudmouth, Oswin had already drawn his glove, and slapped the man across his face. “An insult to one’s King is intolerable, sirrah. Will you defend

yourself outside, or do you lack honor as lacking along with manners?”

This close, Oswin could discern that the Castillian was no older than he was. His fellows were of the same age, which was a shame. Older and wiser heads might have saved the lad from the death he had earned at Oswin’s hands.

The Castillian sneered at his challenger. “If it is a duel that you wish, *señor*,” he snarled in passable Avalon, “Then a duel you shall have.” Ignoring his comrades’ looks of concern, the boy strode out through the front door of the tavern and out into the street. His friends followed him. Oswin was somewhat taken aback: clearly his opponent was more sober than he had first appeared. No matter: challenge had been offered and accepted.

He knew some of the patrons here. He nodded to two of them, who accepted his invitation. They stepped out onto the muddy street, the rest of the patrons not far behind.

The Castillian had already drawn his sword and was slashing it through the air in a series of practice cuts. He fought in the antiquated Aldana style that Oswin had seen the Castillian sailors use. It was the very antithesis of the solid, traditional Donovan style that Oswin and so many of his countrymen employed.

As the tavern crowd began to filter out onto the street, Oswin removed his buckler from its hook and drew his smallsword. He nodded to his impromptu seconds, who stepped forward. The Castillian gave them a look of contempt, handed over his sword, then nodded to two of his own friends. They stepped over to Oswin and



took his sword and buckler. The weapons were quickly examined to make sure they had no poison or other secret tricks. They returned the weapons to their owners, then stepped aside.

Taking up a position a few feet back and opposite the Castillian, Oswin called out, "May I know the name of the man who I will be killing this day?"

The Castillian paused in mid-cut. "I am Arturo Acedo de Ramirez del Castillo. And whose blood shall I have the honor of decorating these crude unpaved streets with?"

Buckler in left hand, smallsword in right, Oswin assumed the first defensive position. "I am Oswin Stiles. And know this: I speak for all those present when I tell you that no man of Avalon would tolerate your insults to King Richard. I merely have the honor of being the quickest to discipline you."

Arturo dropped into his own position, his profile turned to the side. At least he was right-handed. Good, Oswin thought. He had faced swordsmen trained by the Vodacce, and had no desire to deal with an off-handed opponent.

"Have at you then!" he cried, and stepped forward.

The first few seconds flashed by in a blink. Oswin tried for a quick bind, hoping to avoid the cutting steel of Arturo's blade. If he could force the weapon out of the way and leave his opponent exposed, then he could end the engagement with ease. The Castillian was too fast, though, and dodged his efforts like a snake. He recovered quickly and stepped forward before Oswin could follow up his attack, cutting high. It was a feint, but not good enough: Oswin blocked low with his buckler and slashed out. Arturo sidestepped the attack with a movement that was more dance than footwork. Turned sideways, he easily avoided Oswin's slash. The Castillian moved backward then raised the hilt of his sword to his forehead in mock salute.

Oswin didn't permit himself the luxury of rage. Clearly the Castillian was faster on his feet, which did not surprise him. He saw the Aldana style, and knew that whatever strange music it used made Arturo far more agile than Oswin. Still, there was a chance. The Castillians consider themselves civilized, and prized their architectural achievements. Fine: his opponent might be used to a fight in the paved streets of Castille. However, in Avalon it was a different story.



Arturo did not disappoint. He came in fast and straight, trying for a narrow slash at Oswin's face. Oswin was having none of it. He tapped the blade out of line with his heavier weapon, keeping his buckler ready for additional defense. His parry was true, and as Arturo's sword passed to his left he deflected it even further with a twitch of his wrist. Oswin's buckler struck steel, sending Arturo off-balance to his right. Unbalanced by the double-impact, the Castillian's leading foot slipped in the mud of the street, and he went down in a heap.

Pausing not even for a breath, Oswin kicked the blade out of his opponent's hand. It went rolling off into the sewage-filled gutter: the perfect place, as far as Oswin was concerned. He placed his blade to the Castillian's throat. "Do you yield?" he asked, knowing the answer.

Sprawled in the mud, Arturo could do nothing but give a feeble look of defiance. If he had raised his head to spit, he would have cut his own throat. "Never!"

Oswin shrugged. With a single slash, he cut the man's throat. There was a cheer from the Avalon crowd as he stepped back to avoid the gout of blood.



As Oswin sheathed his sword, one of Arturo's comrades retrieved the blade from the gutter. Looking as if he had swallowed lemon juice, he handed it hilt-first to Oswin. The Avalon hung his buckler back on his belt, then took the sword in both hands. Putting it over his knee, he snapped it with one clean motion and then handed the two pieces back to the dead man's second.

"Let that be a lesson to all Castillian pigs!" Oswin shouted. "Insult our King at your peril!"

As the crowd cheered again, the other Castillian glared at Oswin. He wasn't so foolish as to take offense among a crowd that clearly stood against him. Instead he simply said, "Arturo's family shall not be pleased. You have made an enemy this day. Don Julen is a vengeful man. You shall meet him, or some member of his family. Not today, and perhaps not next week or next month. But you will meet him. I suggest you prepare for that day, señor." With that, the man turned and, with his comrades, made their way through the jostling crowd.

The mob surrounded Oswin, hoisting him up on their shoulders. As they headed back into the tavern, Oswin couldn't help but feel a twinge of dread. Castillians had a unique fondness for the blood feud. He may have won honor and reputation this day, but he suspected his winnings carried a high cost yet to be paid.



The Swordsman's Guild is the most "international" organization in Théah. It is open to any fighter who wishes to abide by its rules, which remain loose and easy to adhere to. The Guild rose out of a need to regulate men who wish to kill each other. While it doesn't try to stop them, it does try to regulate their actions. The heads of many countries have given the Guild the authority to create and enforce dueling law in Théah., providing them with great power, but great limitations as well. They walk a thin line between strength and responsibility. If the Guild goes too far, its members may ignore it or turn against it. If it does not go far enough, the countries it represents may eliminate its authority.

Vendel and Vesten are at each other's throats in a civil war. Castille and Montaigne struggle with their codes of honor, which Queen Elaine must reconcile the rivalries and desires of her three kingdoms. Seven ruling princes battle for control of Eisen. All of these are child's play compared to the Swordsman's Guild's obstacles. They must incorporate the desires of eight substantially different cultures without falling apart. Some of its members are reluctant participants, forced to abide by Guild law only because their rulers say they must.

Unlike a secret society, the Guild's members rarely volunteer to join, nor do they all work for a single common cause. In theory, they band together to uphold "honorable" standards of dueling. However, there are as many members who despise that principle as respect it. For every Swordsman who values the Guild's laws, there is another who considers them a burden to work around or ignore.

The leaders of the Guild have sworn themselves to the task of reconciling all members, and ensuring that fighting remains a respectable custom. They hold to their standards no matter what.

A few naming conventions should be noted. "School" refers to the body of knowledge that comprises a particular style of fighting (i.e., the "MacDonald School"). The lower-case "school" refers to a building or location where a fighting style is taught (i.e., "the Aldana school in Altamira"). The upper case "Master" refers a Master of a School of fighting, while the lower-case "master" is used generically.

For the purposes of this book, any references to "the Guild" refer to the Swordsman's Guild unless otherwise noted. A "Swordsman" is a member of the Guild, whether they use a sword or not. Thus a Bogatyr axe fighter who belongs to the Guild is still called a "Swordsman." A "swordsman" (lower-case) is any fighter who wields a sword. In either case, the term is used regardless of gender.

A "Bogatyr" is a student of that School, while a "bogatyr" is any member of that class of landless Ussuran nobles, whether they have had Bogatyr training or not.

This book is divided into four chapters. The first, *Advance*, details the history of the Swordsman Guild from its creation in 1644 until the current day. It also provides information on each nation's historical traditions of dueling, its current state of affairs with the Guild, and background on the various Schools that country plays host to. *Fleche* provides a look at a variety of important NPCs: the three Guild leaders, their Chief Enforcer, the Masters of some of the prominent Schools, and a few of the most feared duelists in all Théah. *Riposte* introduces new rules, new schools, new types of reputation awards, several new advantages and skills, and new weapon accessories. *Coup De Grace* provides a "behind the scenes" look at the Guild, giving players ideas of how their Heroes can use the Guild to their advantage. There are also ideas for GMs who want to integrate the Guild into their campaigns and the secrets of the NPCs in Chapter Two. Lastly, you will find a series of templates for Swordsmen, ready to be integrated into your current campaign as either Heroes or NPCs.

The Guild is a unique organization, with the potential to cross national boundaries and establish a common standard. That standard can truly speak to the values and goals of all nations. In many ways the Guild is the most democratic institution in Théah. Within its laws, anyone — noble or peasant — can win justice and honor with the strength of his sword arm. If they cannot do so themselves, then they can hire someone to do it for them.

The Guild allows any fighter willing to live on a blade's edge to speak his mind and defend his honor. Join them, and discover the honor of the duel.



Chapter One

Advance



The Emperor's Palace – Nonus 1644

Imperator Reifenstahl looked down at the three men who stood before him. Each carried himself with the natural grace and agility of a born swordsman. Reifenstahl, no stranger to the fighting arts, could recognize fellow warriors when he saw them.

"What matter do you bring before the Court for consideration, gentlemen?" he asked, beginning the formal presentation.

The spokesman, Magnus Desaux du Montaigne, stepped forward. Reifenstahl had no fondness for the Montaigne, but knew that he would have to tolerate him if this new organization was to work.

"Your majesty, we come before you with an arrangement beneficial to Eisen."

"I am the only one fit to judge what is beneficial to my country," Reifenstahl let a hint of steel creep into his voice. "What is it?"

Magnus raised an eyebrow at the Emperor's abrupt words; clearly he was accustomed to the courtly graces of the Montaigne court. Yet he recovered quickly, earning the Emperor's approval. A true fighter was always quick on his feet, physically and mentally.

"We have spoken with the rulers of the other kingdoms of Théah. King Leon, Richard IV, the High King MacDuff, the Vendel merchants, and King Salvador. All have agreed to this arrangement." Magnus handed a sheaf to a courtier, who brought it to Reifenstahl. He glanced at the papers, frowning.

Continuing, Magnus noted, "This document outlines the creation of a new Guild, one devoted to the regulation of dueling throughout Théah. As you are no doubt aware, dueling has become more and more . . . dangerous in these times."

Reifenstahl gritted his teeth. He needed no reminder of the many young Eisen dying in duels. He had no objection to people dying to defend their honor: it was their definition of "honor" that drove his subjects to kill themselves in record numbers.

"This 'Swordsman's Guild' will be the first true multi-national organization in Théah. We have proposed a set of dueling laws subject to your approval that will apply to all countries. If a violation occurs, the duelists will be prosecuted. The Guild will seek out violators if asked, but otherwise it will leave capture and punishment to the local law authorities.

As the Emperor thumbed through the parchment, Magnus continued, "Further, the Guild will examine Schools that teach the use of honorable weapons, and determine if they truly uphold the traditions of chivalry that must by necessity accompany the martial arts. Their students will become members of the Guild, as will anyone else who has the proper qualifications. Only Guild members may legally challenge others to a duel. If someone outside the Guild wishes to challenge someone else, they must employ a Guild member to do so. Guild members will only fight against each other by commission.



"In this way, we hope to reduce the number of fatal duels taking place every day, and ensure that such duels begin only for the most honorable of reasons."

Reifenstahl glanced up. "I see that you ban pistols."

"That is true, your Majesty. They are filthy, dishonorable weapons that have no place in a civilized society."

The Emperor nodded in agreement. Then he glanced at the other two men who would form this Guild. Both were considerably younger than Magnus. The first, Miles Donovan, was an Avalon. Reifenstahl had heard of him by reputation, but they had never met. The man was considered an honorable fighter, using much the same traditional weapons that the Eisen did.

The other man was Linnae Knute. Reifenstahl had already talked to him prior to this meeting. In fact, Knute was the would-be Guild's direct representative to Eisen. He and Reifenstahl had spoken privately on several occasions. The Emperor had already made his intentions clear, and put forth what changes in the Pact he felt were necessary.

Reifenstahl gave a subtle nod to Knute, who returned it in kind. Then he waved one hand toward Magnus. "Very well. We are convinced that your Guild shall further the interests of Eisen, and we do hereby put our name to it." With that, the Emperor gestured to one of his servants, who brought forward the royal seal. Reifenstahl applied it to the bottom of the Pact, and signed his name.

A smattering of applause rose from the courtiers. Magnus took the document handed to him, bowed, and stepped back. "You are dismissed!" the Emperor declared, and the three men turned and left. Reifenstahl watched them as he went. He signed the document for the good of his country. Eisen could not afford further losses: the war divided his subjects enough as it was. Still, he couldn't help but be concerned. This enterprise seemed foolish in certain ways. However, it was the new Guild's problem now. If they could not deal with the situation, then he and the other rulers could always reverse themselves.

The Emperor's Palace – 1666

Linnae Knute stepped into the throne room. The place had changed since the Guild first came here. The audience of court attendees was gone: only the Emperor's personal guards remained. Mud and straw lay strewn about the floor: no one had cleaned in some time. Reifenstahl himself sat slouched upon the throne. He appeared tired: far too tired.

"My lord," Knute acknowledged, bowing low.

The Emperor waved him closer. "This is no time for formality. Step forward, man. We have things to discuss."

Linnae advanced, puzzled. He knew the War was not going well for Eisen, not since Castille and Montaigne had declared their intentions. He knew Reifenstahl well enough to believe that the man would not ask the Guild for direct assistance. They could put him in contact with Swordsmen who might or might not fight for Eisen, but they would never agree to a formal alliance.

"What can I do for you, Emperor?" asked Knute.

"Eisen is in ruins, and our enemies approach from every side. The center cannot hold, and I am afraid that I shall have to surrender to preserve what remains of my country."

Linnae frowned. Although only half-Eisen, he felt the loss as keenly as any full-blooded

native did. The words struck at his heart. Eisen, mighty Eisen, brought low by dissension within its own ranks.

"And what would you ask of me, my Lord? We cannot interfere..."

"Yes, yes, I know," Reifenshtahl dismissed Knute's concerns with a wave of his hand. "I have a personal favor to ask. You, Linnae, not the Guild."

"How may I be of assistance?"

"I am the holder of the Eisenfaust School. When I surrender, there shall be nothing of it left. By this time next month, there may no longer be an Eisen. We are at the mercy of our enemies, and I can only hope they will be merciful. But if they choose otherwise, then Eisen shall die. They will lose two of theirs to every one of ours, but we shall die nonetheless."

Reifenshtahl coughed, exhausted from the strain. "Eisenfaust must survive. It is the heart of our nation, as important as any piece of land or dracheneisen. Thus I must ask you to carry it into the future, until the time when Eisen will one day rise again."

"I am honored, my liege," Linnae mumbled, caught off guard. He had not known what to expect, but this had not been it. "But why me? Your nobles will undoubtedly object..."

"Let them!" the Emperor snarled. "I see dark times for my people, and even if they can retain their territories, it's unlikely they will join forces against me. Already my country is split in two, Vaticine versus Objectivist. Brother against brother, baron against baron. You are half-Eisen by birth, Linnae. These papers..." Reifenshtahl snapped his fingers and a servant brought forth a beribboned scroll. "...make you my successor on this matter. Preserve the knowledge of Eisenfaust until such time as my people are ready to take it once more. Then and only then can you surrender this burden. If not you, then your children, and your children's children, unto the seventh generation. Will you swear on this?"

Knute's head swam with the speed of it all. But his loyalty to the Emperor, and more importantly to Eisen, ran deep. "I swear, upon my father's name and upon my honor as a gentleman and a swordsman."

"So be it," the Emperor nodded. "Our pact is sealed." He handed the scroll to Linnae. "Now go. I shall notify the barons. I doubt they will give you much trouble: they have much greater concerns on their mind. As for Eisen..." Reifenshtahl sighed wearily. "I must send a

messenger to seek parlay with our enemies. Hopefully they shall receive what offer I make them, to spare my people."

The Emperor's chin slumped to his chest, exhausted as if he carried a heavy burden. And perhaps he does, Linnae pondered as he turned to go. And what new burden has been passed on to me...?



The Guild largely owes its creation to a Montaigne fencer named Magnus Desaux du Montaigne. Born in 1620, Magnus became intrigued by the rich history of dueling in Théah. However, dueling had been declared illegal in most nations. Although the King paid only lip service to the law at best, Magnus saw it as an encroachment on men's ability defend their honor. On the other hand, he couldn't deny that dueling caused a great deal of unnecessary death. Castille, Eisen, and even Montaigne lost many young men every year to the demands of honor.

Magnus sought a solution that would still allow dueling while reducing the number of fatalities. He came up with a "Dueling Guild" which would legalize the practice while carefully regulating the whys and wherefores. Such a system would allow "proxies" to fight for each other: men willing to duel and who would probably find some other means to kill each other without an acceptable outlet. Thus, men wouldn't feel compelled to die defending their honor. More importantly, men would need to pay for the privilege, either by becoming Guild members (and contributing the requisite tithes) or hiring a Guild member to challenge and fight for them. Magnus saw this as an important step in reducing dueling while still allowing the practice in a legalized form.

To create such a Guild, he needed several things. The organization would have to cover as much of Théah as possible, or it would not serve as sufficient impediment to dueling deaths. That meant it would need the support of as many



rulers as possible; without legal authority such a Guild couldn't function. Even more importantly, creating a Guild meant that Magnus would have to go through the Vendel League and its established system.

As Theus would have it, one of Magnus' noble rivals was murdered by a Vendel youth, Linnae Knute. The rival had hired men to kill Knute's mother, a duelist, rather than face her himself. The boy, a mere lad of 12, had single-handedly killed the noble and his henchmen. Impressed, Magnus approached the boy and took him under his wing. Linnae proved a fearsome fighter who didn't really need his help, but Magnus impressed upon him his own ideas of how dueling should be regulated. Disgusted that his mother had been killed by an opponent who wouldn't face her honorably, Linnae agreed. The two of them perfected a plan to create the Guild. As a native Vendel, Linnae could approach the Vendel League with an offer to legitimize their plan.

Linnae quickly mastered the Eisenfaust School and made a reputation for himself in Eisen, creating his first fencing academy there. While managing his own private Valroux school, Magnus discussed matters with his relative, King Léon and found the ruler amenable to such an arrangement. The Vodacce didn't see the need for a proxy system of dueling and Ussura was as unapproachable as always, but Magnus remained undeterred. The Castillians proved difficult, demanding too much control, so Magnus ignored them for the time being. The inner circle of the Guild required a third member, leaving only Avalon as a legitimate option. Magnus approached the ranking Master of the Donovan School, Miles Donovan, during a trip to Kirk. The swordsman proved amenable, and the Guild had its three inner circle members.

The three men then finished the Pact, as they called it, and approached the rulers of the various countries. Magnus went to Leon XIV and King Salvador Aldana de Sandoval and convinced them to sign. Miles approached Kings Richard and MacDuff in the Glamour Isles, while Linnae negotiated with the Vendel League and Emperor Reifenstahl. The Vendel League was keen to reap the profits of yet another Guild, and their support gave the trio a great deal of

leverage over other rulers. Reifensahl felt he had no choice but to sign, as dueling undermined his country's nobility almost as much as the War of the Cross. Finally, in Nonus 1644 all of the initial signatories agreed, and the Swordsman's Guild became a reality.

The new organization struggled somewhat during the early years. The Guild acted with the authority of the countries' rulers, but many of those rulers had been unable to enforce dueling laws in the first place: that is why they turned to the Guild. As part of their plan, Magnus and the others created the "Razors," a group of Master Swordsmen who would act as their enforcement arm. The Razors existed to make an example of the worst violators of the newly established dueling law. Initially, they focused on pistol dueling, which the Guild considered lethal and dishonorable, but they also pursued traditional swordsmen who refused to adhere to their tenets.

The Guild also worked to increase its influence through social means. Both Leon XIV and the Vendel League proved useful allies, giving the Guild an aura of prestige. It didn't hurt that Veronica Ambrogia, the most famed courtesan in Vodacce, was involved with Magnus even before the Guild's creation. She brought all of her social skills to bear on his behalf, which helped the Guild gain a foothold in many courts. The Guild also sanctioned Veronica's own School at its inception, and convinced the Lucani family to do likewise. This helped to ease their problems with the stubborn Vodacce nobles, and led to the Villanova and Bernoulli Schools eventually seeking Guild approval despite their disdain. The Guild sanctioned several Schools as soon as it came into existence, and soon others clamored to be accepted as well. It reached the point where Guild sanctioning substantially increased a School's enrollment, so the arrangement proved beneficial to all parties concerned.

Certainly, the Guild had its share of setbacks. As noted, Vodacce duelists adamantly denied the Guild's dueling law. A number of incidents took place between the Guild and Vodacce swordsmen; the most famous involved Giovanni Villanova's execution of a fellow "Swordsman" in 1653. Villanova, himself technically a Guild member because of his enrollment in an Ambrogia School, fought another Ambrogia student in an illegal duel and killed him. The Guild sent ten Razors into Villanova's lands to enforce the law and deliver justice to the prince. That proved a costly mistake: Villanova defeated them all. Each year on

the anniversary of the incident, Giovanni sends the Guild a piece of one of the Razors' bodies as a reminder.

The Guild's greatest tragedy took place when Magnus died in 1665. As the driving force behind the Guild, he kept the organization intact throughout its early trials and tribulations. He established in his will that his son Frantz would assume his seat, and charged the boy with fulfilling his duties or losing out on his inheritance. Though overly fond of dueling, Franz has proven a reluctant member of the inner council. Miles and Linnae continue as inner council members, but both of them grow older each day and have not fathered an heir yet. It is not clear what the Guild will do when they pass away. Most likely, Veronica Ambrogia would ascend to the inner council and a new secondary seat would be created. No one knows for sure, but those that find the Guild too restrictive are eager to find out.



Guild Organization

As outlined in "The Pact," the Swordsman's Guild has a very simple organization. At its heart stands the Inner Council, consisting of three members, who hold the position for life. For the first twenty-one years of its existence, the charter members held these seats: Magnus Desaux du Montaigne, Linnae Knute, and Miles Donovan. With Magnus' passing, his son Frantz inherited his seat. The Guild charter allows a council member to appoint his successor in whatever manner he likes. None of the current members have heirs, and if they have successors in mind, they have not yet declared them. If no successor was declared, the remaining two inner council members choose someone suited to representing as much of a given nation's swordsmen as possible. Many believe that Laurence Lugh, Hrodgeir of the Vesten, and Fauner Pösen are leading candidates. However, as far as anyone knows, the Guild has not approached them or anyone else.

The Inner Council decides all Guild matters by a simple vote. Majority rules. A member may abstain from voting, but they understand that a tie that will simply complicate things. The Inner Council typically gathers one week out of the month to decide on any Guild matters brought before them.

The Inner Council is limited to three members, but the Guild has tried to represent all nations in its membership. To do so, they have created the position of a secondary seat. Secondaries can only advise: they may not vote on Guild matters. Currently only one seat exists, held by Veronica Ambrogia, Master and creator of the Ambrogia School. She has held the seat since the Guild's inception. The Guild tried to create a similar seat to assure Castillian representation, but the notoriously prideful Castillians believe they should either have full representation, or none. The Inner Council offered a secondary seat to Don Andrés Bejarano del Aldana, who seemed the most amenable of Castillian School masters. He declined due to a lack of time. Eduardo Montevada, head of the local Guild Chapterhouse in Altamira, is considered a likely candidate for a follow-up offer but so far the Inner Council has not reached a final decision on the matter.

Below the Inner Council are the Chapterhouses, which can be found in almost every major city in Théah. The Inner Council appoints a Master to oversee each Chapterhouse and pays him a small stipend. The Chapterhouse Master may ask other Masters to volunteer their time. Their duties are usually light, and involve

testing and retesting Guild members to maintain standards. Most Masters enjoy the challenge and gladly volunteer their services, though they rarely commit to long-term service. The largest Chapterhouses can have as many as six Masters in attendance at one time.

Spanning the length and breadth of the Swordsman's Guild are the Razors, who make up the organization's enforcement branch. They answer to Renato Marchello, the Head of the Razors, who in turn answers to the Inner Council. Chapterhouse Masters are expected to provide them with assistance when necessary, but the Razors pride themselves on their independence and rarely ask for aid. They have their own building at the Guild Headquarters in Kirk, and can requisition quarters at any Chapterhouse in the world.

Individual Guild-sanctioned schools track and record their own members, and send updated records to the local Chapterhouse once a month. The Chapterhouse then sends the records on to the Guild Headquarters roughly while keeping a copy for themselves. The sanctioned schools have certain duties to the Guild (see Duties as a Guild-Sanctioned School below), but typically these duties are relatively light.

That, in essence, is the sum total of the Guild. Magnus and his associates deliberately created it that way so that the various nations would not perceive it as a threat. The Inner Council does not want to throw around its strength, and for what it does, this simple structure works best.

Membership Figures

The schools send membership updates to the Chapterhouses each week, who in turn send them on to the Guild Headquarters each month. This makes it difficult to track figures at any given moment. Also, not every Guild-sanctioned school reports its membership to Chapterhouses: Ussura and areas of Vestenmannavnjar, for example rarely bother with such bureaucratic formalities. With all of that taken into consideration, the Guild currently believes it has the following membership figures as of the end of 1668:

Avalon/The Glamour Isles: 2,800
Montaigne: 11,400
Eisen: 4,000
Castille: 4,000
Vodacce: 5,500
Ussura: 2,400
Vendel: 1,000
Vesten: 750
Total: 31,850



Terms of the Duel

In general, the Guild recognizes that its members will often practice strange and esoteric forms of fighting, use odd weapons, employ self-enhancement sorcery, etc. While both duelists should agree to the weapons use, in general both sides should be flexible concerning what their opponent uses. The Guild believes that any two weapons (except those specifically excluded) are roughly equal, making fighting ability the determining factor in a duel rather. A duelist that haggles excessively over his opponent's choice of legal weapons or enhancements risks appearing cowardly, with suitable Reputation penalties.



Legal Dueling

The first thing one must understand when discussing “legal dueling” is exactly what the Guild considers a “duel.” They define the term as two parties who meet with premeditation to fight and thus settle some matter between them, typically an affair of honor. They may be alone or have “seconds” to support them, and may meet in a private or public area. Dueling involves either weapons or the bare hands when used to injure someone else. Both parties should draw up an arrangement stating the conditions to which the duel will be fought, and any tactics, weapons, schools, or sorceries that will be disallowed.

Anything else is not “dueling,” and does not fall within the Guild’s purview. If two Swordsmen meet on the field of battle, they are not dueling. If one breaks into the other’s home, they are not dueling. If one is hired as a bodyguard and another Swordsman attacks their charge, they are not dueling. The normal laws of the land (or lack thereof) apply.

For a legal duel to begin, a Swordsman must make a challenge. The Swordsman can either be acting for himself, or be commissioned by someone else to make a challenge. Normally a Swordsman can accept a commission to duel anyone except another Swordsman. Under some circumstances he can challenge another Swordsman to a legal duel (see Personal Dueling below). If he is only commissioned to issue a challenge, the person doing the commissioning is the one who is examined to see if they are a Guild member, and if the resulting duel is illegal.

Anyone can accept a challenge to a duel and defend themselves. Alternately, the challenged party can commission a duelist of their own to act as their proxy. A challenge must be accepted or



Dueling Examples

Example 1: Archibald, a Swordsman, is commissioned by the Marquis von Bahlow, a non-Swordsman, to challenge Otavio Consone, a Swordsman, and then step aside and let the two men fight. The resulting duel is legal: von Bahlow is not a Guild member.

Example 2: Archibald is approached by a non-Guild member, Hans Hoermann, to fight on his behalf against a Guild member who has challenged Hoermann. The resulting duel is legal: Archibald is acting as a commissioned proxy for Hoermann and the person who challenged Hoermann was not challenging a Guild member.

Example 3: Archibald is approached by a Guild member, Giovanni Villanova, to challenge Lawrence Lugh and then step aside while Villanova duels. Lugh is a Swordsman himself: Any resulting duel is illegal and Villanova would be at fault.

declined on the spot, but the challenged party may accept and then state that a commissioned Swordsman will fight for them.

Depending on the country, nobles expecting a challenge prefer to have a Swordsman on hand to accept them: this saves time and assures that the Swordsman is always available. This can become rather expensive. Typically, only Montaigne exiles and the Vendel bother with such retainers. In fact, they take pride in the fact that they can afford to pay a Swordsman for such an extended time. Other countries are usually fairly liberal when it comes to letting challenged parties find a Swordsman to accept a duel. The Guild tacitly encourages this, since it means money for more Swordsmen... and thus more for themselves. A challenged party must usually provide a Swordsman to act as proxy for them within 24 hours, or fight themselves.

Duelists can fight with any hand-to-hand weapon, or bare-handed. Dueling with firearms, other ranged weapons, hidden weapons, and poison is illegal in every country in Théah — and extreme breach of ever basic codes of honor. Even in Vendel pistol dueling is considered illegal... for now.



Types of Duels

There are five basic types of duels recognized by the Guild:

Duel to the Death: The duel ends when one participant or the other is dead. In game terms, this occurs when a participant is rendered unconscious and his opponent deliberately chooses to kill them.

Duel to Unconsciousness: The duel ends when a participant is rendered unconscious.

Duel to Crippling: The duel ends when a participant reaches Crippled status.

Duel to First Blood: The duel ends when a participant takes a Dramatic Wound.

Duel to First Strike: The duel ends when a participant takes any amount of Flesh Wounds.

Duelsits may legally use any non-ranged weapon. The only limitation is that they must be agreed-upon and revealed at the beginning of the duel. Using a previously hidden weapon is illegal and disreputable. The Guild initially tried to limit which hand-held weapons could be used during a duel, but they soon realized that each nation had its own thoughts on what constituted a "honorable weapon." The Guild could not disallow boar spears without angering the Eisen, or claymores without irritating the Highlanders. Nevertheless, they maintain bans a few specific weapons, as well as barehanded fighting techniques. However, just because a School or related weapon is not sanctioned does not mean it is illegal to use in a fight. The Guild believes that if, for example, an Inish fighter wants to defend himself against a MacDonald claymore using his bare fists, that is the Inishman's prerogative. Similarly, if a Vesten wants to use Halfdansson, he can do so without interference from the Guild.

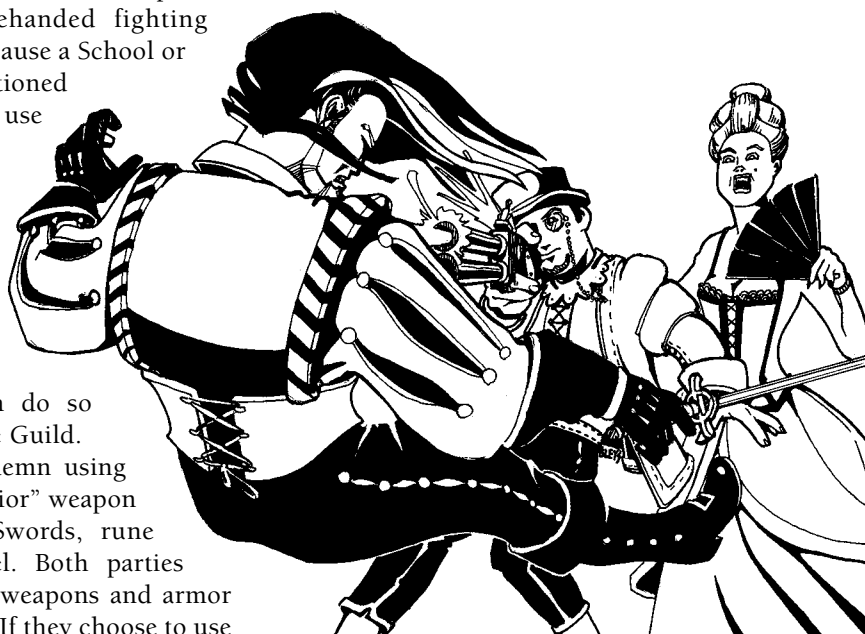
The Guild does not condemn using armor or a supposedly "superior" weapon (Castillian blades, Puzzle Swords, rune swords, etc.) during a duel. Both parties typically have any choice of weapons and armor within the restrictions above. If they choose to use

a lesser weapon better suited to their skills (or no weapon at all), or have not earned or inherited dracheneisen armor or a Puzzle Sword, that is their problem. Two duelists may come to a mutual agreement that may ban such weapons or armor, but their use does not make a duelist's actions illegal.

Sorcery is treated as a superior form of weaponry or armor if it is only used to enhance oneself. The Guild forbids magic that attacks or otherwise directly affects an opponent or his weapon at range (Sorte, the Lærdom rune of Villskap, El Fuego Adentro, certain quasi-magical features of Puzzles Swords, etc.), treating it as the same as a ranged weapon or poison.

Usually, a legal duel must be held on "neutral ground," unless the participants both agree to some other setting. The Guild defines "neutral ground" as flat terrain, both duelists on foot, and normal levels of illumination.

If the participants follow all Guild laws, then they become immune to any legal repercussions from their actions. If one duelist breaks the rules above, then he or she can be prosecuted. If a duelist poisons his opponent, then he is considered a murderer and the Guild doesn't offer protection. Otherwise, if a duelist kills his opponent in a legal duel abiding by the Guild's terms, then the local law authorities cannot prosecute him for murder. Nor can they charge either or both parties with assault, the use of deadly weapons, or any other related crime.



Illegal Dueling

If either participant breaks the rules above, then the duel is illegal. It becomes a crime and the actions involved are assessed as crimes. If a duelist injures his opponent, it is assault. If he kills a man during an illegal duel, it is murder, and so on.

It should be noted that in some areas of Théah, dueling remains legal regardless of whether Guild law is followed. Freiburg is the best example of such a place. Many nobles allow dueling on their private lands, and some Highland clans adhere to similar practices. On the other hand, some areas of Théah forbid any kind of dueling. Some nobles don't want violence on their lands, or wish to restrict the power of the Guild, while certain provinces dislike the perceived stain on their armed forces. In other areas, nobles create their own unique rules for dueling. They may allow dueling but only with a certain weapon. Several barons in Pösen königreich only allow dueling with boar spears, for instance.

The Guild typically defers to the local authorities in this matter. Technically the Guild has the authority of the nations' rulers to enforce dueling law. In reality they simply cannot patrol all of Théah. If the local authorities prefer to handle illegal duels themselves, or if they wish to restrict dueling to particular circumstances, realistically there is little the Guild can do about it. To stop an Eisen lord from limiting dueling to boar spears, they would have to go into that lord's territory and possibly fight him, then occupy her lands and make sure everyone dueled with any weapon the wished. Clearly the Guild wants to avoid such a situation at all costs.

Currently, every country recognizes the Guild's dueling law, if only for convenience. Thus, the local Vodacce or Castillian authorities expect a Swordsman to follow Guild dueling law while in Vodacce. Sometimes countries will not restrict Swordsmen of their own nationality within their own country. Vodacce, Vesten, and Castille are examples of where this typically occurs.

Simply put, the Guild does not protect its own members if they engage in illegal dueling. If someone duels illegally, they are on his or her own. If a Swordsman kills a man without following Swordsman Guild guidelines, then he will have to deal with the local authorities. Perhaps they will be generous, perhaps not. Perhaps they will not even notice or care.



Joining the Guild

There are three ways to join the Guild. The first is by purchasing membership. The second is to become a member of a Guild-sanctioned School. Finally the applicant or his family may call in a political favor to secure membership. The first and third options are optional. The second is mandatory, although there a Swordsman can immediately resign should he or she wish (see Resignation below). Under the terms of their sanctioning agreement, accepted Schools must make all of their students Guild members. They also must make sure the students are familiar with Guild law and the rules for legal dueling.

A duelist can purchase membership at any Chapterhouse or at the Guild Headquarters in Kirk. The applicant receives a book of Guild law, then the Head of the Chapterhouse or his designated assistant tests the applicant to assess their Rank in any given School. If the applicant does not identify himself as a Ranked member of a School, demonstrates no specific Master abilities, and has no record of graduation from a School, the Guild will simply give him an iron Guild pin, representing an Unranked position.

The Guild does not test an applicant who gains membership through political influence. The Guild gives such applicants an Unranked pin and then leaves them to their own devices. An example can be found in *Castille*, page 90.

Most Guild members hold no prejudice against applicants who obtain their memberships in this manner. After all, if they can't fight they'll die soon enough. A few Swordsmen do take exception, and like to seek out such political appointees to test their mettle.

Resignation

A Guild member can resign at any time, with or without cause. They simply turn in their pin, and the Guild strikes their names from the record. The Guild does not allow them to rejoin at a later date, and informs all potential “retirees” before allowing them to leave.

Guild Rank and Pins

Since its inception the Guild has commissioned the creation of Swordsman's Guild pins through Master Ivor Johansson and his successor, Mistress Sela Cole. The Guild pays a substantial sum to the Blacksmith's Guild to make sure that the pins cannot be readily duplicated. Each pin is numbered, and consists of a unique ore which only handful of Blacksmiths know how to smelt.

Five types of pins exist: bronze, silver, gold, platinum, and iron. The Guild issues bronze pins to members who have only achieved Apprentice rank in one or more sanctioned Schools. It issues silver pins to Journeyman members and gold pins to members who have achieved Master rank in at least one School.

Both the Swordsman herself and the school that she graduates from must inform the Guild of the member's progression through the ranks. The Guild will periodically test a member, approximately once a year, if they do not obtain verification from his school. They also test a Swordsman if he requests it because his teacher doesn't contact the Guild. Graduates of Vesten and Ussuran schools often have to verify their rank in this manner.

A Guild member can advance through the ranks while hiding his progress from his school, usually by faking a lesser level of expertise. This can work in the short-term, but given time, enough Swordsmen know the virtues and strengths of most styles that they will spot such a “ringer” and report his crime to the Guild (see Duties of Guild Membership below). If the Swordsman truly does not rely on the higher ranks of his School, then he can continue this deception for quite a while.

A Guild member can also falsify a higher level than they possess, perhaps to earn greater pay. This is more difficult, and usually ends badly for

the Swordsman in question, but it does occur on occasion. The Guild's testing procedure is by no means foolproof.

If a duelist purchases a membership, they must submit to rigorous testing upon joining to determine their rank, if any. The Guild then awards them the appropriate rank pin as appropriate.

The Guild's fourth rank uses a platinum pin, representing Grand Masters. While it is relatively easy for a Master to determine that another Swordsman is a Master, or even a Master of two different Schools, it is much harder to test a Swordsman to see if he has combined those two Schools. The Guild typically relies on the honesty of its members, or the testimony of witness, when making this determination. Failure to reveal one's status Grand Master violates of the Guild bylaws (see Duties of Guild Membership below). The Guild gives out a very limited number of such pins, less than 1% of the total Guild membership to date.

The Guild issues the fifth and final pin, iron, to “Unranked” Swordsmen. These members have not joined any School, and use simple fencing, heavy weapon, or other attack and parry tactics. These members suffer something of a disadvantage since they can demand no set minimum fee. On the other hand, they have the advantage of being an unknown quality. Some Swordsmen have tried to pass themselves off as Unranked by concealing their School. This is difficult to accomplish, since the schools themselves report their graduates to the Guild, and their techniques become very deeply ingrained in members. Still, it has happened in the past. Naturally, such deceit violates Guild laws.

When a Swordsman advances a rank, they are expected to turn in their previous pin at the next Chapterhouse they come to. The Guild updates its records, and assigns the old pin to someone else. When a Swordsman receives a new pin it has a different number as the old one.

The Guild pays a small reward to anyone who turns in a Guild pin, typically two guilders. They believe this is enough to encourage someone returning a pin, but not enough to reward those who kill a Swordsman. If the Guild does not hear from a member in three years, they decommission the badge and remove the member from the ranks. They occasionally have to recommission a member who reappears after that period.

Enforcement

The Guild has created a unique branch of enforcers to make sure that all swordsmen follow its dueling laws: the Razors, headed by lethal duelist Renato Marchello. The Razors have sanction to track down any individual who violates Guild bylaws and bring them in. No Guild violation currently exists that warrants an immediate death penalty. Even a Swordsman accused of taking a commission on and then killing another Guild member goes to the local Chapterhouse for trial. If the head of the Chapterhouse finds them guilty they may appeal to the Guild Headquarters in Kirk. The only time a Swordsman dies at the hands of the Razors is if he puts up a fight. The Razors are all Masters of at least one School, and learn specifically to exploit the weaknesses of a wide range of Schools. Few Swordsmen are foolish enough to fight back, but a few guilty parties invariably go down swinging.

As per the Pact, Razors may act against a non-Guild member, but only if he or she uses a Guild pin or are otherwise impersonates a Guild member. Again, they will try to bring in the offender if possible, or else turn him over to local authorities for trial.

Not every violation constitutes a visit from the Razors. Often the head of the Chapterhouse simply take a member into custody when they check in upon arrival or for their yearly certification. Since the head of a Chapterhouse is a Master, and may have other Masters at the House as well, this rarely presents any problems. Swordsmen who commit minor violations can avoid the Guild simply by not checking in or applying for testing. After three years they will be decommissioned, but in that time they can still sell their services. Of course, they won't have the benefit of the Guild brokering duels for them, and the Guild tries to notify its members of individuals "on probation." Because of this, a violator must be careful to avoid contact with Guild members who might recognize him.

Typically a violator trying to avoid punishment will simply resign, since avoiding the Guild while still trying to legally duel is more trouble than it is worth. The Pact allows Swordsmen to go after him or her, but they rarely bother with minor violations. They have better things to do than hunt down every ex-Swordsman who refused to wear their pin in public.



Joining Up

In game terms, it costs no money to become a Guild member after character creation, nor does it cost money to maintain membership. The Guild typically considers the 10% fee it takes on commissions as acceptable dues.

The Guild always tests a Hero if he or she purchases membership. A player character must meet the following conditions to be accepted by the Guild:

- 1) They have a TN to be hit of at least 15 due to Passive Defense from Parry or Footwork Knacks.
- 2) They have to have a Rank above 0 in at least one Attack knack (Fencing, Heavy Weapon, Buckler, Panzerhand, etc).
- 3) They roll at least 4 dice to hit when making an attack with that Knack.

Punishment

The most severe punishment the Guild inflicts is death. However, they only reserve such harsh measures for a Swordsman who accepts a commission against another Swordsman and kills him. The Guild employs lesser punishments for most crimes. Usually, they can either fine a member who in violation, or expel them from the Guild. Such expulsion can last for a specified period of time, or permanently, depending on the severity of the crime.

Guild Bylaws – Rules of Membership

Swordsmen may never accept a commission on another Guild member.

This is the Guild's foremost rule, and the only one to which they consistently apply the death penalty. Simply put, the Guild does not want its member killing each other for money. The Guild will look into matters if the person accepting the commission claims foul play. There have been occasions when a Swordsman concealed his pin so as to trick another Swordsman into accepting a commission on him. The Guild treats such

deception with the utmost seriousness. Though reluctant to reverse its standing orders on this matter, it recently began making more of an effort to enforce their rule about the display of Guild pins (see below) and prosecute offenders.

A Swordsman directly challenged by a commissioned Guild member can decline the challenge without loss of reputation, regardless of their respective ranks. Alternately, they may defend themselves with no fear of prosecution from the Guild. As noted above, if they tricked a Swordsman by hiding their membership they may be subject to other penalties as well.

A Swordsman who accepts a commission on a fellow Guild member but does not kill, maim, or cripple him will not be sentenced to death, but may suffer some other form of punishment (see Punishment above).

You may not duel a fellow Guild member outside of a commissioned arrangement.

Originally, the Guild banned its members from dueling each other under any circumstances. A Swordsman either had to act as a proxy for some other party, or not duel at all. This soon became impossible to enforce. Many Swordsmen argued with other Swordsmen over matters of honor, and would fight illegally or otherwise engage in criminal acts if the Guild didn't provide them with some outlet. The large number of skilled swordsmen belonging to the Guild made member in addition, some rich individuals bought Guild membership simply to protect themselves from challenge. The Guild values its honorable reputation, and doesn't wish anyone to use membership as a shield against Swordsmen.

Because of these circumstances, the Guild allows one exception to this bylaw. To do so, the challenging party must travel to a Chapterhouse and file a request. This request states the manner in which their honor was offended, and to what degree they wish to resolve the matter. The Head of the Chapterhouse reviews the request and modifies it if necessary. For instance, a challenged party may feel that an insult from a fellow Swordsman demands a duel to the death. The Head of the Chapterhouse may modify the duel to first blood. If the Chapterhouse declines the request, the member may only duel the offender illegally and deal with the consequences.

If the Chapterhouse grants the request, they issue a scroll asserting their approval to the challenging party. That Swordsman must then

seek out the offending party, give them the scroll, and inform them that they have now been legally challenged. The challenged party may decline or accept as usual.

You must check with the local Chapterhouse when you enter and leave a city.

This helps the Guild keep track of its members, and test them if necessary (see below). It also benefits the Swordsmen themselves. If a member's name is on file with the local Chapterhouse, then the Guild can offer his services to those seeking duelists, bodyguards, teachers, etc. A member is also expected to provide an address where they can be contacted, unless they do not currently seek employment.

The Guild honors requests for anonymity if a member does not want his name widely distributed. A Swordsman may also request that the Guild offer his name for particular services only: bodyguard duty, but not dueling, for instance. However, the Chapterhouse still asks members to report in so that they can keep track of him.

You must report to the Guild for testing.

A Swordsman is expected to travel to a Chapterhouse once per year to receive testing. If he does not report in three years, the Guild decommissions his badge number and removes him from the ranks. A member can turn up after the three years and reaffirm his membership. During testing, a member is expected to demonstrate the full extent of his abilities. This helps ensure that duels are balanced, proper fees are paid, and defrauding does not occur.

You must wear a proper Guild Pin in public.

The Guild expects its Swordsmen to keep their pins revealed at all times, which ensures that clientele can easily find a Swordsman of the rank they desire. It also helps reduce the chance that Guild members inadvertently accept commissions against higher-ranking Guild members. The Guild prefers commissioned duels to be as balanced as possible, or at least that the participants enter the duel knowledgeably. Swordsmen are expected to accurately convey their abilities to the Guild so that they wear the proper pin. Failure to do so is also a violation of Guild law.



You must pay a percentage of your commissions to the Guild.

The Guild receives 10% of any fee a Swordsman collects on a commission. Failure to do so violates the most basic Guild protocols. If the Guild brokers a commission they simply deduct their fee directly; otherwise, they must trust the Swordsman to deliver their share of the pay as soon as is convenient. The Guild does not require Swordsmen to accept a commission if they don't wish to. They would prefer that members accept commissions, but they also recognize that some Swordsmen donate their services for a worthy cause, or to help a friend. If a Swordsman does not fight for commission, the Guild does not demand any fee.

You cannot use a pistol in a duel.

The Guild never wavers on this; it considers the use of a firearm the most dishonorable act one can commit in a duel. This is partially because of their arrangement with Emperor Reifentahl in 1644 when they set out to eliminate pistol dueling in Eisen. They also realize that if they allowed firearms in a duel, they would lose members much more rapidly. There is rarely such a thing as a "duel to first blood" with pistols or muskets. But beyond all that, they truly consider firearms dishonorable. Frantz is the only member who would even consider allowing guns in legal duels, but he knows enough about his fellow Inner Council members to realize they will never allow it.

You cannot defraud a Guild customer.

This rule covers a wide variety of sins. The most common case occurs when a Swordsman directly brokers a duel with a customer, and then takes the money without rendering the agreed-upon service. Incidents took place early in the Guild's existence when non-members claimed to be Swordsmen, negotiated with a customer for a fee up-front, and then departed with the loot. This is one reason why the Guild enforces the rule about members displaying Guild pins, and makes sure its customer know of this rule.

Another such fraud is that of a Guild member claiming to hold a higher rank than they actually do, typically by faking testing or using a stolen pin. This allows them to collect a higher fee, which they keep even if they lose.

No refunds.

This rule exists to reassure members and clients alike, though it does not apply if a member withdraws for cause (see Commissioned Dueling below). A Guild member is expected to do his best in any duel he engages in. If he loses, he should not feel obliged to give money back. If a customer feels a Guild member did not fight to the full extent of his abilities, he should report the affair to the local Chapterhouse. The set fee is for effort, not success or failure.

This may seem harsh, but it actually reassures Guild customers. They accept that any hired Swordsman will do his best. In essence, they are paying the Guild to provide them with qualified Swordsman, rather than make that judgement for themselves. Swordsmen know what their employers expect, and don't have to worry about haggling over a refund after taking cuts and bruises in a losing effort. This rule also eliminates some of the perception that the Guild is a "mercenary" organization.





An Example of Opening a School

Otavio Gallegos de Consone, a Master of the Villanova School, decides to open a Villanova school in Altamira. He has permission to teach Gallegos School from its head, Don Samuel Vasquez de Gallegos, but he makes the mistake of not speaking with Giovanni Villanova about it. Once he starts instructions, Otavio refuses to enroll his students in the Guild. He does not keep a record of his students' level of progress, nor does he send a percentage of the tuition fees he collects to Giovanni Villanova.

The Guild considers it Don Samuel's and Giovanni Villanova's responsibility to bring the errant school into line. Rather than send their own Razors, they threaten to withdraw their sanctioning of the Gallegos style. Don Samuel sends his own men to speak with Otavio.

Giovanni has little interest in the Guild, but still desires official sanctioning for his own purposes. He also dislikes the idea of someone teaching his secret style without his permission. He sends his own men to Altamira to have a "chat" with Otavio. Shortly thereafter, Consone pays the two School Heads the backlog of tuition fees, throws in a little extra to Giovanni in acknowledgement of the mistake he made, and files records of his students' progress with the Guild.

Benefits of Guild Membership

Commissioned Dueling

A Swordsman can challenge anyone to a duel, subject to Guild bylaws (see above). Further, a Swordsman can accept payment to challenge someone. The Guild prefers that Swordsman accept commissions for the simple reason that they get a 10% fee from all commissions. However, a Guild member is always free to decline any commission offer, or to negotiate a higher price.

A Swordsman may withdraw from a commission if they feel he was tricked or deceived; if, for example, the client assures a

commissioned Apprentice he will fighting a fellow Apprentice, only to learn that his opponent is actually a Grand Master wearing dracheneisen and wielding a Puzzle Sword! There may be some reputation loss over such a withdrawal, but the Guild typically allows it as long as the Swordsman refunds any fee.

Guild Fees

The basic rate for a Swordsman's services is determined by what it would cost him to offer a challenge and duel against a Swordsman of equal rank. After the Guild's 10% deduction, the basic fee for a Swordsman's services runs as follows:

Unranked: No set rate

Apprentice: 20 guilders

Journeyman: 40 guilders

Master: 80 guilders

Grand Master: 200 guilders

If the Swordsman must face an opponent one rank higher, the fee is doubled. If he must face an opponent two ranks higher, the fee is tripled. And if he must face a Swordsman three levels higher (i.e., an Apprentice vs. a Grand Master), the fee is tripled. Unranked Swordsmen are typically considered Journeymen.

The Guild charges a fee of 10 guilders to offer challenge and then let an employee take over and fight, regardless of the Swordsman's rank. It costs the same amount to hire a Swordsman for one week's services. This does not include room and board, or other expenses. Swordsmen often negotiate a "hazard fee" on top of their basic fee.

Individual Swordsman can always negotiate a higher fee if they wish. Depending on the economy of the area, they may not be able to demand the fees above and might have to accept lower rates (or alternative currencies).

Personal Dueling

As mentioned above, a Guild member may submit a request to the Guild to challenge and duel another Swordsman. This gives them protection in the subsequent duel... assuming the Guild approves. If it isn't approved and they proceed with a duel anyway, they are acting outside of the Guild's authority and therefore dueling illegally. If the local authorities catch them, they will be treated just like anyone else found fighting in the streets.

In some cases, this may not result in any penalty whatsoever. In Vesten territory, for instance, few Jarls worry about two foreigners fighting each other to the death. Vodacce and

Freiburg are other examples of areas where dueling is legal under any circumstances.

Essentially, the Guild wishes to ensure that its members do not get paid to duel other Guild members. The restriction on commissions is not intended to keep a Swordsman from defending himself in battle, or against a criminal, or during a matter of honor. Of course, they may have to pay the price to do so. The Guild simply declines to protect them in these non-dueling situations.

Shelter

A Guild member may request food and board at any Chapterhouse, which is obliged to provide them with what they request. However the Head of the Chapterhouse may decline the offer, or provide “alternate” services, at his discretion. Sometimes he may ask the Swordsman to render a service for the benefits provided. The Head has the final say on these matters. A Chapterhouse typically has a small barrack and practice circle. Most have at least one member who will be glad to spar with visiting Guild members.

Chapterhouses are considered “international” and are expected to open their doors to any member, regardless of origin. Some, however, balk at admitting certain members. Occasionally Castillian Chapterhouse Masters will claim that they are fully occupied when a Montaigne Swordsman asks for shelter and vice versa.

The Guild does not intend shelter at a Chapterhouse to constitute any kind of “sanctuary.” The Guild exists because the national and local authorities allow it to. If the local city guard ask a Chapterhouse to turn over Swordsman staying within, the Head will do so. The Guild does not want a spy or criminal to purchase a membership purchased just to use a Chapterhouse as a secure base of operations.

Employment Service

The Guild has evolved somewhat since its creation. Originally, it only provided the names of members to individuals who sought a duelist. However, as the Guild gained more and more members, its Chapterhouses became a convenient place to hire skilled fighters for other reasons besides challenging.

Currently the Guild offers the names of Swordsmen seeking employment for the following occupations: duelist (challenge only, or challenge-and-fight), bodyguard, city guard, and teacher. Also, when a member checks in, the Chapterhouse clerk will try to determine in

more general terms what kind of employment he or she might seek. The Guild can then respond to more general inquiries as well. For instance, if a prospective customer asks, “Do you have a Swordsman who is practiced in fighting aboard a ship?” the clerk will hopefully know which members may have such skills.

If the Guild is unaware of anyone that has such skills, they review their files for “alternate” selections. They will then send a messenger to a (presumably) qualified Guild member and see if they want the job. They will also broker payment if the Swordsman so wishes. The Guild does not guarantee a Swordsman to prospective customers: only that they will try their best. As always, the Swordsman has the final say in accepting a job.



What about the Vodacce?

Some duelists wonder why the Vodacce bother to get their Schools Guild-sanctioned, given their expressed contempt for the Guild. The stems primarily from the behind-the-scene machinations of Veronica Ambrogia. The Guild sanctioned Ambrogia and Lucani Schools at the time of its Guild’s inception in 1644. The Head Teacher of the Bernoulli School applied for and received sanctioning in 1648, with Veronica sponsoring their claim. The Villanova School only trained members of its own family until 1656, when one of Giovanni’s cousins, the head of the School, requested sanctioning. The Guild almost dismissed the request until Veronica Ambrogia stepped forward to endorse it. The application cause heated debate, but it was eventually accepted by a vote of two to one (with Miles Donovan voting against).

Since that time, the Villanova School has opened its doors to a limited number of non-Villanovas, and an even smaller number of non-Vodacce. An invitation to train in a Villanova School is considered a bargaining chip in the Great Game. However, no one in a position to know ever speaks of the matter. Veronica merely smiles enigmatically at anyone foolish enough to question her on the matter. If you ask a Villanova, they might feel generous and let you live.



Swordsman Schools

A Swordsman School is any body of knowledge that a fighter has accumulated. He can keep it to himself, or pass it on to others. Most Théan use the term “Swordsman School” generically. Many “Swordsman Schools” do not teach a fighting style that employs a sword (Bogatyr, Pösen), a Guild-sanctioned weapon (Halfdansson, Höpken), or any weapon at all (Finnegan, Steil, Unabwendbar, Dobrynya). The term “Swordsman School” is one of convenience, nothing more.

A Swordsman School does not need approval from the Guild. Most seek sanctioning if they employ an appropriate dueling weapon, but the rest never bother. Typically it takes years of devoted effort to create a single specific Swordsman School. Guidelines for creating a Swordsman School are provided in Chapter 3. The GM has final say on the amount of time it takes a Hero to create a School, but it should never be less than a year.

Training Schools

A school can be as simple as a cave or a single room in a house, or as extensive as an entire academy. Even within a given nation the structure of schools vary considerably. A school does not have to teach a specific Swordsman School. A teacher can simply chose to teach Knacks such as Fencing, Heavy Weapons, Knife, etc. A school serves to teach any Knack in an organized manner. For the purposes of this book, however, we will only be discussing schools as they relate to the teaching of Swordsman Schools.

Most Schools and their styles are “owned” in some manner. The Drexel family maintains control of the Drexel School, while each family in Castille has its own style of fighting that it administers. Before his unfortunate demise, L'Empereur himself claimed the Valroux style

despite the fact that the Valroux du Martise family created it. It has since become the purveyance of the Musketeers. On the other hand, a few schools are so broad and diverse that no central organization exists (at least none which cares who learns the school). Leegstra, Bogatyr, Kjemper, and Urostifter are a few such examples.

Before a would-be teacher opens a school devoted to a particular style or styles, they may have to obtain permission from whoever is in charge of the School(s) in question. Of course, someone who already belongs to that family or group will not usually have trouble obtaining permission.

The controlling faction typically demands some kind of payment if they grant teaching permission to an outsider (usually a percentage of any tuition fees paid). The controlling group also typically demands the right to inspect the premises from time to time, to make sure that the teacher is performing his duties adequately. And finally, the controlling faction, if Guild-sanctioned, will make sure that the new school follows the same obligations that the faction itself does.

Anyone can potentially start a school. Typically students demand to learn from at least a Master of a particular Swordsman School. On occasion Journeymen open their own schools, but they have trouble demanding the type of fees that Masters do.

The only time the Guild concerns itself with a school is when it teaches one or more Guild-sanctioned Swordsman Schools. In this case, it expects the new school to meet the same responsibilities that the Swordsman School does. Typically it leaves this to the group in charge of the sanctioned Swordsman School, who has the final responsibility. If someone teaches the School without respecting the School's arrangement with the Guild, the group in charge of the School will deal with matters first. The Guild only steps in when necessary.

The Guild understands that some Schools have a less structured connection to the Guild, and that their teachers are not as organized. This is the case with Bogatyr and the Vesten Schools. The Guild will test members who wish to have their rank on file, rather than rely on the schools to report their members' progress. Otherwise the Guild awards iron Guild pins to members from these schools.

Guild-Sanctioned Schools

How to Become Sanctioned

Several things must occur before a Swordsman School can be sanctioned by the Guild.

You must want to be sanctioned. Currently, the Swordsman's Guild cannot force a School to become Guild sanctioned. The Guild also requires sanctioned Schools to inform it of the entirety of its tactics. Some Schools, particularly secret society ones that teach assassination- and stealth-oriented styles, do not wish to "go public" and impart their tricks to outsiders. Desaix, Mortis, Bonita, and Vipera ex Morsi fall into this category.

Pirates and some Vesten Schools make no secret of their fighting styles, and occasionally teach outsiders, but they rarely respect the Guild and could care less about official sanctioning. For that reason, Rogers, Halfdansson, and Siggursdottir do not seek Guild sanctioning.

Other Schools simply don't see the point to sanctioning, and prefer to devote their resources to teaching their students. Typically, these Schools' areas of training have little or no

usefulness in a duel. Shield Man, Gelingen, Steil, and Unabwendbar fall into this category.

Practitioners of Crescent and Cathay Schools occasionally travel within the seven nations. However, the Guild has not found any teachers or anyone willing to impart his or her knowledge. No such practitioner has volunteered to have the Guild formally study his or her style. On occasion duelists seek practitioners out to witness their style and exploit any weaknesses it might have. Unfortunately, incidents of "foreign" styles remain too rare to be worth the effort.

You must teach an honorable weapon.

In its efforts to become a "international" organization, the Guild must be flexible. Different countries have differing standards of "honor" that it must take into account. Because of their desire to allow its members to pit differing weapons against each other, the Guild is fairly liberal in what weapon Schools it sanctions. While some might consider the Pösen boar spear, Drexel zweihandler, and MacDonald claymore odd weapons for dueling, each has a long tradition of such use in its native country. Because of this, the Guild sanctions schools teaching them.

A few exceptions exist, however. It always denies sanctioning to a School that concentrates on a ranged weapon. Goodfellow, Rasmussen, Cappuntina, and Höpken all fail to qualify for Guild sanctioning for this reason. They do tend to accept Schools that teach the throwing of a weapon as one tactic among several. Bogatyr is one such example.

The Guild never sanctions Schools that teach unarmed hand-to-hand tactics (Finnegan, Dobrynya). The Guild considers some non-ranged weapons inappropriate and "dishonorable." Halfdansson (assuming the Vesten ever require official sanction) falls into this category. Zapeda and Lorrington are others. The Larsen School originally fell into this category as well. After a great deal of debate and some pressure from the Vendel League, the Inner Council approved Larsen for sanctioning by a vote of two to one (with Miles Donovan voting against).

Most fighters considered the Torres style of sword-and-cloak fighting dishonorable, much to the dismay of the founding family. The Guild's sanctioning of the Larsen School (along with the growing popularity of the Robertson School) gave the Torres justification to resubmit their request for sanction. After many debates and a round of testing, the Guild reconsidered its earlier decision and sanctioned the Torres School.



You must pass the test.

To receive sanctioning, the School submitting its application must travel to the Guild headquarters in Kirk and submit to testing by the Masters of at least three different Schools. Traditionally, each Guild Master uses a different School to test the applicant (who may delegate a proxy if they are so inclined). Each Guild Master chooses whichever style he wishes for his part of the test. However, he typically uses one of the six founding Schools. If the Guild Masters consider an applicant School unorthodox, they may test the applicant using a fourth or even fifth School. The Guild tested Torres, Larsen, Swanson, and Bogatyr more extensively in this manner.

The object of the tests is not to “win” or “lose,” but rather for to gauge the School effectiveness, determine the applicant’s skill, and decide whether its teaching may weaken the virtues of swordsmanship. The Guild has a vested interest in keeping swordfighting an honored and respected profession. Sanctioning a weak or absurd style may discredit all that they’ve tried to achieve in the last twenty-four years. They know that sanctioning a School increases the number of applicants it receives and enhance its reputation.

On this the Guild never bends. The Larsen application is a good example. Teacher Ralf Larsen was reluctant to apply for Guild membership and the Guild was equally reluctant to sanction his School. However, once the Vendel League brought the matter before them, they tested the School thoroughly and completely. If they had found the Larsen style wanting, they would have denied sanctioning no matter how much pressure the League brought to bear. By the same token, once the question arose, Larsen demonstrated his style with complete thoroughness: to do any less would have been dishonorable.

Of course, there a certain degree of socializing always takes place when an applicant applies for sanctioning. Frantz is often seen in public with an applicant School’s Master, typically in the most expensive and sophisticated salons in Kirk. Miles Donovan is far too honorable to appear outside of the testing arena with an applicant, and Linnae is too busy. Since Frantz has socialized with many applicants who have subsequently failed to secure sanctioning, very few believe his vote can be bought.

Duties as a Guild – Sanctioned School

You must educate your students.

A Guild-Sanctioned School must educate its students on the bylaws of the Swordsman’s Guild, process their memberships, and otherwise make sure they are full Guild members. Even the Vodacce and Castille sanctioned Schools do this, although there are occasional exceptions. This function eliminates a great deal of paperwork and labor for the Guild, which only processes duelists who apply for Guild membership independently.

You must accept any qualified candidate.

A sanctioned School must accept any qualified candidate who applies for membership. The key here is “qualified.” As is often the case with Guild matters, it tends to affect the countries most strongly affiliated with the Guild: Avalon, Eisen, Vendel, and Montaigne. In each of these countries, Schools are fairly large affairs that accept large classes of students and typically train its techniques en masse. Qualifications exist, but they are not particularly strenuous.

In Castille, Vesten, and Ussura, “Schools” tend to be smaller affairs, often no more than a single Master and student. In these cases, the qualifications are more stringent, and may put the student through many tests before accepting him or her for training. The Guild has neither the inclination nor the manpower to dispute with these Masters.

Schools in Vodacce are larger affairs. The intricate rules of the Great Game make it difficult to determine exactly what Vodacce Masters use to measure “qualification,” and they have made it clear (sometimes gently, sometimes not) that they won’t have anyone else gainsay their judgement of would-be students.

Ranking members of the Guild, and anyone they designate, are always considered qualified and cannot be denied training at any Guild-sanctioned School. This assures that the Guild Masters and the Razors receive whatever training they wish. Even the Vodacce schools will provide such training, although the Guild Masters rarely prevail upon them for education. When Razors first went to the Villanova school for training after 1656, a suspiciously high number of them died in “training accidents.”

You must keep a record of your students.

Individual schools within a given School must track their graduates as much as possible, and record when they advance to the next rank in the style. They then send these records to the Guild and assign them pins accordingly. Some teachers can't be bothered, but the Guild has other means of keeping track of the rank of its members.



John Harmond: 1609-present

Harmond was born in Ussura, but his family moved to Avalon when he was nine, changing their name to better fit in. At the age of 6, he lost his right leg in an accident at sea, and used various prosthetics since then. When his younger brother took fencing lessons, John insisted on attending as well. At first everyone scoffed, but when he became the master's best student, they fell silent. He learned to use his wooden leg to tremendous advantage, playing off people's sympathy and low expectations while manipulating the limb to trap an opponent's blade momentarily while he attacked.

Fifteen years ago, Harmond's work brought him to Charouse for a time. One night at the opera, trouble arose with a group of younger men. John was obliged to issue formal challenges via the Guild to all four of them. The next morning he met them on a friend's estate, intending to face them one after the other. John's first bout ended quickly: he punctured his opponent's lung, rendering him unable to continue. The second took only slightly longer before he struck the man's arm fiercely enough to puncture right through and wound the man in the side. After a brief break to catch his breath, he faced his third opponent who rather than attacking, concentrated on running. He retreated 200 yards before trapping himself against a tree. Harmond quickly finished this fight as well.

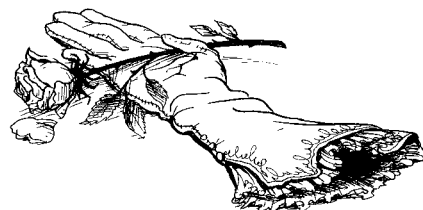
Upon seeing this, the fourth Montaigne became irate and offered Harmond an insult that could only be satisfied by a duel to the death. Shortly thereafter, the matter ended with the Montaigne's lifeblood spilling onto the grass. Harmond left the field and returned to Charouse to go about his day as if nothing had happened.

Those are the only duties. In the interest of maintaining control over dueling in Théah, the Guild avoids imposing any onerous burdens on sanctioned Schools. There are no fees for sanctioning. to do so would imply that their approval can be purchased, and that their considerations never extend beyond profit.

Benefits as a Guild – Sanctioned Schools

The primary benefit of Guild sanctioning is prestige. The Guild maintains strict criteria for sanctioning, adjudicated by three of the top swordsmen in the known world. For those three to consider your School worthy is an honor indeed. A School that has received Guild sanctioning can expect a marked increase in its reputation, and a subsequent increase in the number of students applying for teaching. The opposite also applies. A swordfighting school without Guild sanctioning usually lacks the prestige and popularity of other schools, and also runs the risk of being accused of illegal dueling even when its students conduct sparring matches. The Guild occasionally uses this tactic to harass unsanctioned Schools.

In theory the Guild could revoke their approval of any School they wish, though to date, it has never done so. The Guild has no written contract or pact with the individual Schools. It could withdraw sanctioning for any reason or even no reason at all. Even in the face of continuing challenges from Vodacce and Castille duelists, however, the Guild has never withdrawn a School's sanction. Its relationship with those two countries has improved somewhat in recent years, and no one has arisen to take their place as a gadfly within the system. Many have speculated on exactly what would happen to force the Guild to revoke a School's sanction, but no one really has any idea.



The Guild and the Nations of Théah

Avalon

Historical Dueling

Avalon dueling started in its medieval period, as armored knights fought each other over matters of honor. They battled for their own honor, for the honor of a lady, of a noble, or of a province. They initially used lances and ride at each other, seeking to unmount their opponent. If the opponent survived the fall, combat would then switch to hand-to-hand, using broad-swords, two-handed swords, maces, and flails. These battles rarely ended in death, although a victorious champion could kill his opponent if he so wished.

As the practices of combat changed, so too did Avalon's style of dueling. As weaponry evolved to defeat armor, the use of the lance died out. Abandoning armor, champions fought their duels using lighter weapons such as broadswords and smallswords. As Avalon interacted with other nations, some saw the advantages of the light rapier and switched to those weapons as well.

For the most part, Avalons take dueling very seriously, a carryover from earlier days. As in many nations, they consider it a more "civilized" way of settling disputes. Otherwise nobles would send bands of armed henchmen out to avenge themselves. If nothing else, dueling cut down on the property damage.

In Avalon, dueling helped narrow the gap between classes. Any man could challenge another, relying on the strength of his arm to win justice. While the nobility had the advantage of spare leisure time, the power of Sidhe Glamour often gave the lower classes a decided edge. Often times the desire of a commoner to fight for his honor was enough to give him the very skill and power he needed to do so successfully.

In the Highland Marches, dueling was very fierce and primal. If someone offended a warrior he would attack the miscreant then and there. They would use any weapons, and battles were usually bloody and final. No agreements or contracts existed, and no one dared use poison for fear of discovery. Because of this, fighters saw no need for seconds, even if there was enough time to get them together.

Dueling in Inismore was less bloody than in the Highlands, despite the natives' infamous tempers. They realized that they needed a more peaceful way to settle their grievances, and resorted to fisticuffs rather than weaponry. Offended parties soon used bare-fisted brawling to settle their disputes (*Avalon*, page 43). Their friends would form a circle around them just in case anyone decided to interfere. On occasion full-scale riots broke out when the two parties forming the circle decided one or the other was interfering. Bare-knuckle Inish "duels" went on until one man could no longer stand. Matters settled, the loser was expected to buy a round of drinks for everyone present, and all was forgiven and forgotten. Until the next time, of course.

The Sidhe

As noted in *Avalon* (page 110), the Sidhe never learn Swordsman Schools. They are not interested in tolerating human-style teaching. Although some Sidhe make formidable fighters due to their mastery of the basic skills, most rely on Glamour to supplement their combat prowess, rather than use human-style Schools. Some Sidhe in human form have subsequently learned Swordsman Schools. The Guild does not discriminate against such individuals.

Lawrence Lugh lost much of his Sidhe abilities and acquired human sensibilities when the iron hand was attached to him. A fully accredited member of the Guild, Lawrence's prowess and Sidhe ancestry make him one of the greatest living duelists in Théah. In addition, his position as one of Elaine's Knights allows him to challenge any offender in Avalon, and he often investigates illegal duels when a skilled swordsman is the criminal. Few such fighters dare to fight back against the Queen's champion.

Modern-Day Dueling

Up until the time of the Pact, Avalon considered dueling an honorable means of resolving disputes. Some considered it a "barbaric" practice, but for the most part dueling

remained perfectly acceptable. Still, King Richard IV never bothered regulating it, even after the founding of the Guild. He saw the organization as a way to gain some influence for, and further recognition of, his nation's swordsmen outside of its borders. Queens Margaret and Elaine have respectively re-affirmed the Pact since coming to the throne.

Dueling in Avalon is a relatively sedate affair. Even when an offended party fights without a champion, they rarely let their animosities get in the way. Avalon duelists typically fight to first blood rather than the death. Avalon duels are not an excuse for a party as in Montaigne, though the rising number of noble émigrés have begun to change that. Duelists typically engage in a fair amount of ritual, politely greeting each other and perhaps sharing a drink before or after the duel. Even when occasions become more heated, the duelists try to treat their opponents with civility and respect.

Avalon noblemen pride themselves on their ability to defend themselves, whether Guild members or not. They typically fight for themselves after employing a Swordsman to make the challenge. Despite this, the art of "championing" remains popular. Some of Avalon's most famous duelists will fight for a cause that they believe is just, and forego any fee for their services. The Guild dislikes this practice, but can do little about it, short of taking an active role in collecting and dispersing commission fees.

Highland dueling remains mostly unchanged. The Highlanders have reluctantly accepted Guild law, mostly because the MacDuffs will find anyone who disregards it and beat him to a bloody pulp. They also accept the Guild's authority because the Guild gives the same respect to the MacDonald style as all the "foreign" styles of Castille, Montaigne, and Vodacce. Many Highlanders consider Miles Donovan an "honorary" Highlander (he's one-fourth Highlander on his grandmother's side), and thus worthy of representing them.

The Inish have little use for the Guild, though several Chapterhouses lie on Inish soil. Some buy Guild membership after acquiring some skill with a sword, but most settle grievances the old-fashioned way: with their fists. As long as they're not killing each other with swords, the Guild and Queen Elaine happily allow them to continue beating each other senseless.

Donovan

For centuries, Avalons looked with disdain on the lightweight rapier preferred by many nations. They preferred the older-style smallsword. However, the weapon left them at a disadvantage facing Vodacce, Castille, and Montaigne swordsmen. Some Avalons recognized this, and paid several teachers from those nations to set up small schools in Carleon. Other families sent their sons overseas to learn such techniques.

Ironically, Donovan has its roots in the Montaigne invasion and their desire to master foreign ways. The buckler itself originated in Montaigne ("buckler" derives from the Montaigne term *bocler*, referring to the "boss" at the center of the shield). They took the elements of the Vesten's Kjemper style, substituting the lighter buckler for the heavier Vesten shield and the smallsword for the axe. The occupied Avalons used the small shield to make up for the smallsword's weakness on defense.

It wasn't until the sixteenth century that two men, Jacob Edwards and his student Geoffrey Donovan, compiled various developments of sword-and-buckler style into a single amalgamated School. Edwards acknowledged that





Geoffrey Donovan: 1504-1569

Geoffrey became the first Avalon to teach the formal "Donovan" style of sword-and-buckler. He opposed what he considered dishonorable sword-and-dagger styles found in Montaigne and Vodacce. He also despised the Castillian styles, and any style involving a rapier. After perfecting the Donovan School, he penned a defense of it in "A Treatise on Proper Defense," published in 1549. A rabid Avalon nationalist, Geoffrey challenged foreign swordsmen whenever possible. He also maintained a running argument through correspondence with Castillian fencing master Jorge Argento. Despite Geoffrey's fondness for the smallsword and its "honor," he remained a realist at heart. "The ancient teachings are the best," he wrote. "The quarters, the wards, the blows, and then close combat strikes with the blade, the buckler, and the foot or knee to the groin." Due to encroaching age, Geoffrey retired as a duelist five years after publishing his book and took up teaching until he died in bed in 1569.

Geoffrey was the driving force behind the creation of the School, and insisted that it be named in honor of him. Miles Donovan, a direct descendent of Geoffrey and one of the founding Guild members, currently represents the School on the Inner Council. Every major and many minor cities in Avalon contain a Donovan school, though Miles himself rarely has time to teach (he maintains a single fencing academy in Carleon).

Other nations consider Donovan an antiquated "heavy sword" style, and it has not proven popular outside of Avalon. Although a single school exists in Kirk, Eisen is the only country where Donovan has really caught on. Tannen, Insel, and Stahlfort all contain Donovan schools.

MacDonald

The claymore ("claimh mhor": Highland for "big sword") first came into use in the twelfth century. They were commonly used by the gallogladh: elite bands of mercenaries who supplemented many Inish and Highland warlords. Many gallogladh descended from Vesten who

settled in the islands west of the Highlands, and it was they who first mastered the claymore.

Robert the Dark was the best known wielder of a claymore, using it to fight the Avalon "invaders" in the thirteenth century. His choice of the claymore further confused the issue of his ancestry, which remains unknown to the current day. No one disputes his skill with the weapon, however. The MacDonalds, who rallied to Robert's cause, embraced the claymore as part of their efforts to take the best of all cultures. They soon became the first masters of the weapon.

The MacDonalds considered it a point of honor for the Guild to recognize the legitimacy of the "traditional" Highland weapon. Their representative passed the testing with ease and the style has been sanctioned ever since. There are MacDonald schools throughout the Highlands. With the recent reconciliation between Avalon proper and the Highlands, Queen Elaine requested that the MacDonalds open a school in Carleon. As the style caught on, the MacDonalds have opened several other schools in nearby cities. While old animosities die hard, most Avalons consider the Highland claymore a more "honorable" weapon than a rapier.

Although the style carries the MacDonald name no one single family (including the MacDonalds themselves) is in charge of teaching the claymore. Some clans, such as the MacLeods, wouldn't be caught dead using anything with the name "MacDonald" attached to it. Rather, the claymore has become such a traditional Highland weapon that all of the clans (even the MacIntyres) employ it, and learn the style with which to best utilize it. Each clan has its own "MacDonald" schools and refers to it as their own by name, although little variation exists between the techniques. For instance, when a MacLeod discussed the claymore he refers to the "MacLeod style."

Most foreigners soon learn that anybody talking about a fighting style that starts with "Mac" refers to the claymore. When two claymore fighters from different clans meet, they will either refer to the style as "MacDonald" as a relatively neutral term (unless one of them is a MacLeod), or occasionally get into a brawl over the correct term. Every so often, a duel of honor takes place over the correct naming of the style. The Guild usually doesn't give its permission to such frivolity or else spends so much time processing the request that the participants have time to cool down.

The Eisen, who also like “ancient” weapons, have expressed an interest in the MacDonald style, and the MacDonald clan has sent a single Master to open a school in Insel. No other country cares enough to warrant the MacDonalds (or any other clan) opening a foreign school.

Finnegan

Roary Finnegan has no interest in Guild sanctioning for his School of fighting. The Guild doesn’t consider unarmed combat honorable; they don’t even recognize bare-fisted brawling as “dueling” (i.e., two men trying to hurt each other with weapons). Guild law doesn’t apply to Inish fighting, and the Guild ignores Inismore’s countless street brawls. The Inish couldn’t care less.

Robertson

A relatively new School, Robertson lacks the ancestry of the Donovan style. David Robertson created it in 1634. His great-grandfather, a more liberal sword stylist who felt that Avalon fighting would benefit from foreign influences, disdained the Donovan school and quarreled constantly with Geoffrey Donovan. David, himself a Donovan Master, grew tired of the scorn heaped upon “old-fashioned” Avalon duelists and resolved to try something different. He became an expert with the rapier, then adapted the Torres School for his own purposes. His triumph was a surprise to his Castillian teachers, who thought that Avalons were crude and slow and had only accepted him to prove the weakness of Avalon swordfighters.

David returned to Avalon and put his new techniques to use. He found the Torres’ cloak well suited to urban fighting, though the acrobatic movements became somewhat unwieldy in the streets and alleys of Carleon. Instead of using a heavier weapon and focusing on an opponent’s weapon as the Donovan style taught, David relied on the cloak for parrying and misdirection while practicing a series of short, brutal cuts. He dropped the more athletic maneuvers of the Torres style (such as the side-step) while incorporating the more “solid” footwork of the Donovan School.

David opened the first Robertson school in 1634. It proved a boon to his countrymen seeking an alternative to the Donovan, and the School’s reputation quickly grew. Robertson applied to the Guild for sanctioning during its initial inception, but was rejected because the Guild did not consider the use of the cloak “honorable.” He pursued the issue every two years after that for the next eight years, while simultaneously providing many Avalon

fighters with the skills necessary to fight for their honor without relying on the Donovan School.

Because of the rising popularity of the Robertson style, the Guild soon noticed a drop-off in Avalon commissions. They had finally agreed to test the Robertson School as a prelude to sanctioning when David was killed in a duel of honor in 1652. Ironically, a Donovan duelist killed him. Enrollments dropped off substantially and the Robertson School seemed in danger of disappearing when David’s best student, Jack Webster, took up the mantle. It took him several years to not only re-organize the Robertson School, but learn to teach and supervise as well as fight. Among his first decisions was that the School would retain the Robertson name in honor of its founder, rather than become the “Webster” School.

Five years later, in 1657, Webster went to Kirk for sanctioning. The Guild accepted his application, tested him with four Schools, and unanimously granted his requests. Jack concentrated his efforts on teaching and increasing the popularity of the Robertson style in Avalon. He found little resistance from Donovan adherents, since Miles Donovan himself voted to sanction. Still, a few holdouts refused to yield, and Webster soon developed a gift for politicking to deal with them.

Jack also strengthened ties with the “founders” of the Robertson style: the Torres family. He befriended Jamie Bejarano del Guzman, the Guild’s Torres representative, and often hosted the young man when he traveled to Queen Elaine’s court seeking assistance against the Montaigne. Webster also pressured the Guild to sanction the Torres style. However, the fact that the Torres had originally voted against the Guild in Castille (see “Castille,” page 32) meant that Webster’s efforts remained stymied until 1668, when the Guild finally tested and sanctioned the Torres School.

Robertson is the most “individual” and least regimented of the Avalon sword styles. Schools can be found throughout Avalon, and there are three in Carleon. The style has caught on among the more fashion-conscious Montaigne exiles, who like the idea of incorporating a piece of clothing into their defense. There was a Robertson school in Rancho Torres before the Montaigne invasion, but Jack Webster closed it in protest against the military action. With the Montaigne retreat, he has begun plans to reopen it. Robertson remains popular in Kirk, and a single school can be found there. Ussuran cloaks are too heavy to use with this style, and the Eisen see no need to depend on a cloak when dracheneisen does a much better job.



Andrews

As with Robertson, the Andrews style sprung mainly from a growing dissatisfaction with Donovan's "antiquated" reputation. Several Castillian and Vodacce fighters taught their style in Avalon, and many Avalons still preferred their "lighter" style of fighting. Among their number was Geoffery Andrews, a graduate of the Aldana School. In 1651, shortly after becoming a Master, he suffered a back injury that rendered him too stiff and inflexible to dance to his Song.

Geoffery could have mastered the Donovan style, which focuses on the opponent's weapon and the notion of standing one's ground. Instead, he decided to formulate a new style of fighting, taking the basics of the Aldana School and developing them to accommodate his injury. The result was a style that practiced an economy of motion but relied on injuring one's opponent rather than attacking their weapon. Geoffery finished developing his style two years later, and began teaching it throughout Avalon.

The Swordsman's Guild was impressed. Both Linnae and Miles felt that the Andrews School made an excellent "teaching" style that focused on what they considered the basics of swordfighting. When Andrews sought sanctioning in 1653 they

granted his application without a second thought. The Andrews School remains popular in Avalon: more so than Robertson but less than the traditional Donovan style. Those who have a fondness for rapiers prefer it over traditional Avalon forms.. A heavy rivalry exists between Andrews and Robertson students. The former considers the latter irreverent light-footed fools who rely too heavily on a piece of clothing. The latter consider Andrews practitioners plodders who may be competent in a straight fight, but horribly limited outside of the practice arena.

Castille

Historical Dueling

Most Castillians, and many scholars, believe that formal dueling first evolved in Castille. The Ancient Numans had little interest in formal dueling, preferring a more direct "anything goes" approach which evolved into modern-day Vodacce styles. Senator Caius Castillus was one of the few Numans who believed in a more formalized system of settling grievances. He saw conquered Acraga as the perfect place to put his theories into practice, and the natives accepted his "advance" along with many others. The Castillo family held to these standards even after the fall of the Old Empire.

In traditional Castillian dueling, the offended party challenges the offending party in public. Each brings a certain number of seconds, determined by the degree of honor involved. The seconds draw up the formal terms, provide medical services as necessary (or the Last Rites, depending on the duel), and make sure that the fight occurs in an honorable manner.

Prior to the establishment of the Swordsman's Guild, duels could take place privately or publicly. Typically, the degree of honor at stake determined how public the duel was. The greater the stakes, the more public the duel. Over small matters, nobles rarely felt it necessary to leave their ranchos. On the other hand, a man who suffered a grave insult would seek satisfaction in full public view.

A peasant could challenge a noble, but it rarely happened. Most Dons kept good relations with those who worked their lands, often sharing in the labor. If nothing else, the nobles realized that lower-class Castillians were no less passionate and valued their honor no less. To suppress those inclinations would be disastrous.



Jorge Argento: 1497-1558

Argento mastered every known Castillian style of his time, and several that have since disappeared into history. He wrote a number of treatises on swordfighting, including the seminal *Los Paradojos de Defensa* ("The Paradoxes of Defense"). Argento, a fierce Castillian patriot, hated every other nations' Schools, and wrote long monographs dissecting their flaws and ignoring their virtues. Argento is best known for his rivalry with Geoffrey Donovan, Master of the style that bears his name. The two men never met, but debated back and forth by correspondence. Many of their writings found their way into publication, providing entertainment for both of their nations. Argento never dueled, insisting that it cheapened the purity of his art. He wrote and taught until his death in 1558.

Since Dons took an active hand in the daily duties of their people, the peasants had a bit more time to allocate to leisure activities, including swordfighting. This practice differed markedly from most other countries, where swordfighting remained the domain of the nobility. Peasants and nobles alike developed many fighting innovations over the centuries, and shared them with each other. Many of the most famous teachers and duelists of Castille came from the lower classes.

Modern-Day Dueling

The War of the Cross forced a change in dueling in Castille. When Magnus approached King Salvador Aldana de Sandoval, the War of the Cross had been underway for ten years. Many Castillian swordsmen traveled to Eisen to fight for the Church, while many more traveled to foreign lands to challenge prominent Objectionists to duels. These Castillians, ever prideful, considered the formation of the Objectionist movement a slight to their personal honor.

Further, many Objectionist duelists also traveled to Castille to seek satisfaction. This situation caused a substantial decrease in Castille's younger fighters, who died to defend their honor. King Salvador felt that this decrease, on top of the losses taken by Castillians fighting in the war, could weaken Castille to the point where it could not defend itself from other countries.

Salvador conferred with the heads of the great families. He believed that by creating a more formalized system of dueling and transferring authority to enforce it to the Swordsman's Guild, they could reduce Castille's losses. After much debate, the Aldana, Soldano, and Gallegos families reluctantly agreed to the King's request, promising to abide by the rules of the newly created Guild. The Zepeda also accepted the Guild's authority. Since they had never developed a swordfighting style, they would be no more limited then before. Only the Torres family objected, but they lacked the support to prevent the other families from overruling them.

Castillian pride played a part in the families reluctance to accept the Guild. After all, the Guild never approached any of them. As the greatest duelists in all of Théah, they should naturally have a role, King Salvador or no. The fact that the Guild thought otherwise became something of a sticking point. On the other hand, the Families didn't think Castille should have only one seat among several in the Swordsman's Guild. Who but they could speak for the true spirit of dueling? Many chafed at the system, since it made dueling more difficult and often times forced them to fight a proxy rather than the one who they truly felt deserved their blade. Their stubborn pride led to rather strained relations with the Guild occasionally. Fortunately for Castille, the Guild's commission system reduced the loss of its young fighters.

Since his father's death, King Sandoval continued to adhere to the Pact. It is believed that Cardinal Verdugo made this decision, since the Guild structure limits the ability of many Castillians to fight as they wish. Sandoval's true feelings concerning the Guild are not known.

The Families' strained relationship with the Guild has lead to an odd state of affairs. In Castille itself, Castillian Swordsmen pay lip service to the Guild rules. The offended party still challenges publicly, but the duel occurs in private, with all parties sworn to secrecy. In Castille, foreign duelists must still abide by Guild law, and Castillian Swordsmen fighting them must return the favor. Outside of Castille, Castillian duelists abide by Guild law: their families made a promise, and their sense of honor rarely lets them do otherwise.

The Guild knows that illegal dueling occurs in Castille among Castillians. They are loath to pursue the matter, fearing it would add to tensions with that country. Also, the Guild doesn't have the resources to send Razors after every illegal duel.



A cellar in Barcino: 1668

"I tell you, Javier: now is the time to appeal to that misbegotten Guild for sanctioning!"

Javier looked up from the map of the Montaigne forces. "We are at war for our very souls, Jaime. The invaders have taken our lands, and yet still you concern yourself with foreign opinion of our fighting style."

Jaime sighed. "Many of those foreigners hold us in disdain. Some even believe that our style of fighting cripples our efforts against the Montaigne!"

The Castillian grabbed a rickety chair and spun it around, sitting down to face his cousin across the map. "That disdain prevents me from drawing others to our side. They say we don't take the struggle seriously! Give me leave to travel to Kirk and reapply for the Guild's sanctioning. Jack Webster has volunteered to vouch for us. With his help, I shall not fail! How can they grant sanctioning to a school that uses..." a sniff of disdain, "...lanterns in a duel, and yet deny us? Once I have achieved this, we shall have a way to draw others to our side!"

Javier considered his cousin's words. The boy was young and enthusiastic: an experienced duelist, but in truth ill suited to the long guerilla struggle that Javier led to retake his family's lands. Jamie had been most useful in acquiring funds from Montaigne's enemies to finance their struggle. And it had been some time since Javier had left Castille for other lands. Perhaps the boy's assessment of the situation was correct. And if not, what could it hurt?

He nodded. "Very well. You have my leave: go before the Guild and let them test you as they will." Javier glanced down at the map, calculating the long battle ahead. "We must have something for if... *when* we take back what is ours."

According to the Pact, local authorities are expected to look into violations of the Guild's dueling law. In the case of Castille, those very authorities either turn a blind eye to illegal dueling, or are among the participants themselves!

Recently, the Guild has tried to improve their relationship with Castille. They suggested creating a secondary seat on the Guild (similar to the one Veronica Ambrogia has) with Don Bejarano del Aldana. The Guild considers Andrés the most reasonable head of the primary Schools in Castille, but Andrés has declined, noting his duties to the Crown and other time-consuming activities. The other Families consider the offer an insult: they should have a full seat or no seat at all. Also, if they accepted a full seat, they would be honor-bound to fully abide by Guild law. They enjoy their current internal autonomy, and don't wish to give it up.

The Guild has been more successful incorporating the Torres School. The Torres cared little for Guild approval when they voted against accepting the organization in 1644, but as sanctioning became a mark of prestige, they changed their minds. However, the rejection of their cape-and-sword style of fighting stung them deeply. They reapplied for sanctioning several times in the last 20 years, only to be rejected on each occasion. The sanctioning of the Larsen School and the influence of Jack Webster finally gave them a foothold which they used to acquire Guild sanctioning in 1668.

Uniquely, each fighting style in Castille "belongs" to a noble family, and most families their own unique style. The head of each Family is responsible for the maintenance and administration of their School. Castillian training schools are small, relatively informal affairs. Each teacher answers to the Head of the Family, and must have permission to teach the style.

For administrative purposes, Eduardo Montevada coordinates Guild activities in Castille. He lives in the Guild of San Marcos at Altamira. A fair man and skilled politician, he works hard to make sure that foreign duelists do not offend Castillian Swordsmen and vice versa. He remains a close friend of all three Guild chairmen. Since Don Andrés declined the invitation to take a secondary seat in the Guild, the Inner Council has discussed offering the seat to Eduardo. To date, they have come to no final decision on the matter.

Aldana

The Aldana style is the oldest and most widespread in Castille. It goes back to the Acraga people, who claimed that they incorporated the "spirit of the land" into their musical and dancing styles. In turn they incorporated their music and dance into their swordfighting. Each Song varies

from fighter to fighter. A fighter's Song changes slightly as they grow older and wiser, but each individual fighter's chorus remains the same. Some musician-scholars claim that Aldana swordsmen all share a few common notes, causing a great deal of debate. Few swordsmen are willing to let themselves be studied so that the scholars can make a better determination.

The methods by which Aldana swordsmen acquire their Song vary as much as the Song itself. Some find their theme through meditation, some through exercise, some through dance, and some by singing out loud. Those same musician-scholars often note minor consistencies from practitioner to practitioner of Aldana in different countries. Thus, all Aldana swordsmen born in Valroux have Songs that, while substantially different from each other, share a few notes in common. There is no one single Song and the similarities never become prevelant enough to pin down a single flaw.

Near the end of the sixteenth century, Aldana began to fade away, mostly due to the growing popularity of Valroux in the north. Some Castellians found this foreign import upsetting, and banded together in small groups to preserve the Aldana style. Most of them congregated in Rancho Aldana, considered the traditional "homeland" of the Aldana School. The Aldana family was instrumental in this preservation, since they considered the School their birthright.

Still, many Montaigne-influenced Castellians considered the Aldana style too "old-fashioned," and the Aldanas worked hard to overcome this image. In 1639 Don Millano Rios del Aldana compiled a somewhat updated version of Aldana, making the dance a more controlled, less frenzied style than under the older Acraga influences. Working with several other nobles, Don Millano managed to popularize Aldana once more, using a combination of appeals to patriotism and duels with Castellians who used Valroux. Within two years, Aldana reasserted itself as the supreme style of Castille once more.

Torres

Many believe that the Torres style of sword-and-cape fighting evolved from bullfighting. They are not incorrect, but neither are they entirely accurate. The Torres style rose out of practicality influenced by Montaigne (which Rancho Torres borders to the north). It stemmed from the Torres' admiration for the two-weapon fighting style that later became Valroux, upon which Castellians generally frowned.



Manuel Salvador de Aldana and Antonio Rodriguez de Gallegos: 1643

These two masters had much in common. They were both famed swordsmen, both the chief fencing instructors for their families, both highly ranked Masters in the School whose name they shared, and both continued fencing to a very advanced age.

For years debate raged around San Gustavo about which style was better, and their students constantly pleaded for the two to meet and settle the question once and for all. When they finally consented, Antonio was 63 and Manuel was in his late 80's. The sun rose over the city of San Cristobal, shining on a hill a few miles outside of town to reveal both Masters and a handful of their best students. They agreed to fight until first blood, with a ten-minute break for every fifty in deference to the elder's advanced age. The duel continued for quite some time; neither side was able to score a solid enough blow to draw blood.

Twenty hours later, a blister Antonio developed during the fight finally burst. Blood having been drawn and the honor of both Masters satisfied, they retired to town for a glass of wine.

Torres swordsmen took their basic fighting style (influenced by the Valroux School) and incorporated a cloak into it, replacing the main gauche. At that time there were many Torres bull fighters. However the use of the cloak stems equally from the influence of the Tout Prés "school" of fighting. Indeed, for many years opponents considered the Torres use of a cloak an occasional improvisation, rather than an inherent facet of the Torres style.

Unfortunately, the Torres School fell into disrepute due to a combination of factors. When the other Schools figured out that the cape was indeed a formal part of the technique, they felt deceived and the Torres style suffered a subsequent lose of prestige. Also, as Castellians came to view the *tercio final* bullfighting style with contempt (*Castille*, page 53), their attitude carried over to the Torres style as well, even though *tercio final* originated primarily in Rancho Gallegos. Ultimately, the Torres' disdain for the Guild and its attempts to regulate dueling



Don Millano Rios del Aldana: 1606-1658

A Castillian wedded to traditional values, Don Millano became a Master of his family's School at the age of 16. Unfortunately, at the time it seemed an empty accomplishment: Aldana had gone out of style. Millano swore to reverse the school's decline, and for the next seventeen years he strove to restore it to a place of prominence. At the age of 33, he and several fellow nobles finally achieved their goals. Most of them conceded that Don Millano led the way, but one, Don Julian Rivera del Rios, claimed he had been the one responsible for updating the School, and that Don Millano and the others were opportunistic pretenders. He struck out against Millano's holdings, until the Don finally outlawed the man. No one was able to capture him, and he eventually disappeared from the pages of history.

There are still some gossips who claimed Don Julian told the truth, and that Don Millano and the others had taken the credit that rightfully belonged to him. The true story may never come to light: Don Millano was the last surviving member of the cabal that revived Aldana, and he passed away of natural causes in 1658. To this day, his son Don Francisco denies any such allegations. He has revoked the warrant against Don Julian, and said that if the man comes forth he will be recognized for assisting his father.

With the death of Don Millano, his son Don Francisco Guzman del Aldana is the foremost Master of the School, followed closely by his great-nephew Andrés. Francisco administers all Aldana schools as the head of the family. There are approximately 40 Aldana teachers scattered throughout Rancho Aldana, and an equal number scattered throughout the other four Ranchos. Andrés even maintains underground Aldana schools in Ranchos Torres and Zepeda. Aldana schools can also be found in Carleon, Freiburg, and Kirk. Aldana schools once stood in Charouse and Dionna, but the invasion and the church schism respectively led to their withdrawal. Aldana has never spread as far as Ussura. Interestingly, the occasional Ussuran who learns Aldana seems to have an easier time learning the School than any other non-Castillian.

led to a backlash when it applied for sanctioning in 1644. It took over twenty years for them to finally remove the stigma.

Jamie Bejarano del Guzman currently speaks for the Torres School, while his uncle Javier and others struggle to restore their lands from the Montaigne invasion. Javier Gallegos del Guzman, the Torres Head of Family, recognizes the need to administrate his family's School, and turned that responsibility over to Jamie. A Master of the Torres style, Jamie has always been insulted and embarrassed by the disdain of others toward the Torres School. He came to believe that this disdain hurt his efforts to acquire aid against the Montaigne invaders, and the belief did not fade with the end of the war.

Late in 1668, with his cousin's permission Jamie reapplied for and acquired Guild sanctioning. The few existing Torres Schools now provide Guild training as part of their membership. As noted above, Jamie is often out of the country and the Torres schools in Rancho Torres are just emerging after two years of hiding. That further complicates maintaining lines of communication. The only school outside of Rancho Torres is in Altamira, which Jamie administers. His duties are light, since the Torres teachers still operate independently. Jamie's friend Jack Webster offered him land in Carleon to build a Torres school, but so far Jamie doesn't feel his family has the resources.

As with the other Castillian Schools, Torres students learn the style in small groups, sometimes as small as a single teacher and student. The Montaigne occupation necessitated this: any large gatherings inevitably drew the attention of the invading army, and they had not yet adjusted to the recent peace. Despite some claims to the contrary, the Torres style was quite useful for a guerilla force. One can lose a second weapon, but it is far more difficult to lose a cloak. Torres is not a rapid-attack style, but rather uses tagging and parrying to set up an opponent while focusing on defense. Despite propaganda claims that the Torres style "stymied" the guerillas' efforts, most Montaigne commanders knew that the truth was far different. Those that didn't soon learned the error of their ways.

Gallegos

The Gallegos style is the third oldest in Castille, after Soldano and the "original" Aldana. In the twelfth century Don Joachim Gallegos de Arciniega set to work creating a new School.

He disdained the “music” of Aldana and the wild whirling style of Soldano. Educated in the best Castillian universities and churches, and valuing logic and discipline over “instinct,” he used his knowledge of geometry and medicine to create a new style of fighting.

Joachim took the single-sword style of Aldana and continued to stress presenting as small a profile (and thus a target) as possible to one’s opponent. He then taught that each duelist must stand within a circle defined by the length of their arm and the reach of their sword. A Gallegos duelist was also taught to envision the circle within which their opponent stood. Joachim divided the circle into chords, then carefully examined the points at which the two circles would intersect at any given moment, in all three dimensions. After making this examination, he determined the most effective points at which to attack and move out of the way.

Joachim also taught the duelist to move his body out of the way rather than rely on his sword to deflect an oncoming attack. Aldana fighters used the sword to attack and defend. Joachim would use it only to attack and the body for defense. Again, his study of the exact points of intersection between the two circles aided this process. As the School developed, he taught students how to visualize the intersecting circles of multiple opponents and all of the various ways in which they could intersect.

Joachim also put his medical training to use, emphasizing the most effective strike-points on the human body. His training also let him determine the most effective way to move one’s own vulnerable points out of the way. As a result, artisans inscribe anatomical drawings of the human body within a ceremonial Gallegos circle.

Many fighters have the misconception that the Gallegos style is “motionless.” Rather, a Gallegos swordsman moves clockwise (i.e., to their left) along their personal circle, again presenting the smallest possible target to their opponent. Some Gallegos duelists have a tendency to stand still, but most realize that they must move if they wish to fight against an opponent with a longer reach. One could never move toward an opponent if one fought in such a manner, which might prove fatal.

The Gallegos style further teaches how to measure the “feel” of an opponent’s weapon through the fighter’s own sword. In this manner a skilled Gallegos fighter could deflect an opponent’s weapon, or move his own body out of the way, with minimal effort. True Masters became so

skilled at this that they could simply tap an opponent’s blade once, then shift their upper torso out of the line of attack several seconds later.

Traditionally, Gallegos swordsmen hold duels in a circle (often referred to as the “Castillian Circle” or “Magic Circle”). Many Gallegos duelists inscribe such a circle on the ground near their residence, often in a courtyard where others can watch. However, an inscribed circle is by no means a requirement. An opponent who thinks he can defeat a Gallegos swordsmen just because there are no marks on the ground is sorely mistaken.

Don Samuel Vasquez de Gallegos currently heads the Gallegos School. He is a bit of a curmudgeon, with no fondness for outsiders, but the Gallegos style is one of his Rancho’s greatest exports. Travelers from other Ranchos and foreign nations come there to learn the teachings of the School. Don Samuel has a hidden fondness for this attention. Though loath to let outsiders into his territory, he likes to flaunt the fact that they need him. As such, outsiders must obtain personal approval from him to receive Gallegos



Tübingen Dueling: 1632-Present

Named for a small town in southern Eisen where the style first became popular, Tübingen represents the ultimate test of a man’s courage to many Eisen. Each participant receives a flat, wide (about 3 inches) blade with a straight edge. They stand facing each other, about 3 feet apart. Each duelist wears padding about the shoulders but no other protections. They then take turns swinging at the top of each other’s heads with a straight up-down motion. Each is allowed three strikes. The “winner” or “loser” matters not so much as the degree to which each participant stoically absorbs the blows and the subsequent medical attention. No skill is necessary, and in fact Tübingen was looked upon as a way to prove one’s honor and fortitude without having to have proficiency with the sword or panzerhand.

The Guild declared Tübingen dueling illegal when Reifentahl signed the Pact, but rumors abound that such duels still occur, especilly with Eisen’s current desperate state.

Each participant makes three contested Brawn rolls, one for each pair of strikes. Best two out of three prevail.



Gisla Ilke von Reichmond: 1458-1513

One common form of pre-Guild dueling was the judicial duel, which settled legal disputes through armed combat. The theory held that Theus would see the righteous party through to victory. Usually people unable to fight on their own behalf would find a champion to fight in their place, and share his or her fate should the fight prove lethal. Women in particular were usually forced to find a champion, since they “obviously” didn’t have athletic and martial abilities. However, on certain occasions a woman either could not find, or refused to find, a champion, so several styles of judicial duel developed to give a woman a “fair chance” against a man. One of the most popular involved the man standing in a 4-foot pit, armed with a wooden mace, while the woman stood on the ground above him with a pound of stones tied in her veil. The duel ended when one person could no longer continue due to bludgeoning or suffocation, the man was pulled out of the hole (or climbed out), or the woman pulled in.

Gisela von Reichmond’s story typifies the often-ludicrous extremes in this practice. The Eisen Emperor sent Gisla’s father, a diplomat, to many lands where they did not understand that Eisen women fight as well as their men. Consequently, when she found herself in situations that she felt demanded a duel (and there were number of them), she was forced to fight in what she considered a completely ridiculous manner. After she won her ninth duel untouched in this fashion, she refused to do so anymore. At her next duel, she would not begin until her opponent surrendered the pit and wooden mace to her, allowing her to take his place while he stood on the ground above her.

She won another fourteen duels in this manner before finally returning home, where the stories of her fights spread quickly. To this day, many women either receive her name at birth or take it as their Ehrenname, and many more carry her image on their Heiligen to remind them always that being a woman in no way means being weak in combat.

training. Further, foreigners seeking Gallegos training can only contact Don Samuel by appointment. To do so, they must contact Eduardo Montevada in Altamira first. He will send a messenger on to make arrangements.

There are no family-managed Gallegos schools outside of Rancho Gallegos, but the Gallegos family does not completely control the teaching of their School. The Vaticine Church finds Aldana too “immoral” (although far too popular to ban... yet) and the Soldano School too influenced by the Crescent Empire. The priests admire Gallegos’ scientific nature and intellectual elements, as well as its emphasis on the vulnerable points of the human body. Even the Inquisition appreciates the knowledge, for they can use it to determine the best places to apply pain. Because of its virtues, the Church has started its own Gallegos schools taught by loyal Vaticine Masters. The Church did not seek out Don Samuel’s permission, and he is not happy with the situation. However, he remains loyal to his country and his Church, and there is little he can do in any case.

Soldano

Soldano derives from the whirling fighting style of the Crescents known as “Yael.” Castillians first learned of it during the mass immigration of Crescents into Soldano in the fourth century. Prior to that, the Crescents kept the style to themselves, and the Castillians were more than happy with Aldana. Once relations with the Crescents stabilized, a few Castillians became fascinated with Yael. Among those was Luis Montoya de Soldano, a military officer. He saw in Soldano a speed and agility that would let the fighter sweep away or intimidate all opposition before him. He went to work learning the basics of Yael from the relocated Crescent in Rancho Soldano.

Luis proved a quick study and soon became proficient with the two-sword style. His fellow Castillians scoffed at him, having no fondness for a “barbaric” two-weapon style. Luis soon began to combine it with his own special refinements. Luis was already a Master of Aldana, and he took the best of the two schools and made something greater than the sum of its parts. His style quickly became popular with soldiers in the field, rather than those who quarreled over matters of honor.

Luis died in battle, but the style he created lived on. Eduardo Montevada currently heads the Soldano School. Don Diego Ruiz de Ontiveros, the head of the family, appointed him to the position five years ago. Montevada divides his time

between administering Guild business and dealing with the specific needs of the Soldano schools. There are four Soldano schools in Altamira, with the rest scattered throughout Rancho Soldano. Schools also exist in Rancho Aldana, the mountains of Gallegos, and San Augustin.

Most other nations consider a two-rapier style barbaric, and dislike its Crescent roots. Vodacce would be the logical place for a Soldano school, but they prefer the Crescent-derived Bernoulli School. A few Musketeers from Rogné have learned the style, but because of the recent war and the relative lack of interest, Montevada does not currently plan to open a school in that province.

Eisen

Historical Dueling

Eisen has embraced dueling since time immemorial. It is believed to have started among the Eisen tribes when they first came together. Since they were busy fighting against the Numan invaders from the south, they couldn't devote resources to killing each other. So when tribes had a dispute they sent representatives to fight each other. When Carleman came to power he allowed such practices to continue, permitting his subjects to settle disputes on the personal level rather than the battlefield. More often than not Eisen took it as a source of pride, resolving minor conflicts among themselves one-on-one rather than bringing an army into it. Anyone could raise an army, but it took a true warrior to fight for his honor and defeat his opponent.

Dueling soon became an essential part of a young man's education. All of the academies taught basic swordsmanship as well as the Eisenfaust style. Encouraged by their elders, the young readily took to dueling. With each passing generation the magnitude of the slights prompting duels shrunk considerably. By the seventeenth century many young Eisen even incorporated firearms into their duels. The result was a horrendous loss of life.

Various Imperators tried to enforce dueling laws, but they depended upon the rulers of the various kingdoms to enforce. Many saw nothing wrong with such dueling, and did very little to uphold the Imperator's law. Lacking their rulers' view of the big picture, they didn't see the harm dueling caused their country.

When the War of the Cross started, dueling by pistol escalated sharply. Thanks to the division



Siegsburg, 1633

Two Eisen nobles fought a duel to the death here. One of them, Reinart, belonged to the Winged Kursars. The other, Branimir, was a local lord who favored dracheneisen armor styled on the form of a drachen. Branimir managed to disarm his opponent but Reinart, the larger of the two, was skilled in close fighting and managed to grapple Branimir before he could bring his weapon to bear. The two of them fell to the ground, Reinart dislocating his shoulder in the process. Unable to follow up his advantage, and with Branimir trapped underneath him, the two of them were reduced to pecking at each with the sharpened dracheneisen beaks of their helmets. Reinart lost an eye and Branimir suffered gratuitous injuries before their seconds separated them. Branimir died of his wounds within the week while Reinart was forced to retire due to his injury.

between Vaticine and Objectionist, there were more reasons to duel than ever before. A particularly lethal variant called Au Mouchoir (see "Vendel," page 51) became a brief fad in Montaigne, and soon spread to Eisen as well.

It was this wholesale slaughter of Eisen's young men, and the barons' disregard for the Imperator's laws, that led to Reifentahl signing the Pact with the Guild with 1644. The Guild unofficially agreed to concentrate on dueling law violations in Eisen for the next year. A number of Razors traveled throughout Eisen to arrest anyone who participated in an illegal firearm duel and turn them directly over to the Imperator's Iron Guard. This kept the casualty rate to a minimum, at least as far as dueling was concerned.

Modern-Day Dueling

After the Pact, pistol dueling fell out of favor in Eisen. Young bucks attempting to prove their manhood still held illegal pistol duels, but for the most part Eisen duelists reverted to more traditional weaponry. Eisen duelists prefer Eisenfaust or simple swords for the most part. However, there is a slowly growing trend toward Durchsetzungsborg, a style which is not intended to be lethal but can be used to bypass dracheneisen armor to inflict painful but survivable wounds.

For the most part, Eisen duelists staunchly abide by Guild law. They take pride in the fact that they have a representative, even a half-blooded one, within the Guild. The fact that Reifenstahl invested Linnae Knute with sole authority over Eisenfaust before his death earns the man even more respect.

Young Eisen rarely hire Guild Swordsmen on commission. Part of this is simply because most Eisen cannot afford the fees. In addition, Eisen youth still seem to thrive on the thrill of challenging death. Winning or losing matters less than facing one's mortality. For the same reason, more duels to the death take place in Eisen than in any other country.

Eisenfaust

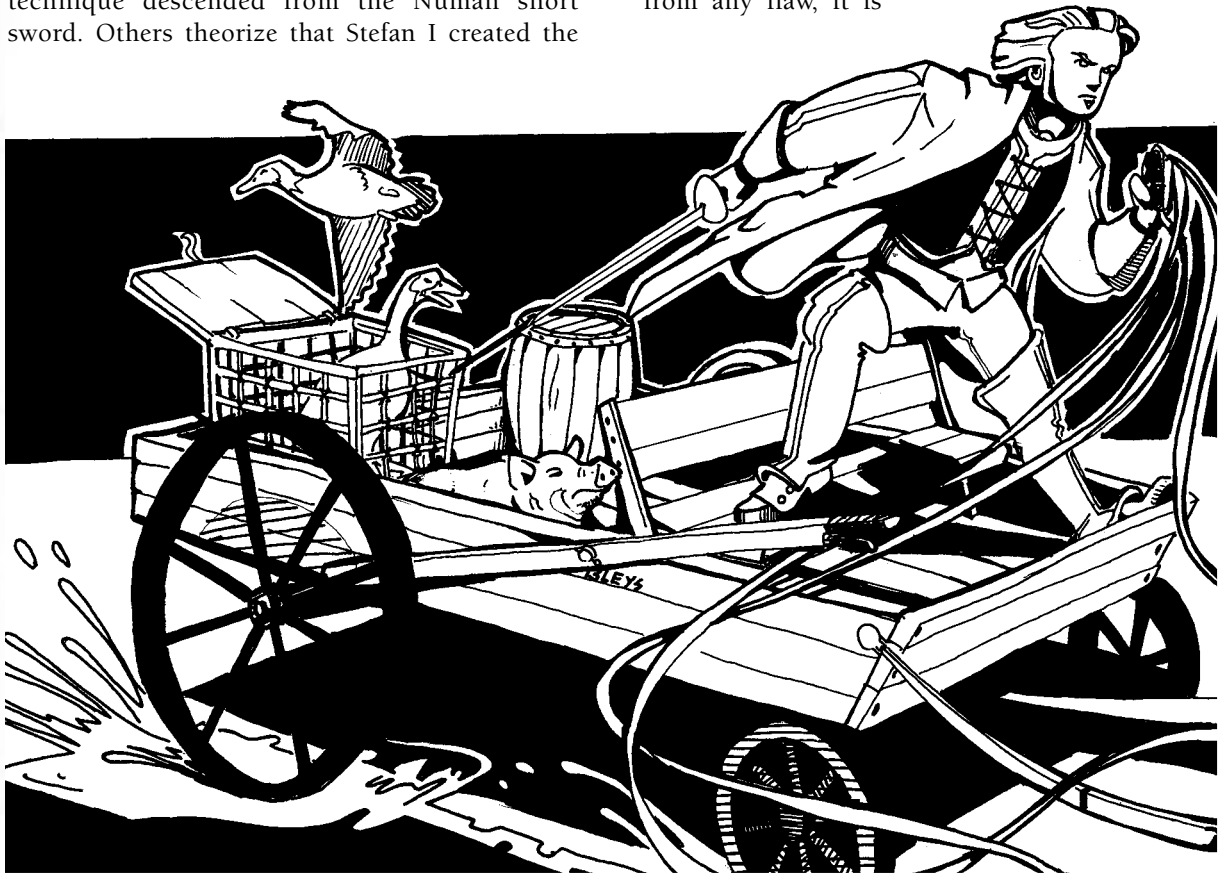
No one knows exactly where the Eisenfaust style originated. Scholars have devised a number of theories to account for the School's origins. Some believe that it began when Carleman rose to power in the seventh century. He wore the armored glove as a symbol of his power, and had his best warriors develop a style to fight with it. Their result later became known as "Eisenfaust." A few claim that Corantine developed it long before Carleman's reign, and the broadsword technique descended from the Numan short sword. Others theorize that Stefan I created the

style using the first glove created out of the newly discovered dracheneisen. A very small minority claim that the Nibelungen "gave" the School to Stefan I shortly after his discovery of dracheneisen. No Nibelungen has ever answered questions put to them concerning this matter.

What no one disputes is that Eisenfaust remains an integral part of Eisen's national character. The Eisen view it with great pride, and consider it an unshakable cultural tradition. It embodies the national spirit: to defend and ensnare an opponent's attack or shatter it entirely, while striking back at the same instant. The School teaches patience and the philosophy of careful study before committing oneself to an attack. Study your opponent's mistakes, use them to your advantage, and the battle is yours.

Those who think Eisenfaust and Eisen philosophy are not suitable to attack are poorly misinformed. Anyone who has faced an Eisen army on a battlefield knows better. Eisen believe that aggression should only occur after careful thought and planning. An Eisenfaust Master considers the strategies and tactics of his opponent as carefully as an Unabwendbar general studies the field of battle.

If Eisenfaust suffers from any flaw, it is



predictability. Many (although not all) Eisen fall into recurring patterns of behavior, responding to the same action of their opponents in the same manner every time. The greatest Eisenfaust Masters suffer no such problem. Still, the fact that so many Eisen fighters use Eisenfaust suggests some truth to the stereotype. The Eisen have not bothered to develop many other styles of hand-to-hand fighting. Drexel is considered a “mercenary” style and Pösen only fit to bring down wild game (although no one is foolish enough to say that in Pösen itself).

The most ironic fact regarding Eisenfaust is that Eisen no longer “owns” it. Traditionally the Emperor himself was the “head” of the Eisenfaust School. However, when Emperor Reifenstahl considered surrendering to Montaigne and Castille in 1666, he foresaw the possibility that his nation would be split asunder. He did not yet know what lands he would lose in the Treaty of Weissberg, or if the victors would even leave him a country to rule. Anticipating the worst, he summoned Linnae Knute, who he met in 1644 when the Guild asked him to sign the Pact. As noted earlier, Reifenstahl wanted to use the Guild to reduce the number of dueling deaths in his country. Now he needed Knute, whom he had personally trained in the Eisenfaust School and was half-Eisen by birth, for another reason.

Reifenstahl appointed Linnae the head of the Eisenfaust style, and asked that he save it, or pass it down to his descendants, until such time as it could be returned to a united Eisen. Linnae agreed and moved the seat of Eisenfaust to his fencing academy in Kirk. Relations between Eisen and Vendel had always been good, so the barons acknowledged the necessity of the move. Although Eisen was not completely taken apart by its enemies, Reifenstahl’s subsequent suicide and the division of the country showed the wisdom in Emperor’s decision.

Because of this arrangement, the primary Eisenfaust school is in Kirk. Knute lets his assistants handle the paperwork and administration, since he has more than enough to occupy his attention elsewhere. None of the Eisenfürsten have expressed an interest in taking on the position. The late Niklaus Trägue never cared, and his successor is still occupied with holding Freiburg together. Hainzl is too divorced from reality to even know the current Eisenfaust situation, much less try and manage it. Fischler feels he is too young for the responsibility, and the other Eisenfürsten would never let him have the



The Coup de Jarnac: 1547

Franciois de Vivonne, Lord of Chataigneraie and a favorite of King Herold II, told the court that Guy de Jarnac slept with his stepmother. Jarnac published a cartel proclaiming Vivonne a liar, forcing Vivonne to challenge Jarnac to a duel. Technically, the duel was over Vivonne’s status as a liar, not whether Jarnac slept with his stepmother.

Herold II granted Vivonne the field, and the two fought beneath a clear blue sky one Corantine afternoon. Vivonne, considered the better fighter, spent his time prior to the duel socializing, while Jarnac prayed to Theus for the strength to win. This gained him the support of the people despite his noble status. It also brought him to the attention of a Vodacce fencing master who taught him a few special moves. The duel began, and the combatants exchanged several fierce thrusts before Jarnac made a feint at his opponent’s head, drawing Vivonne’s shield high. Seeing his opponent’s reaction, Jarnac dropped the tip of his sword and drew it across the back of Vivonne’s knee. Thus injured, Vivonne dropped to the ground, unable to continue. As the victor, Jarnac proved his claim and Vivonne’s accusation was dismissed.

Although Jarnac was hardly the first to use this technique, the fame of the bout became so great that such a cut to the back of the knee is still known as the “coup de Jarnac.”

authority (he’s right). Erich Sieger feels he would be at the beck and call of every teacher and bureaucrat, and Stefan Heilgrund is too enamored of his newfound powers to care.

Only Reinhard von Wische and Fauner Pösen show an interest in taking over Eisenfaust. The former is still cementing control of his königreich, while the latter already has a School to manage and many other responsibilities on her plate. More importantly, they both believe that the other Eisenfürsten would consider any attempt to take on the role as part of a bid for the throne. Since the Emperor has traditionally held the Head position, anyone becoming the Head of the School would represent a threat. Neither plans to reunite the country at the moment or feels a

pressing need to control the Eisenfaust School. So for now, Linnae Knute continues to hold Eisenfaust for Eisen.

Academies throughout Eisen teach Eisenfaust. Students learn the techniques *en masse*, and teachers place a strong emphasis on memorization and repetition: ideal qualities to be taught in large groups. No one in Eisen instructs Eisenfaust in a separate school. However, Eisenfaust Masters traveling outside of their home country usually build similar structures. There are a number of Eisenfaust schools scattered throughout Avalon. Typically, sölden Eisenfaust Masters prefer to sell their services to rich foreigners and teach one-on-one.

Drexel

A mercenary named Kristoff Drexel first developed the *Zweihander* (Eisen for 'two-hander') after his experiences in the Highland Marches. He commanded a band known as the Blood Spirits in the fifteenth century, who traveled to the Marches as part of a contract with High King MacDuff. They fought many battles with the gallgogladh: local mercenaries working for the Inish and unruly Highland clans. Kristoff saw the gallgogladh use the claymore and was very impressed with the weapon. Knowing the value of an intimidating blade, he decided to adapt the style for his own... with a few changes.

Kristoff took the basic two-handed design of the claymore and combined it with an undulating blade that he had seen Crescents wield. He then developed a style of fighting that relied upon Eisen martial discipline, rather than the wild exuberance of the Highland mercenaries. Kristoff put four of his lieutenants to work on the School: Horst-August Bittner, Emil-Arthur Gerbeck, Marion-Johanna Köhler, and Carole Metzger. They each tackled one of four logical categories: defense, attack, speed, and speed-attack, and spent the next year developing the best stance for their selection. Kristoff himself worked with all four styles.

At the end of the year, he and his lieutenants joined together and compared notes. Drexel took what he had created and combined it with the individual study of each lieutenant, then the five of them worked closely for another year integrating their individual styles into a working School of combat. The result was the Drexel style, which Kristoff taught to all of the Blood Spirits over the course of the next year.

Mercenaries who knew of Drexel were surprised at his three-year hiatus. They were even more surprised when he and the Blood Spirits emerged from their seclusion with a new and fearful style of fighting. The Blood Spirits quickly gained enough experience and reputation to warrant twice their normal pay, and with their increased payment came their new nickname *doppelsoldners*: literally "double soldiers" in Eisen.

Drexel and the Blood Spirits soon became the most fearsome mercenaries in all of Eisen. Kristoff remained loyal to his country, and when Arvid I needed his assistance he contracted his services full-time to the Emperor. Thanks in part to the development of the Drexel School, Kristoff survived until the age of 40, where he retired to Stahlfort and disbanded the Blood Spirits. No longer worried about competing mercenaries learning his style, Drexel taught his School to anyone who paid the fee, and mercenaries flocked to him in droves.

Kristoff married shortly after retirement, and passed his knowledge on to his daughter Irmelind. Since then, a Drexel has always stood at the head of the school. The primary Drexel School is in Stahlfort, on the grounds of the Drexel family estate. Yasmine Drexel currently administers the School, keeping track of the training academies in Insel, Freiburg, Seeufer, Tannen, Stärle, Siegsburg, and Prachtig. Smaller schools, not directly supervised by Yasmine, dot the countryside as well. The Drexel School is far too widespread for her to control directly. However, Yasmine makes sure that any mercenary who teaches the style pays her a percentage of their tuition fees. Those who don't soon experience her mastery of the School first-hand. Military academies never teach Drexel; it still has a reputation as a "mercenary" style.

Many foreigners consider Drexel ineffective, and it has fallen into disdain outside of Eisen. After all, it didn't help the Eisen hold its own against foreign invasion. But as more sölden travel abroad to sell their services, their employers and those they fight against are reminded why the zweihander is one of the most feared weapons in Théah. Only the prevailing trend towards lighter blades prevents Drexel from spreading further. Some Avalon warriors show interest, not surprising given their fondness for "old-fashioned" weaponry. However, the Highlanders consider Drexel a "stolen" School and view it with disdain. Most foreign mercenaries who wish to learn Drexel (and there are many) must travel to Eisen.

Pösen

Humanity's use of the spear pre-dates the sword in most nations. The Eisen first publicly used the boar spear as a weapon of warfare in 782, when Pösen cavalry began drilling with it. Gottschalk I knew of this and chose them to act as his cavalry during the assault on Vodacce. His choice was a wise one: most scholars (certainly all Pösen ones) credit the decision as a major cause of his triumph.

No other kingdom in Eisen used the boar spear for warfare. The Pösen were more than content with this, since they felt it gave them a decided edge. They remained frustrated, however by the Nibelungens' repeated refusal to forge a dracheneisen boar spear. The smiths never gave a reason for their refusal, and the more sensitive Pösen warriors wondered if it said something about the honorable nature of the weapon. Most simply shrugged and continued to fight with it anyway.

Pösen warriors eventually began to use the boar spear in duels, which gave rise to the practice of mounted dueling in Eisen. Two (typically armored) fighters would mount and then charge at each other. If one fighter was unseated, the other would dismount and they would then fight hand-to-hand. This echoed the battles of Avalon knights centuries before, a dueling style that had died out in that country. However, it continues to see use in Pösen königreich to this day.

Linnae Knute faced a difficult choice when his organization approached Eisen in 1644. The Pösen were one of the most powerful families in the country, and had the favor of the Emperor. Rather than leave the issue up for negotiation, Linnae immediately proposed that the Pösen School test for sanctioning. Then he and the other Guild leaders modified the restrictions on dueling while mounted, stipulating that it could be allowed only if both participants agreed.

Understandably, few duelists wanted to fight on horseback. Konrad Pösen (Fauner's father) was in power in 1644, and strongly believed in the Pösen fighting style. He didn't really care whether the Guild recognized Pösen School or not, since he didn't think any outsiders would want to learn it. Still, sanctioning kept his fighters happy and his sense of honor intact. For their part, most Pösen warriors didn't think that the School was that good a style for dueling, and usually employed Eisenfaust or Drexel when they fought duels. However, when two Pösen — trained

duelists — fight, they still agree to fight on horseback.

Konrad was correct in his assessment: few foreigners travel to Pösen to learn the style. A small handful see it as a useful style for a duel, but even they tend to balk at the harsh Eisen training tactics. Since Konrad's death, Fauner administers the School, but has little interest in teaching and leaves it to her retired military commanders. Insel houses the primary Pösen school, but there are others scattered throughout the kingdom. The only other Pösen school in Eisen lies in Stahlfort: Erich Sieger uses any resource he can to hold his territory. No other nation has expressed an interest in a Pösen school, and Fauner is too busy with the reconstruction to devote any manpower to pursuing the matter.

Durchsetzungburg

Students at the Durchsetzungburg University in Atemlos (in Hainzl königreich) first created this style in or about 1526. There was no single author of the School. Rather, the students developed it as a way to settling arguments in a less than lethal fashion (since they were Eisen, the thought of doing so through debates or edicts never really crossed their minds). They applied their knowledge of math, science, and physiology to creating the new style. They chose the saber for their preferred weapon, since they had no fondness for the rapier and did not want to mimic the longsword techniques used in Eisenfaust. For inspiration, they looked to the one-sword Aldana and Gallegos Schools of Castille, which taught that the off-hand should remain tucked behind the back and the swordsmen should present as small a profile as possible to their opponent.

They then concentrated on the infliction of precision cuts and slashes. This helped to reduce the number of fatalities. However, it also resulted in a substantial amount of scarring among the participants. A student gaining a scar in such a duel earned great respect from his fellows. When need be, a Durchsetzungburg student could inflict lethal wounds with great precision, and even slash an opponent's hand and force him to drop his weapon.

The School did not grow substantially in over 100 years. There was no formal "head;" teachers passed the knowledge on to their students, and assured continuity of knowledge by ensuring that skilled alumni joined the faculty themselves. In this manner, the teachers at Durchsetzungburg University passed the knowledge of the School down for the next century.

Albert Sydow, a fencer, professor emeritus, and mathematician, currently administers the School, and has since 1654. Sydow is somewhat absent-minded, and didn't even hear of the existence of the Guild until 1656. For its part, the Guild had reservations about sanctioning the Durchsetzungburg School. Miles felt that the deliberate scarring was rather questionable for a "honorable" School. Frantz also balked, since he didn't think any Montaigne would want to risk damage to their visage. But Durchsetzungburg students soon demanded formal recognition, and the Guild finally sent a representative to the university. Sydow himself traveled to Kirk for sanction testing, and despite his advanced age, he easily passed.

Durchsetzungburg is perhaps the smallest Swordsman School in Théah. It never grew beyond a single academy; those who wish to learn the style must enroll at Durchsetzungburg University, limiting the number of Masters. The rest of Eisen still respects the School, mostly because Durchsetzungburg has proven very effective against dracheneisen armor. In recent years a number of foreigners have enrolled at Durchsetzungburg University and mastered the style. They have then gone out, challenged dracheneisen-armored opponents, and killed them. Albert Sydow has not responded to complaints about this tendency; he views Durchsetzungburg as a intellectual exercise, and would not deny any student the chance to learn it. While he does not deliberately teach the style to defeat dracheneisen opponents, neither does he avoid doing so.

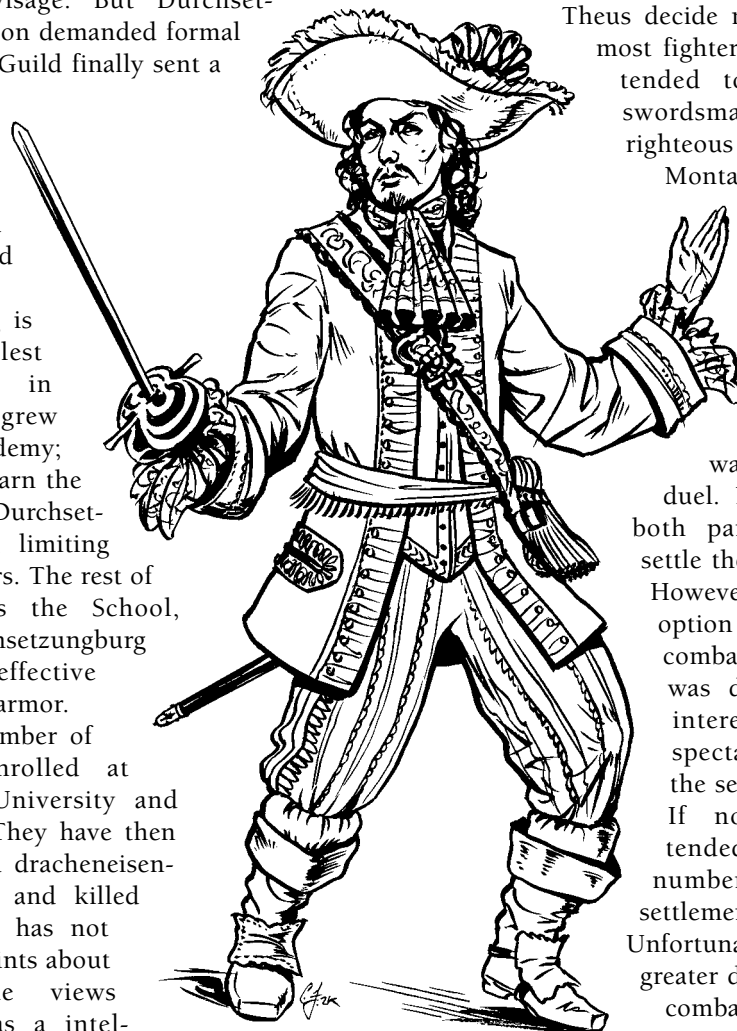
Montaigne

Historical Dueling

As in most nations, dueling in Montaigne sprung from the concept of trial by combat. The historical records remain unclear on the specifics, but most scholars believe that Carleman instituted the practice of letting Theus decide matters. Of course, most fighters knew that Theus tended to favor the best swordsman, not the most righteous cause.

Montaigne used trials by combat to settle all manner of cases from civil to criminal. In many cases, especially the criminal ones, the defendant did not want to engage in a duel. In some instances, both parties preferred to settle the matter peacefully. However, the judge had the option to order trial by combat. Often, his choice was determined by the interests of the spectators rather than the severity of the crime. If nothing else, this tended to increase the number of out-of-court settlements in civil cases. Unfortunately, it also meant a greater demand for trial by combat in criminal cases.

Dueling slowly arose out of this legal code. Some individuals enjoyed the thrill of combat. Rather than go to court and have the judge force them to battle each other over a civil matter, they would skip all that and simply fight each other right away. The offended party would send a cartel to the local ruler asking for a field upon which to duel on a given date. Each party would bring seconds, who would inspect the weapons and make sure both parties adhered to fair play. The noble and many witnesses would come to the field to witness the duel.



Such duels rarely became lethal. The duelists preferred fighting to display their style and flair, rather than kill their opponent. In cases of an inconclusive duel, the challenged party was declared the winner, since the burden of proof lay upon the challenger. However, losing a duel did not cost the loser honor. That only occurred when the challenged party simply refused to fight, or if either party cheated during the duel.

In 1548, King Herold II decided to flaunt his authority over the judicial system and the nobles alike and declare dueling illegal. Some claimed he was also unhappy that dueling had led to the defeat of his champion, the Lord of Chataigneraie (see *The Coup de Jarnac*, page 41). The Montaigne nobles subsequently began to host illegal duels. Duelists fought under an informal set of guidelines: Each side could have multiple participants, with the seconds cheerfully pitching in. The nobles provided public places within their lands where the duelists could fight. His point made, Herold II turned a blind eye to the public but illegal dueling that was going on.

Subsequent kings were not so forgiving. Herold's sons applied stricter and stricter penalties to illegal dueling, but the number of such matches continued to grow. Even the rulers themselves did not fully pursue the law. Often, the duelists would flee the country, and the king would simply burn or hang him or her in effigy. The duelist could then return to Montaigne, his criminal records cleared. Léon XIII du Montaigne is the only king to have a duelist killed for violating the Royal edict. The only recorded application of the death penalty for dueling occurred in 1610, in Charouse. A noble and his cousin had returned to the country after previously been found guilty of illegal dueling, to fight yet another duel. They were found guilty, and Léon XIII had nearly 300 soldiers accompany them to their place of execution. A huge crowd of peasants and nobles alike gathered to cheer the "criminals" on, and the soldiers on duty narrowly averted a riot.

Taking the demonstrations to heart, Léon XIII never again ordered the execution of a duelist. He continued to maintain the edicts, however, and his son Léon XIV followed this trend when he came to power. The latter Léon eventually decided to take measures one step further. When Guild founder and second cousin Magnus Desaix du Montaigne came before him in 1644, the king saw a way to rid himself of a burden that plagued Montaigne's rulers for almost a century. He also



Gogil Anton Isaakovich: 1625-1657

Gogil was a Ussuran noble and compulsive gambler who served at the court of Gaius Nikolai Nikolovich. He was well known in Pavtlow for his unseemly habits, but the Gaius favored him for his boistrous charm and few dared cross him. One who did was Artem Olovsky, one of four brothers who served as stelets to Nikolai. The two disputed over a woman of the court, which led to a formal duel. The battle ended when Artem cut out Gogil's right eye, to which Gogil quipped "If you do that one more time, I'll never look at you again!" Gogil yielded the lady's favor to Artem, and became only slightly less restrained in his court activities from that time on. He never dueled again and, despite his lifestyle, died seven years later of natural causes.

wanted to acknowledge the Valroux style (see "Valroux," below) in a proper fashion. He quickly scanned the Guild's Pact, scribbled down his signature, and departed for a party in his honor.

Since then, dueling in Montaigne has subsided somewhat. Without the prestige of illegality, fighting over honor has declined. However, the spirit of the Montaigne duelist lives on. There are probably more duels in Montaigne than in any other country in Théah. Even the Revolution has not dimmed the luster of dueling, and those in power still pay homage to the notion of Montaigne honor.

Modern-Day Dueling

Dueling in Montaigne bears many similarities to the style of older days. The main difference is how Guild law has changed things. If someone feels that their honor has been attacked, they commission a Swordsman to challenge the offender, accusing them of falsehood. The offender may or may not fight personally, depending on his reputation as a duelist. He may simply hire another Swordsman to accept the challenge and fight on his behalf.

On the day of the duel, both parties bring a large number of seconds and gather in as public a place as possible. Montaigne dueling style currently dictates that only the two duelists themselves fight. On occasion overly enthusiastic

seconds also become involved, but as a rule of thumb the two sides should be equal in number regardless of how many people fight. To do otherwise is considered tasteless at the very least, and most likely disreputable as well.

Guild law makes it difficult for one Swordsman to challenge another. The Guild occasionally allows it, but the matter must be serious. Montaigne nobles in exile often wish to fight over relatively trivial affairs of honor. The Guild rarely waives its restrictions to let them do so. As a result, most illegal dueling involves Montaigne participants: more than any other nationality. Since the Guild must leave investigation of illegal dueling to the local authorities unless requested to intervene, there is little they can do under these circumstances.

Valroux

Valroux is the most popular swordfighting style in all of Montaigne: favored by the late Empereur, and practiced by the Lightning Guards and the Musketeers. Valroux embodies the proud, undefeatable spirit of the Montaigne nobility. Only Eisen has made a swordfighting style (Eisenfaust) as much a part of their national heritage.

Francois Valroux du Martise developed the Valroux style in 1593. A number of two-weapon styles existed before then, many of which had sprung up in a show of defiance against the traditional one-sword Aldana style. The Montaigne, seeking to upstage the Castillians, used two weapons: a rapier and main gauche. A number of such styles flourished Montaigne at the time. The Valroux family quickly mastered them all, and Francois decided to put everything they had learned into a single School that his family could claim as their own.

Francois envisioned his style as a "performance." He designed it so that it worked equally well on offense as defense, and took advantage of an opponent's low wit. Not only did Francois incorporate the feint as a heavy part of his new style, but he also emphasized rapid motion. He studied the Gallegos style for its basic tactics, then ignored its careful, disciplined techniques and instead incorporated a wild fighting style that relied on knowing the weak points of an opponent's psyche rather than his physical body.

Francois finished the style in 1593 and quickly used it to gain fame within Montaigne's dueling circles. It remained illegal but highly popular.

Francois made sure to teach it to his sons and daughters. The Valroux style became Montaigne's best-known secret. Duelists from all over the country traveled to Martise to learn from the hidden academies where the Valroux family taught. Noblemen in Avalon and Kirk asked Francois to send teachers to educate their children. Ironically, Valroux proved quite popular in Castille and for a time threatened to usurp the native Aldana School (see "Aldana" above).

When Léon XIV signed the Pact in 1644, he acknowledged Valroux as well. In truth, the School's existence had become somewhat of an embarrassment. Léon knew of the style, and many of his own family members practiced it. He saw the arrival of the Guild as a way to save face. He could use the legalization of dueling to bring Valroux out into the public spotlight, and make sure that Montaigne received the credit for its contributions to the profession of dueling.

Since that time, Valroux swordsmen have been wine and dined in the highest courts of Montaigne. Before his untimely demise, Léon made sure that every Lightning Guard trained in Valroux. Having previously ignored Valroux's existence, Léon subsequently treated it like a pampered pet. His efforts reverberated to the Revolution and beyond, and Valroux style continues to be popular among the reformed Musketeers and other prominent Montaigne citizens. The noble exiles practice it regularly, leading to increased interest in the school abroad.

Madeleine Sabine Valroux du Martise, the head of the Valroux clan, leaves the administration of the school to her grandson Sébastien. They both live in exile in Kirk, and have little time for bureaucratic niceties. Many schools have no allegiance or contact with the Valroux family at all, especially in wake of the revolution. A Valroux Master decides he wishes to spread the knowledge, buys a building for his school, and simply teaches it.

Valroux training is particularly harsh, as the instructor must constantly insult and berate his pupils simply to teach them the manner in which they must insult their opponents. Montaigne students dislike such abuse, but Valroux's popularity (and the need to impress their peers) ensure that they keep at it. Foreigners don't handle the insults nearly as well. But they know what they are getting into, and most of them tolerate the abuse.

Valroux schools can be found in every province of Montaigne, and many academies teach it as well. Several academies closed their

doors after the Revolution, but other remain open and teach it to anyone — noble or peasant — willing to learn. Valroux dominates the country so thoroughly that all other styles have been quashed. Only Gaulle (see below) survives, mostly because of its relative obscurity.

The Valroux family has opened schools in Avalon, Vendel, and Eisen. A few Valroux schools once existed in Castille, but no one dared try and maintain one after L'Empereur declared his sorcerous affiliations in 1664. Vodacce prefer Ambrogia if they want a two-weapon style, but a few schools have opened in that country as well. Ussura and Vesten are uninterested in Valroux.

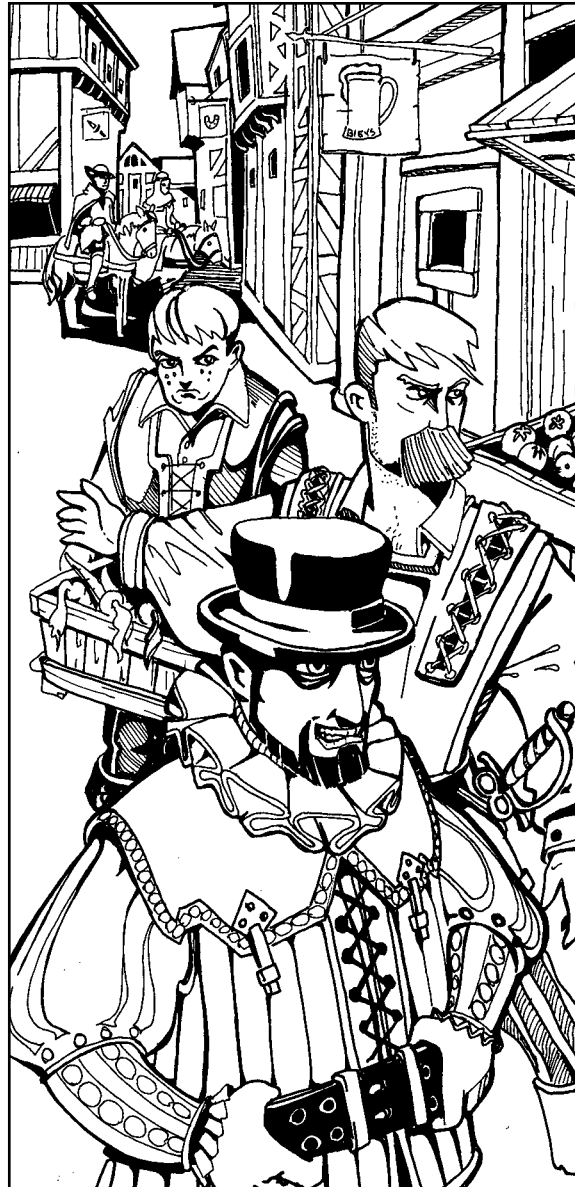
Gaulle

The Gaulle School of rapier and triple dagger began sometime in the early 1630's. The School failed to achieve much prominence until recently because of the reclusive nature of the Gaulle dul Motte family who founded it. The Gaulles draw little attention to themselves, and their isolation ensured that the widespread popularity of the Valroux style never caught on in La Motte province.

Maurice Gaulle dul Motte, son of family patriarch Vincent Gaulle dul Motte pioneered the substitution of the triple dagger for the main gauche. An avid swordsman by the age of 16, Maurice sought a style that "improved" upon the Valroux School, which he considered too fancy for simple Gaulle tastes. Why should one waste time taunting an opponent and making minor cuts to infuriate them? Better to spend one's time simply hitting them. Better yet, why leave them with any weapon at all?

Maurice took a farming implement and adapted it into a triple-bladed dagger that could trap and break an opponent's weapon. He experimented for years with some degree of success. The main limitation was the gauche's fragile nature; triple daggers tended to break much more easily than a normal blade. Maurice finally solved the problem with the assistance of his nephew, Simon, the finest weaponsmith in all of Montaigne. At his Maurice's request he created a triple dagger of the finest steel.

Armed with this newest version of the triple dagger, Maurice soon gained a following for his Gaulle School. However, the family's relative isolation, and the Montaigne nation's obsession with Valroux, meant that the style never spread very far. Valroux swordsman defeated by a Gaulle duelist never admitted it, for fear that their



"perfect" school would suffer. Duelists who fought a Gaulle practitioner outside of Montaigne dismissed the style as a minor aberration, and didn't see enough of it to conclude it was a taught style.

This changed in 1666 when an aging Maurice received word that a man in Avalon murdered his son Jean-Yves. A man of honor, Maurice felt that the killer should be dealt with in an honorable manner, and that the time had come for the world to hear of the Gaulle style. He contacted the Guild, sending his best student Sibert to be tested. Surprised to hear of a style that had been around so long but had drawn so little attention, the Guild thoroughly tested the boy and found Gaulle worthy of sanctioning. Maurice then



Kirk: Nonus 1668

Ralf looked at his daughter affectionately. "You really should get out more, Lydia." He held the lantern out carefully before him, scanning the street. "You are an attractive young woman, and..."

"...you want an heir, Father?" the girl asked suspiciously.

"Perish the thought!" Ralf chuckled. "But it seems such a waste..." A shot rang out from an alleyway just down the street. Immediately all business, the two Larsens raised their lanterns, spotlighting a man carrying a smoking pistol and moving out into the street.

"Halt!" Ralf called out. Without saying a word, the man drew a second pistol, aimed, and fired. A gout of blood burst from Larsen's chest as he flew back then crashed to the cobblestones.

"Father!" Lydia screamed. She paused for a moment as the shooter fled down the street. Her father, or the criminal? Her duty as a City Guard be damned. She dropped to her knees, only to see that the wound was mortal. Ralf Larson would never rise again.

personally traveled to Avalon, challenged his son's killer to an honorable duel, and killed him.

The largest Gaulle school is in Bascone, in La Motte province, where Maurice selects the best students for his personal tutoring. Gaulle schools also exist in Buché and Crieux. The Gaulle style has proven popular with Musketeers, and the Rois et Reines family keeps strong connections to the Gaulles through it. Montaigne members of the Knights of the Rose & Cross, less devoted to the Valroux style, learn Gaulle at the Crieux school to supplement their own mysterious Desaix variant. And finally, both Crieux and Buché are port cities, making the Gaulle popular with sailors and pirates.

Since it has only been sanctioned for two years, no Gaulle schools currently exist outside of Montaigne. The Vendel have supposedly expressed interest in opening a school in Kirk, since they consider the use of a triple dagger innovative yet not as "old-fashioned" as Eisenfaust. Maurice is getting on in years, however, and with the recent unexpected death of his son, he has not found anyone else worthy

enough to take over the School. Due to his age, Maurice does not have the time to administer the spread of the Gaulle style outside of Montaigne at this time.

Ussura

Historical Dueling

The Knias Douma established the limitations of dueling in one of their first meetings in the sixth century. Only boyers (the nobility) could officially challenge someone to a duel. The council did not allow Muzhiks (peasants) to duel. The muzhiks could appeal to their local boyar, or hope that a bogatyr would come to their assistance. They could also defend themselves if challenged, if a boyar was foolish enough to formally challenge them. More often, a boyar would simply kill an offending peasant on the spot rather than give him the chance to defend himself. Initially the third social class of Ussura, the vyeche (merchants and freemen), were also not permitted to duel. But as they become more populous and gained a certain degree of power, the Knias Douma eventually relented and let vyeche challenge others of their own social level to a duel.

Ussuran duels, as duels in other countries, would take place in a public location, often the court of one or the other of the parties to the duel. Duelists believed that the more spectators present to see them win, the better. Vyeche weren't quite so wealthy or extravagant, and usually fought each other in a private place. They typically drew up contracts dictating the terms of satisfaction, the conditions of the duel, etc. and selected seconds to make sure the terms of the contract were honored. Boyars rarely bothered with such things, considering such mercantile tendencies beneath them. No one would dare cheat with so many witnesses.

Battles went to first blood or to the death, depending on the degree of honor at stake. Any weapon could be chosen, though Ussuran society expected duelists to use swords, since knowing how to use that weapon was considered a mark of culture. Muzhiks might wrestle upon the ground, or use an axe, but a boyar wouldn't be caught dead using such crude tactics. The vyeche followed the boyar tradition.

As some boyars lost their lands through one circumstance or another, and bogatyrs (wandering

noble knights) began to travel the land in greater numbers, a new style of fighting evolved. Disdaining the “noble” sword which they felt they had no right to (lacking noble lands to call their own), bogatyr embraced the common weapon of the peasants: the axe. This unofficially allowed the peasants to duel, or at least defend themselves in a duel. A boyar could no longer simply cut down a peasant with impunity when the desire took them. Matushka sometimes guided bogatyr to a boyar who abused his power in such a manner. In some cases, bogatyr arrived at just the right moment to actually stop a boyar from killing a peasant who offended his or her honor. If not, the bogatyr would arrive shortly thereafter and challenge the boyar.

As the situation escalated, bogatyr took the brunt of challenges by boyars. Peasants could also seek out bogatyr who would aid them, if Matushka did not guide one of the traveling knights their way. This crude form of social justice soon made sure that all duels took place within a particular social class, and the higher social classes did not abuse the lesser ones.

Modern-Day Dueling

Modern-day dueling remains relatively unchanged in Ussura. The Guild tried to make inroads into the nation, and thought it had succeeded when they reached an unofficial, unspoken arrangement with Gaius Ilya. He looked the other way as the Guild brought its laws to Ussura and they sanctioned his bogatyr’s School of fighting despite its use of a “dishonorable” weapon. Further, Ussurans could buy Guild membership, just as any other nation. At first, the Guild thought that the Gaius’ unspoken acknowledgement would lead to increased popularity and acceptance of formalized dueling in Ussura. They thought that they were getting the better end of the bargain, since the bogatyr would have no power within the Guild outside of Ussura. They were wrong.

The Guild discovered that whatever arrangements they had with the Gaius, Matushka had the final say on the matter. Most Guild members met with the same resistance that the country greets other foreigners. Swordsmen made some small headway in Ekaternava, since that port city is on the very edge of Matushka’s influence, but the Guild did not penetrate any further into Ussura except on a very limited basis. Those who did often reported that they felt “guided” in some manner by weather and animals, directed to a particularly abusive boyar.

Conveniently, the local peasantry would commission the Swordsman to fight their oppressive ruler. Guild members dislike being pawns of some superior power. The bogatyr are equally unhappy with the informal arrangement. Once they could travel the land freely, using their good right arms in the cause of justice. Now they must cope with a laborious series of “Guild rules” to challenge those who disobey Matushka’s laws. The few who travel outside of Ussura find that the Guild does not protect them there, either.

Only the Gaius benefits from the current situation. The bogatyr have always been a thorn in his side. Most focus on perfecting their fighting ability over Pyeryem, so Ilya could not threaten to strip them of their shapeshifting ability. Nor could he threaten them with the deprivation of their lands, for they had none. By asking the bogatyr to abide by Guild law within Ussura, the Gaius limited their ability to do as they wish. When the Guild suggests that Ilya allow foreign Swordsmen more freedom within Ussura, all he can do is shrug and note that “I have done what I can, but I cannot gainsay Grandmother Matushka. You must speak with her.” Matushka has so far proven unwilling to converse with Swordsmen. Ilya’s seeming acceptance of the Guild has also helped him maintain good relationships with both the Vendel League and Eisen mercenaries (the most common foreign Swordsmen to visit Ussura).

The Guild has little power to come into Ussura and force the Bogatyr Swordsmen to abide by Guild bylaws. The Bogatyr’s own honor currently constrains them, as they respect their ruler’s informal commitment to the Guild. Some also believe that he pays lip service to the Guild in order to reap the benefits of a foreign organization while still denying it any real power over Ussura. Most find the Guild bylaws awkward, but can usually work around them as necessary. Some boyars and criminals buy Guild membership to protect against challenges by bogatyr, though it rarely works. As per Guild law, Swordsmen cannot fight each other without Guild approval, but the bogatyr do not all obey the unofficial Guild edicts. Those buying membership for protection receive little for their money, since the Guild is too far away to investigate Ussuran offenses. There are only two Guild Chapterhouses in Ussura: at Ekaternava and Pavtlov. Only honor holds a bogatyr back from attacking an unjust Swordsman... and not all bogatyr are so honorable. Nor does Guild membership protect the unjust from bogatyr who do not belong to the Guild.



Au Moucher

“Au moucher” is a unique style of dueling that has caught on among Rasmussen duelists attempting to legitimize the use of pistols. It briefly appeared in Montaigne before the Pact, and since moved to Vendel where it currently thrives. Both duelists hold a pistol in their right hand and a shared handkerchief in their left. Both fire simultaneously. The one left standing wins. If both remain standing, their seconds hand them a second pistol, or a third or as many as required.

In game terms, no Firearms or skill rolls are necessary. Both Heroes roll for damage simultaneously.

Bogatyr

Ussurans first used the axe as a military weapon in the thirteenth century. Foot soldiers (typically poorly trained peasantry) employed them because they were the only weapon they were remotely familiar with. When the landless boyars began roaming the land, they selected a new weapon to represent their split from the landed boyars. To affirm that they would fight for all, not just the nobles, they chose the peasant's axe. This was not a universal decision: some bogatyrs still used the sword, or the bow and arrow, or wrestling and barehanded brawling.

In the intervening centuries, formal training in the “Bogatyr” School became a casual affair. Individual bogatyrs developed different styles to match their particular tastes. The current Bogatyr School is an amalgamation of a variety of styles and tactics the Bogatyrs have developed over the years.

The Bogatyr School does not have any formal training procedures. Bogatyrs pass on their knowledge to a successor, or to a young bogatyr who seeks knowledge. Bogatyr teachers are among the harshest School educators in Théah. Bogatyr teachers share many techniques with Dobrynya trainers. A student learning Bogatyr spends much of her time running through the woods in the dead of winter wearing very little clothing, lifting and throwing heavy logs, endlessly chopping wood to strengthen her upper arm strength, etc. Traditionally, Bogatyr teachers train their students to hunt and live off the land. In this manner, they learn that they can never rely

upon anyone but themselves. Bogatyr warriors may aspire to gain or regain a noble holding one day, but they should never expect to.

Most Bogatyr teachers have retired from an active life as a wandering knight and live in isolated areas of Ussura. Students who actively seek a Bogatyr teacher often must go on a “quest” to find such a teacher, which usually requires the will of Matushka. The ranking Master Bogatyr in Ussura technically “heads” the School, but this is a relatively meaningless title given Ussura's size. All Bogatyr teachers are essentially equal. They never get together in a single group, although sometimes smaller numbers will gather to discuss students, complain about how they lack the standards that were common “in their day,” etc. There is much drinking of vodka and cider during these gatherings, which take place in small, out-of-the-way taverns far from any city.

The current “head” of the Bogatyr School is Silan, a mysterious figure to say the least. He has no known relatives or heirs, and no one can claim him as a child of their village. Storytellers speak of the many epic quests and battles he participated in from his youth in 1618 until he disappeared in 1648. However, although no one disputes his prowess, no one living can tell you where he lives today. The strongest rumors place him somewhere in Molhyna, but no one knows for sure. Some wonder if he still exists. However, from time to time individuals claim to have found themselves at Silan's doorstep, guided there by Matushka. They will not speak of his training, but they acknowledge he still lives. Most believe he is far stricter than any other Bogatyr teacher. Those who survive the training are among the greatest bogatyr that Ussura has ever known.

No Bogatyr teacher has ever left Ussura, and very few foreigners receive training. One of those is Linnae Knute. Once the Gaius came to his “arrangement” with the Guild, Linnae spent a year traveling through the wastelands of Ussura seeking out the greatest Bogatyr teacher from which to learn. He never speaks of what he found in the wilds, but when he reappeared, he wielded the axe of a Bogatyr warrior. He refuses to train anyone else in the School, and does not give an explanation for his reticence.

Vendel

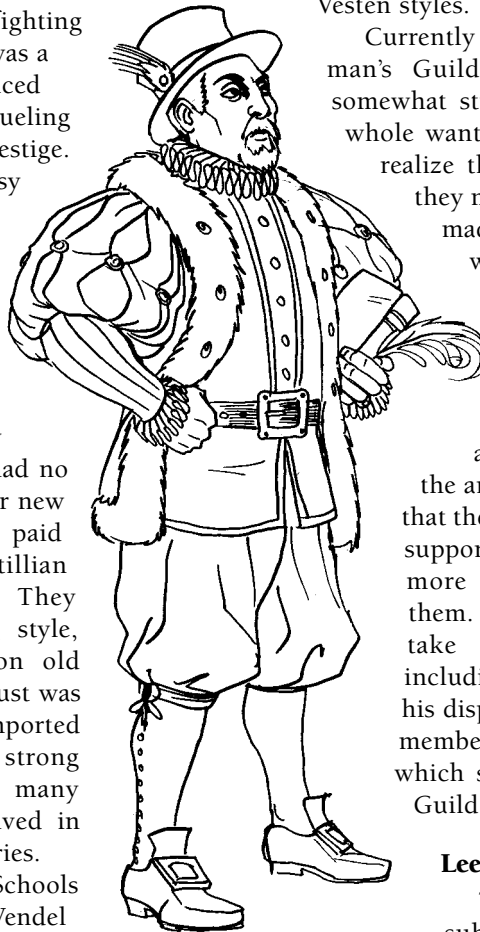
Historical Dueling

Vendel has few “historical” dueling traditions. The nation hasn’t been around that long. In the first few decades of their existence, they hired mercenaries to protect themselves. If a law was broken they took the matter to court rather than seek personal satisfaction. However, Vendel merchants were interested in the idea of dueling. Modern rapier-style fighting did not exist in Vesten, so it was a new concept to them. Influenced by the Montaigne, they saw dueling as a mark of nobility and prestige. However, most were too busy establishing and maintaining their new nation to spend time acquiring personal fighting skills.

This situation persisted until the 1620s, when the Vendel could finally devote time to mastering new fighting skills. The Vodacce had no desire to send teachers to their new rivals, but the Vendel rich paid handsomely to import Castillian and Montaigne swordsmen. They scorned the Avalon fighting style, since it relied too much on old fashioned techniques. Eisenfaust was by far the most popular imported style, due to the Vendel’s strong bonds with Eisen. In fact, many Eisenfaust Masters already lived in Vendel, employed as mercenaries.

Learning other nations’ Schools was only the first step. The Vendel desired to create their own unique styles, beginning with Snedig, and continuing to Larsen. When the swordcane became a popular weapon and fashion accessory, they “imported” the Swanson School from Avalon. However, this fascination with dueling by swords seems to have peaked a few years ago. Many Vendel now turned to pistol dueling as the “future” of personal combat. And as with all things, the Vendel plan to be at the forefront.

Vendel is the strongest supporter of the Swordsman’s Guild and regulated dueling. As far as they are concerned, the system of



“commissioned dueling” is perfect for them. An offended party can hire a Swordsman to fight for them, and the more money you have, the better a Swordsman you can hire. The Vendel provide the Guild with its own seat on the League, which a Vendel (Linnae Knute) has held since the Guild’s inception. The Vendel have proven so eager to enjoy the prestige of sanctioning that they pushed several marginal Schools (Larsen and Swanson) onto the Guild. This has backfired to some degree: the Guild, including Knute, responded by incorporating several additional Vesten styles.

Currently relations between the Swordsman’s Guild and the Vendel League are somewhat strained. The Vendel League as a whole wants control of the Guild, but they realize that if they push matters too far they may lose it entirely. The Guild has made itself indispensable to (and won the favor of) many other nations. Even if the League dropped the Guild from its ranks, it might very well stand on its own. Also, some Vendel believe that such an action might drive the Guild into the arms of Vodacce. For now it seems that the Vendel League must continue to support the Guild, and resist pushing more non-traditional schools upon them. Some of its ranking members take exception to this approach, including Master Val Mokka. To register his displeasure he recent announced his membership in the Rasmussen School, which sent shockwaves throughout the Guild (see Rasmussen below).

Leegstra

The Vendel do not practice a substantially different form of Leegstra than the Vesten. The main difference comes in the attitude. While Vendel are capable of appreciating philosophy, they have little taste for the Vesten style. Their distaste for Vesten philosophy was part of the reason they formed their own country in the first place.

Still, Leegstra is a popular style with Vendel “traditionalists.” They feel that learning the School keeps them in touch with their roots. Some learn Leegstra simply to establish their superiority over the Vesten. And finally, there is no point in denying the style’s effectiveness.

The Vendel are practical if nothing else, and if learning Leegstra gives them a vital edge in combat, then they will learn it. No one in Vendel has trouble finding a Leegstra teacher, though relatively few Masters live among the Vendel. Linnae Knute is the most famous of them. Leegstra schools are scattered throughout all of the Vendel cities and outlying communities.

Larsen

The Larsen style was the creation of Ralf Larsen, a former shield man (by profession, not by School membership) with the Explorer's Society. During his years with the Society he discovered that a lantern shined upon many ruin monsters and other creatures sufficed to blind them or drive them back. He also realized that since he had to carry a lantern anyway to illuminate his way, he might as well use it as a parrying weapon rather than rely on a one-weapon fighting style.

Suffering from numerous old wounds, Ralf retired from the Society at the age of 30 and returned to his home in Kirk. But he soon grew

bored with the sedentary lifestyle and hired out his services as a city guard. He put his style to good use against nocturnal troublemakers, and in 1668 the government of Kirk asked him to train others. Although Larsen would have been perfectly happy training students without Guild sanctioning, the Vendel League thought that a School practiced by defenders of its capital city, should have Guild approval.

Miles Donovan scorned the style. Who would be so obliging as to duel in the dark? What kind of "honorable" or traditional weapon was a lantern? But Frantz Desaix du Montaigne happily cast his vote to the benefit of the Vendel League, leaving the deciding vote to Linnae Knute. He had no desire to displease the League, recognizing their impact on the Guild's continued existence. However, Linnae also respected his comrade Donovan's desire to maintain "pure" standards of the Guild and shared it to a degree. Finally Knute relented and allowed the Larsen School to apply for sanctioning. In Tertius 1668 he insisted that Larsen test against four styles: Valroux, Ambrogia, Gallegos, and Donovan. Larsen still didn't see the need, but felt his honor was at stake. He performed admirably against Masters of all four Schools, and the Guild promptly sanctioned his School.

Regrettably, Ralf Larsen recently met an untimely demise. In Nonus 1668, while dividing his time between teaching and patrolling his beloved city, Ralf was shot and killed by a Rasmussen duelist after stumbling across an illegal pistol match in a back alleyway of Kirk. His daughter Lydia, herself a Master, currently keeps the Larsen Schools going as best she can. Two Larsen schools currently exist: one in Kirk and one in Västeras. Queen Elaine has sent a message to Lydia asking her to start a school in Carleon. To date Lydia has not decided whether to accept or not.

Snedig

The Vendel can never resist improving on the past, and the Snedig style exemplifies that trend. Ten years ago Tor Snedig, a Vendel surgeon and duelist, mastered the Leegstra School. He considered the style an interesting combination of anatomical knowledge and fighting ability, but the heavy weapon was far too awkward for a Vendel. Barbarian Vesten might find such a blade comfortable, but it was hardly a fit weapon for a Vendel.



Tor put his medical training to good use and began to “tinker” with the Leegstra style. His goal: to use many of the same tactics taught by the Leegstra style, but apply them via a rapier. If the rapier couldn’t match the sheer cutting trauma of an axe, then Tor would compensate by picking key spots on the human anatomy and then teaching the swordsman to hit those spots repeatedly.

Tor succeeded after three years of work. In 1661 he became the first Master of the new Snedig School. He passed his teachings on to his twin son and daughter, Alois and Yolande, then tried to go back to work as a full-time surgeon. Vendel fighters quickly embraced the Snedig style with an enthusiasm not seen since the Montaigne took to the Valroux style. Overwhelmed with requests for training and vast financial rewards, Tor had no choice but to quickly build the first Snedig school and begin teaching eager swordsmen.

Snedig takes a great deal of time to master, as it teaches medical skills as part of its curriculum. After the first year, Alois and Yolande became teachers as well. In 1665 they sought sanctioning from the Guild and readily received it. Guild sanctioning further increased the School’s popularity, and the number of Snedig students has grown substantially. Though still a relatively young School, if its current levels of popularity continues it should rival the older Schools within the next decade.

Tor has now retired full time from his medical practice and teaches Snedig style at the main school in Kirk. Yolande manages the school in Västerås, while Alois is currently in Charouse preparing to open a school at the request of the Revolutionary government. Other Snedig graduates manage schools in Eskilstuna, Isafjordhur, and one of the small communities on Eskjö. The price of admission is relatively steep; Tor wishes reduce the demand upon his time. Unfortunately, the expense has simply given the School an additional glamour of prestige among the Vendel elite.

Swanson

The rising popularity of the swordcane as a weapon of the rich led to an increased demand for a School that taught the style. Initially, the Guild proved quite resistant. While technically a legitimate dueling weapon, Miles Donovan felt quite strongly that the swordcane lacked honor. Linnae Knute cast the deciding vote in the matter.

Despite his ties to the Vendel League, Knute dislike the way that the Larsen School had been forced upon the Guild, and this time voted with Donovan.

Clearly other means were necessary to gain Guild sanction. Over the next three months, interested Vendel parties sought high and low and eventually found an impoverished Avalon swordsman, George Mayhew who had developed a fencing style that relied on the weapon’s sheath as a parrying device in lieu of a costly second weapon. The Avalons strongly rejected Mayhew’s School, believing it dishonorable and cheap. The elderly Mayhew lived a pauper’s life in a ramshackle hut near Luthon. When contacted by the Vendel, he jumped at the chance to gain the recognition so long denied to him.

The Vendel brought Mayhew to Kirk and gave him all the resources he needed to develop a School around his style of fighting. Overwhelming the man with their largess, they easily supplied the swordsman with an “associate,” Poul Swanson, who encouraged him to incorporate a few dirty fighting techniques as well as a knack for concealment. The elderly teacher could hardly say no to his patrons, particularly when eager students demanding those exact skills started flocking to his school.

Although Mayhew was far too old to fight, Poul proved a capable student. Already familiar with the swordcane, it took only a few months to master Mayhew’s style. Seeking vindication, Mayhew applied for Guild sanctioning and Poul went before the Guild in Julius 1668. He convinced George that given the poor reputation his style had achieved in Avalon, it would be best to name the new style “Swanson” rather than “Mayhew.” George reluctantly agreed, Poul tested against four established styles, and the School received sanctioning.

Since then, Mayhew’s sponsors have quietly phased him out of the School’s operations, letting Swanson take over. He retired to a life of obscurity, comfortable but never receiving the credit for a lifetime’s work. The Guild has since realized that the style, although designed for sword and sheath, works equally well with swordcane and sheath. Unwilling to withdraw sanctioning, and rationalizing “honorable” uses for the School (even if few ever come to light), the Guild has continued to sanction the practice of Swanson.



Giorgio Tourelle: 1223-1279

Author of one of the oldest known books on swordplay, Giorgio developed many of the tactics that evolved into modern broadsword and longsword techniques. He used a fluid and adaptable style, permitting him to both direct his blade with great accuracy and grapple with an opponent as needed. Born a commoner, Giorgio showed great promise from a young age. He quickly gained a position as a martial instructor with the Vaticine's standing army, a position that raised him to nobility.

Many stories tell of his astounding feats in combat, including the time he asked a visiting master to help him demonstrate a lesson. The master decided to play a trick on Tourelle. Twisting his blade quickly, he gave Giorgio such a blow as to split his waistcoat open. Tourelle became so enraged by this that he struck the master on the chin with his pommel; the man bore the mark of Tourelle's sword for the rest of his days. However, as fierce as Giorgio was with a blade, he was equally as docile without. Within seconds of landing the blow, he sent for a medic and helped his esteemed opponent recover his composure.

In another story, Giorgio overheard a young Eisen captain bragging to a group of women about his swordsmanship. The Eisen claimed he could best any swordsman in Vodacce. When one of the women mentioned Tourelle's name, the captain scoffed and said he had already beaten the man. Giorgio remarked quietly, "Dear me; I should rather like to cross blades with you myself. If we can find a pair of knives, perhaps we can entertain these women." In the resulting duel, Giorgio sliced off the Eisen's buttons one by one while the women called out the number of the next to go. Finally he placed his blade at the young man's neck and said, "Young gentleman, such an encounter could have but one ending. Go, and you may at last tell your friends with truth that you have crossed blades with me. My name is Giorgio Tourelle."

Rasmussen

This School is not and probably never will be Guild-sanctioned. It warrants inclusion here for its increasing popularity. Vendel remains the strongest adherent of pistol dueling in Théah. Considering themselves the most forward-thinking of all nations, the Vendel consider the firearm the weapon of the future, and as always they should be on the forward edge of progress. Guns are relatively expensive, and don't require a great deal of training, which make it an ideal choice for rich merchants who wish to resolve affairs of honor.

The Rasmussen School represents the most public example of the Vendel's interest in firearms. It has struggled to establish the principle of pistol dueling as an honorable means of settling affairs. The practice of pistol dueling exists in Eisen and Montaigne as well, but has too few adherents for the Rasmussen stylists to gain a footing. (The recent Revolution may change things in Montaigne, however.)

Efforts within Vendel itself have been more successful, and many local authorities in Kirk and other Vendel cities tend to look the other way at pistol dueling. They investigate to make sure it was a mutually agreed-upon duel, but often that is as far as they go. The Swordsman's Guild is not happy with this, but as per the Pact they must leave enforcement up to locals unless the duel involves their members.

There is no love lost between Rasmussen practitioners and Swordsmen. The Guild has declared pistol dueling illegal, and a fierce rivalry exists between Rasmussen duelists and everyone else. The situation became worse following Ralf Larsen at the hands of what most people believe to be a Rasmussen duelist (see Larsen, above). Since then, four Rasmussen duelists have been found dead in the alleyways of Kirk, cut down by a sword. It is not clear what Kirk's legal authorities will do if they catch the killer(s): some of the town guards receive money from noblemen with Rasmussen sympathies.

Tensions rose even further when Master Val Mokka formally announced his adherence to Rasmussen in Octavus 1668. Most believe he made the statement to register his displeasure with the Guild's decision to sanction more Vesten Schools (see Vesten below). Supposedly the rest of the Vendel League are very unhappy with his decision, since they planned to let matters settle a bit before seeking a solution. Mokka is too powerful for anyone to oppose directly, but the

Vendel League rarely lets its internal disputes become public, and this matter appears to be no exception.

No one currently leads the Rasmussen School. Erl Rasmussen, its founder, was shot and killed in Sextus 1668 during a duel with another member. The duel wasn't intended to be lethal, but Rasmussen duels tend to end with a fatality. Ironically, this fact keeps the School's membership numbers down, preventing it from becoming as popular as it might otherwise.

Kirk initially boasted four Rasmussen schools plus many more in outlying Vendel towns. Threats from Swordsmen forced them to close, and they have since gone underground. Rumors abound of Rasmussen schools in Eisen and Montaigne, but to date no one has managed to confirm that.

Vestenmannavnjar

Historical Dueling

Those who believe that the Vestenmannavnjar do not understand "true" dueling are sadly mistaken. The most ancient form of dueling began there, as a means of mediating between warring tribes. One Vesten tribe would choose a man from the opposing tribe (typically captured during a raid, though sometimes the man would volunteer if his own tribe knew that someone planned to challenge them). Although a tribe might take many captives, it was considered dishonorable to select any but the most competent to fight.

The first tribe would then select a warrior of its own to fight the representative of the second tribe. Each would be allowed to use the favored weapon of their tribe. An area would be cleared, typically in the town square, and the two men would fight to the death. The first tribe would consider the results an augury of the war's outcome and act accordingly. If their champion died, they would stop the raids and never proceed to war. If the captive champion died, they would proceed with the war.

While not the only augury used by a tribe looking to start a war, this sort of "dueling" was considered the most significant. If the second tribe knew that a war loomed and sent a champion voluntarily, the two tribes would come together to witness the battle amid much drinking and gambling. Even if the first tribe's champion won, the subsequent shared feelings and mutual

understanding often prevented subsequent hostilities. Many non-Vesten considered this form of "championing" bloodthirsty, but the Vestenmannavnjar considered it far more civilized than wasting hundreds of lives in futile conflict.

Eventually certain warriors trained specifically to fight in such duels. As the Vestenmannavnjar tribes came together, these Vesten duelists had less and less to do. So they and the Vesten families found a new use for their services: *hólmgang*, a form of dueling used when families had matters to settle between themselves. Again, rather than waste valuable manpower killing each other, each would select a single duelist to fight for them under the law of *hólmgangulog*.

Each family or village would employ a champion and maintain its own traditional *hólmgangustaór*: an area approximately 12-foot square and bounded by ropes, wooden posts, or rocks. This area would typically be on a small island (a *hólm* in the Vesten tongue) just off the shore of the village and visible to spectators. Inland villages built their *hólmgangustaór* at a crossroads, or otherwise cordoned it off, marking it as a holy spot. Within the square they would place a 9' square cloak or blanket, and draw three lines around its edge — often inscribed with runes and other sacred writings, giving the duel a futher aura of significance.

Each duelist would enter the *hólmgangustaór* with a weapon and a shield. The duelist's assistant (typically a duelist-in-training) would stand just outside the *hólmgangustaór* and hold two spare shields. The duelist for the challenged party would take the first blow, then attacks were exchanged back and forth, one for one. The duel continued until all of a duelist's shields were destroyed and his blood subsequently fell upon the cloak. If a duelist stepped off the cloak with both feet, he was considered to have fled the arena and forfeited the match. Needless to say, no one outside of the *hólmgangustaór* could intervene.

These duels never intentionally went to the death, although a final blow often not only drew blood but killed the target as well. This was an expected risk; to kill an opponent in such a manner was not considered dishonorable. If their champion was defeated, that party paid a fee to the winning party, which discouraged spurious challenges. The matter was considered resolved at this point; Grumfather had spoken through combat and no one dared gainsay him.

A similar means of fighting developed to settle legal disputes during a thing (*Vendel/Vesten*, page 32). While originally the offended parties fought for themselves, it soon became common practice to find a champion willing to defend one's cause. Ironically, this gave the champions great power to settle matters peacefully. If a Vesten couldn't find a champion to back his side and his opponent did, he would usually withdraw his complaint or accept judgment.

These champions typically shared styles of fighting, and lacked any organized "Schools." Sometimes a champion would retire and train other champions in his or her style of fighting. Since they often dealt with experienced champions looking to expand their knowledge, the teachers learned much from their students, which they then incorporated into their own style (and passed on to others). Champion-teachers never worried about sharing knowledge among themselves, so eventually something not dissimilar to modern-day Schools developed. However, the instance of one person "in charge" of a particular School of fighting rarely occurred.

Modern Day Dueling

Vestenmannavnjar dueling has not changed much since those ancient days. The families do not fight among each other as they once did, preferring to unite against the Vendel. However, if one family intends has a quarrel with the other, they follow a procedure not dissimilar from the old ways. Essentially they have combined the two forms of dueling. They select a champion and give word to the opposing family that they should select one as well. The two then meet at the challenged party's hólmgangustaór where the two champion fight. As in the ancient days, if the challenger's champion wins, they go to war or are ruled the victor in the dispute. The participants believe the victory is an augury from Grumfather. If they lose, they pay the challenged party a small fee and end the matter.

The champions of the earlier age evolved into a unique class of jarls who travel the lands offering their services to worthy causes, or to further master their craft. They do not fight for payment, but rather for the honor and glory of combat. There are still no coordinated "Schools" of fighting. Rather, every Master of a School that decided to teach must adhere to his own code of honor. The ranking Master of each School is considered the "head" of the School. However,

they have no real authority or power other than what they choose to implement with their strong right arm.

The one thing that has changed recently is the Vesten's attitude toward the Guild. When the Guild formed in 1644, no High King existed for them to approach. The individual jarls rebuffed any efforts to put a single system of dueling in place; they had no interest in outside forms of dueling.

The Leegstra School became the single exception to this. Hrodgeir, a Vestenmannavnjar Master who saw Guild acceptance as a means of bridging the divide between Vendel and Vesten, contacted the Guild as they traveled through the islands and offered them his School and its teachings in return for its sanctioning. Happy to get any foothold in Vestenmannavnjar, they accepted Hrodgeir's offer. Since then he has taught the Leegstra style to Vesten, Vendel, and foreigner alike.

The Vesten jarls were unhappy with Hrodgeir's actions but they learned not to challenge him when he set his mind upon something. A few young Vesten warriors sought him out to register their displeasure: they were never seen again.

Other Vestenmannavnjar Schools exist, but none of the teachers had any interest in Guild sanctioning. Matters remained that way until 1668, when the Vendel League forced the Larsen School upon the Guild. Displeased by this show of brute political force, Linnae Knute and Miles Donovan secretly contacted Hrodgeir in Octavus 1668, and told him that they wanted to teach the Vendel League a lesson. They asked that he approach the remaining Vesten teachers and ask them to apply for Guild sanctioning.

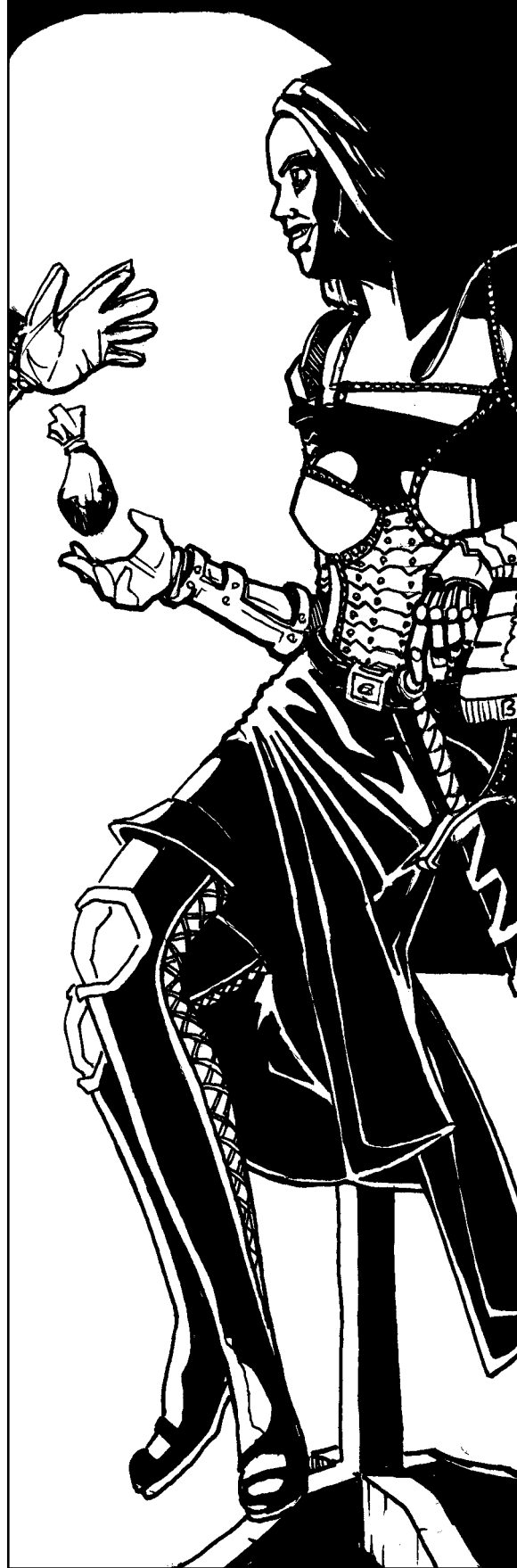
Hrodgeir agreed for his own reasons, and approached the ranking Masters of the three most popular Schools: Siggursdottir, Kjemper and Urostifter. The Siggursdottir Master had no interest in joining the Guild and stalked away. The other two Masters initially had little interest in Guild sanctioning. However, Hrodgeir convinced them that this was the perfect way to tweak the Vendels' collective noses. Amused at the jest, they agreed. Both Schools received Guild sanctioning, much to the displeasure of the Vendel League. To their chagrin, the merchants could hardly complain when the Guild showed the same flexibility toward the Vesten that it showed toward the Vendel.

Dueling in Vesten remains a curious affair. Graduating students of the recently sanctioned Schools now receive full Guild membership. However, Vesten duelists rarely have use for this membership outside of their own country. They have little interest in acting as champions in a duel for foreigners, and usually dismiss any offers from someone brave or foolish enough to approach them. The Guild does not force its members to accept commissions, so this doesn't cause any problems.

Since Vesten duelists fighting in Vestenmannavnjar don't typically collect a fee to champion a cause, they don't technically fight for a "commission." However, their system of dueling by appointed champions is so close to the Guild style that in reality it makes very little difference. They offer their services as a champion to a family or jarl, and fight against another champion. Hólmgangulog and Guild law alike allows this, so few conflicts ever take place. Since the system doesn't involve pay, but rather the champion/duelist fighting for causes he believes in, few non-Vesten duelists become involved. This is fine with the Vesten, who have little fondness for the Swordsman's Guild. The Guild feels that if its non-Vesten Swordsmen participate in the system and thus offer their services without pay, that's their business.

In theory, two Swordsmen fighting a non-commissioned duel must contact the Guild for approval. To date, the Guild has yet to establish a Chapterhouse in a Vesten community and Vesten champions rarely bother to contact the Guild for permission. Thus the situation is similar to that in Castille, where technically "illegal" duels occur frequently. However, the Guild has no way to enforce their edicts, Vesten jarls have little interest in enforcing Guild law.

On occasion a foreign Swordsman seeking new challenges and travelling to Vestenmannavnjar will offer his services even if no one will pay him. A jarl seeking amusement may accept the offer if the matter is not too serious. The resulting fights are among the most diverse in the Guild's experience. Torres duelists battle Urostifter sword-and-shield warriors while Eisenfaust soldiers try to avoid having their glove broken by a Kjemper's longsword. Some jarls prefer to employ non-Guild duelists, so a Guild champion may occasionally face an opponent wielding harpoons or hand axes.



Leegstra

Leegstra may be the first style or discipline of fighting that the Vesten ever knew. The style supposedly dates back to the battle against the Great Wyrms and the birth of the Living Runes. Some claim Kjöt was the first practitioner, some believe it was Styrke, and some Storsæd. No one knows for sure, but it has existed in the spoken histories as long as anyone can remember.



Duchaine: 1667

Hans Hoermann pondered his opponent as the noble slashed his rapier through the air in a series of practice cuts. As the Town Guardian of Dechaine, he faced many dangers, both human and otherwise, and had defeated them all. He never anticipated having to fight a public duel, however.

Hans cursed the incident in the street that brought him to the attention of the Marquis von Bahlow. The nobleman's horse had reared as Hans crossed in front of the beast, and the wretched man took offense at the incident, blaming Hoermann. von Bahlow had commissioned a Guildsman to challenge Hans to the death. That had been merely to satisfy the dueling laws, however. Priding himself on his fencing skills, von Bahlow then stepped in and took on the duel himself.

Hans could have hired a Swordsman to fight in his stead, but that may very well have drawn too much attention. Swordsmen in Montaigne did not come cheap, and someone might have wondered where a simple merchant obtained such funds. The loss of reputation if he declined the duel would cripple his current position. Nor could he fight with knives or stiletos and apply his training in Mortis. The only option left to him was to use the rapier as best he could, and hope for a win.

Hans did not hold out much hope for his chances of victory. He had already contacted the local cell and set his affairs in order. If he died here today, another Black Cross would step in claiming to be his "relative," and Duchaine would remain protected. Whether Hans lived or died, Die Kreuzritter would go on.

Hrodgeir is the ranking Master of Leegstra. He lives in a cave near the mountain of Tårn on Viddenheim. The trip to Hrodgeir's cave is a perilous one, but considered worth the risk. The cave holds twenty students, who usually study for two years before "graduating." However, other Leegstra schools scattered through the Vesten islands also teach the style. Some are found in villages, some in caves, some in deep gorges, and some perched on desolate peaks. A single Leegstra champion-teacher runs each; most have retired, but a few can be called upon to champion a particularly worthy cause.

Since the Vesten teach Leegstra freely many non-Vesten Masters exist. Numerous Leegstra schools are scattered throughout Avalon, the Highlands Marches, Inish, and Eisen. There are even a few in Vendel cities, taught to those seeking a "traditional" Vesten experience. There is even a Leegstra teacher living outside of Ekaternava in Ussura. The Montaigne, Vodacce, and Castille disdain Leegstra's heavy weapon training, but occasionally a duelist from those lands seeks out a Leegstra instructor.

As noted elsewhere, Leegstra is as much a philosophy as a fighting style. Leegstra Masters show their students how to stand as unmovable as the earth itself, and to focus their very heart and soul into every strike. Vesten Leegstra teachers only take those philosophically suited to the style, rather than those seeking a special trick in combat. The standards vary from teacher to teacher, and some have loser standards than others. Hrodgeir is the strictest of all Vesten teachers when making such an assessment. Teachers outside of Vesten have lower standards, but they also have a higher rate of dropouts among their students.

Kjemper

Kjemper (Vesten for "fighter") is one of the earliest Vesten battle styles. It employed a heavy longsword one-handed, and used the shield to supplement their protection. In this manner they could use the sword to do what it was best suited for: attack. A battle between two Kjemper fighters typically became a race to see who can break the other's shield, leaving them with a sword suited only to attacking.

Because of its ancestry and common use, the Kjemper style was the first to be used for hólmgangulog. Combatants favored the shield because it reduced the amount of bloodshed involved. By the same token, it extended the time

that a hólmgang took place, so that the judgement of Grumfather dispensed too quickly. The longer the fight, the more clearly Grumfather's wisdom appears.

Kjemper remains a popular fighting style in battle, and Vesten champions favor it over even the Leegstra style. Ingegerdr Thorgaut ("Ingegerdr the Kjemper") is the current ranking Kjemper Master. She rarely teaches, spending too much time either in battle (she despise the Vendel) or championing duels. She almost never allows foreigners (particularly Vendel) to train in Kjemper. When someone tries she dismisses them as "unqualified." Those rejected can appeal to the Guild, who will usually turn to Hrodgeir. Hrodgeir then convinces Ingegerdr to accept those students anyway. Most find they can't handle her training exercises and drop out shortly thereafter. Ingegerdr merely smirks and says that she knew they couldn't handle her training in the first place, which is why she considered them unqualified. Word has gotten around, and only the most determined fighters now try to train with her. Ingegerdr makes a single exception for Avalon's Donovan fighters, whom she has a grudging respect for (she never understood why they rely on such puny little shields, though). Luckily, other Kjemper Masters willing to impart their skills throughout all of the Vesten islands.

Urostifter

Urostifter (Vesten for "troublemaker") is a two-sword style relying on brute strength. Like the Donovan style, with which it shares some common roots, it focuses on overwhelming an opponent through sheer brawn. Rather than use a shield, the Urostifter warrior uses a second sword, typically held by a thong at the wrist, to parry. If the primary weapon breaks, the Urostifter warrior then switches to his off-hand sword. The Urostifter style encourages the use of the longsword to parry as well as attack, so the loss of the first sword does not leave the fighter defenseless.

The Urostifter style was first used by a champion, Eirik, and caused his opponents no end of grief. Became known as "Eirik the Urostifter," and the nickname stuck. After a slow start, the Urostifter style eventually caught on and was often used in hólmgangulog . It has fewer adherent than Kjemper since it costs less to buy a shield than a second sword. Thorfinn Ásgautr is the current ranking Master of Urostifter, and a renowned dueling champion. He loves elaborate



A Coastal Village in Southwest Montaigne: 1666

"Kheired-Din! Stand and be challenged!"

The well-muscled Crescent turned to face the man who stepped out of an alleyway between two flaming buildings. An Avalon by the look of him: a sword in one hand and a cape flung over his other arm.

The Strange Skies' first mate, Inil, moved to his captain's side. "A duelist by the look of him. Perhaps one of your heathen victims hired him."

The Avalon swordsman strode through the rubble of the town. "I have been commissioned by Lord Harriman to challenge you to a duel to the death, to avenge his son whom you killed. Accept, or be branded a coward forever."

Kheired-Din considered the man for a moment, then shrugged. "Only the Second Prophet may judge my bravery. The opinions of unbelievers are of no concern to me." He nodded to Inil. "Kill him."

As Kheired-Din turned to supervise the destruction of the village, the twang of a crossbow string rang out, followed by the thud of a quarrel sinking into human flesh.

practical joker, and considers his de facto membership in the Vendel League a jest of the first magnitude.

Vodacce

Since Vodacce considers itself beyond the reach of the Guild, its dueling traditions have remained unchanged in the last 24 years. Duels are typically abrupt affairs. If a Vodacce takes offense at something, he rarely sees any reason to wait to prove his virtù. If someone offends him, he will usually give challenge then and there. This apparent impetuosity hides some very practical reasons, however. The less time you give an opponent to find a Fate Witch to twist the strands to their advantage, the better. The parties involved have seconds if possible, or else recruit

bystanders. As with most duels, weapons are checked for poison and the participants examined for concealed weapons. While “anything goes” in a Vodacce duel, some things violate local sensibilities. A man who uses poison or a concealed blade must be weak in virtù if he must rely on other means to achieve victory.

On occasion the participants arrange a formal duel at a later date. This can happen because either parties have other engagements, or because they both wish to employ Fate Witches. If this occurs, each is advised to take whatever precautions needed to arrive at the site. Duelists may not poison an opponent, but “accidents” have a habit of occurring beforehand. In the past duelists awaiting a match have been crushed by falling stones, drowned, found robbed and killed by brigands, and even suffered natural deaths, all in suspiciously high numbers. Seconds often serve as bodyguards and food tasters for their respective parties prior to the beginning of a duel.

Outside of their native land, Vodacce duelists typically pay lip service to the Guild and its dueling laws. Many of the same “accidents” that befall incautious Vodacce duelists tend to occur to foreign duelists as well, despite the fact that such foreigners are rarely as talented or as paranoid at taking precautions. Vodacce rarely bother to employ such wiles against a mere foreigner; non-Vodacce never know whether to be insulted or relived by this attitude. Vodacce Swordsmen prize Guild membership primarily as a means to delay commissioned challenges. Anyone foolish enough to challenge a Vodacce Guildsman gives their opponent a chance to commit all manner of dirty tricks.

Schools in Vodacce are large academy-style affairs. Most teachers find that it safer to teach large groups from various families, rather than instruct one or two students at a time. A Vodacce Prince who feels one of his rivals receives exclusive training will often take... extreme measures to make sure that training does not continue.

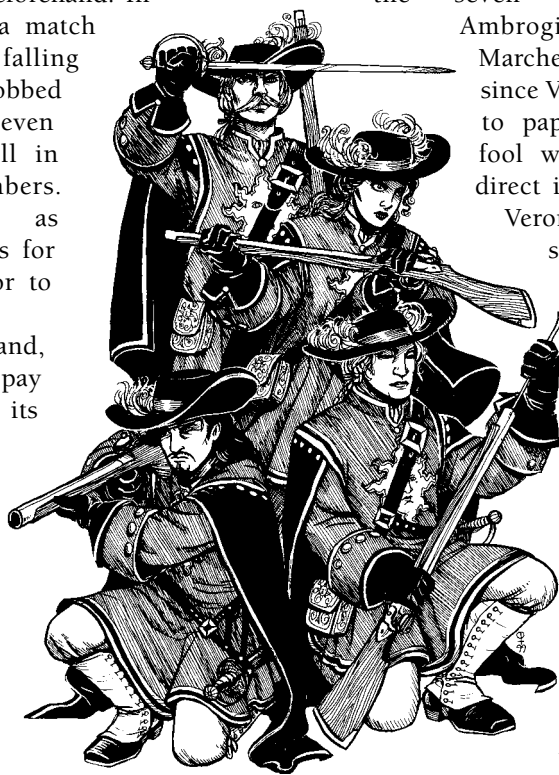
Some families also feel that a School provides their children with an early introduction into the Great Game. A student finds himself in an environment where various families come together in a neutral setting and can't simply kill their rivals straight out. In many ways a School becomes a microcosm of Vodacce itself. Students form alliances and rivalries that continue for decades. Vodacce Schools have more “training accidents” than any other country.

Ambrogia

Ambrogia currently predominates in Vodacce. At least one Ambrogia school exists in each of the seven principalities. Veronica Ambrogia's henchman, Renato Marchello administers the schools, since Veronica prefers social affairs to paperwork. However, only a fool would mistake her lack of direct involvement for disinterest.

Veronica created the Ambrogia style 15 years ago, at the age of 25. As a courtesan she took a particular interest in human physiology, and applied it in the School's development. A fencer herself, she added aspects of dirty fighting that allowed a “mere woman” to compensate for a male opponent's superior strength, as well as left-handed techniques that compensated for her own preferences.

Many of her noble clientele, amused by the notion of a courtesan who could fence, indulged her with practice matches. She defeated many of them, and gave the most skilled a substantial challenge. Veronica's services became so popular that she had clients from several families... meaning that no single family could take the style for itself. Instead, Veronica played them against each other and parleyed the secret of her style into financing for her school. No family wanted to let the others get any kind of an advantage, so each sent students to her. She quickly accumulated a great deal of wealth, and retired as a professional courtesan three years later in 1656. Veronica also used her influence to quash most other Vodacce rapier styles, ensuring her financial future.



Veronica was not content to rest on her laurels, however. She had connections with the du Montaigne family, and spent much time in many of the same social circles as Guild Founder Magnus Desaix du Montaigne. She appealed to him to let Ambrogia apply for sanctioning, which helped increase the School's popularity within Vodacce, and attract foreign students as well.

Now fabulously wealthy, Veronica Ambrogia currently allies herself with no one Prince. A master manipulator, she meets with all of them but owes loyalty to none. Her secondary seat with the Guild is an honorary one, but her influence remains no less potent. Her loyal henchman Renato stands at the head of the Razors, and she often appears with Frantz Desaix du Montaigne at social occasions. Veronica does not seem to put her power in the Guild to any great use. No one knows of any occasion on when she has influenced Frantz to her benefit... at least, any benefit that anyone knows.

Villanova

No one knows where the Villanova School originated, though many scholars and enemies of the Villanova have tried to find out. Some believe that it came the Delaga line, except that the Caligaris have no knowledge of the style. Since they also descend from the Delaga line, it seems unlikely that they did not acquire that knowledge as well. Some suspect that the reason the Caligaris don't know of the Villanova School is because the ancestors of the current Villanovas schemed even then to gain some unique advantage that no other descendent of the Delaga might acquire.

Others believe that the Villanova line waited until they could excise the Caligaras from the Delaga lineage (see *Vodacce*, page 59), and then developed the Villanova School. This corresponds with the fact that no reliable records report the Villanova style until after Prince Aldo lost the right to call himself a Caligara. Older records report a similar style, but it is difficult to tell if that technique is the current Villanova style. Perhaps coincidentally, many of the ancient records that might shed light on the matter have either disappeared, or belong to the Villanovas.

No one can deny the effectiveness with which the Villanovas wield the style today. Giovanni Villanova demonstrates complete mastery of the style, as he does all things Villanova. He carefully keeps the School out of the public eye. In fact, one of the greatest topics of discussion among the Guild is exactly why Nicodemo Villanova applied

for Guild membership in 1658. And more importantly, why Giovanni allowed him to.

Nicodemo is still alive and apparently on good terms with Giovanni. In fact, he still takes care of the day-to-day management of the schools. Some feel that he is merely another of the Prince's puppets. Others believe that Giovanni just toys with Nicodemo and will eventually exact some horrible revenge for the mistake. And some suspect that Giovanni lets Nicodemo live just to confuse those who would think to anticipate his schemes.

Regardless, the Prince only allows a few forgieners to learn the Villanova style. Giovanni never accepts an applicant unless the Guild requests it. Often times, when they do ask he declines, saying they lack the proper qualifications. Of those who Giovanni admits, as many as half die in training accidents. According to reports, this fatality rate is not totally unusual. Giovanni takes no responsibility for those who die in his schools. When asked, he merely smiles, strokes his beard and notes, "My style is the deadliest in all Théah; not just to the victim, but to those who would wield it as well."

Giovanni has always denied teaching his family's School to the Razors; he makes no secret of his dislike of the Guild. The one exception is Linnae Knute, whom the Prince seems to like. What terms the two of them came to which resulted in Linnae's access to the Villanova School, none can say.

The Villanovas teach their style to a larger number of non-Villanova Vodacce. No one knows what criteria Giovanni uses to measure candidates, but normally only those of noble blood receive Villanova training. Most students believe that their elders have negotiated some arrangement with the Villanovas to train them in return for some other favor in the Great Game.

Presumably, any Villanova who wishes to receive Villanova sword training gets it. Almost all living Villanova swordsmen use the School. Rumors circulate that students who do not express their faith in the Villanova School disappear, never to be heard from again. As with so many stories concerning the Villanovas (and Giovanni in particular) it becomes hard to separate fact from fiction.

No outsider knows the exact location of the only Villanova school. Students are assembled in groups of 40-50, taken to Porta Serafina on the mainland, and blindfolded. They then take a three-day trip through the swamps to their final

destination. The school stands on top of old Numan ruins. Training takes approximately six months.

The rumors that the Villanovas require an oath of fealty are false, arising from the fact that the graduates are sworn to secrecy, upon pain of death. Vodacce honor usually prevents the students from breaking their vow, but it has happened upon occasion. Retribution comes with all the finality one expects from the Villanovas. There is no truth to the rumor that students who fail to master the style become fencing dummies for the next class. Training accidents occur among graduates and non-graduates alike in equal numbers.

Bernoulli

Thanks to the sanctioning of the Church, the Bernoulli have been able to import knowledge as well as goods from the Crescent Empire — including the Crescent style of saber fighting. The Crescents used it to fight from horseback, but the Bernoullis never saw the need to develop a horseback style: the islands and marshes of Vodacce prevent useful application. Instead they adapted the style so that the empty hand used to hold the reins became a free hand to strike at one's opponent. They still used the Crescent saber, adapting it slightly and lightening the weapon.

Because of their arrangement with the Church, the Bernoulli family holds exclusive rights to their School of fighting. No other Prince would dare adopt a Crescent style, for fear of upsetting the Vaticine. The Bernoulli School is not a secret one, like Villanova, but most Vodacce have little interest in a Crescent style. The Vodacce in general also dislike Bernoulli because it is a single-weapon style and bears some resemblance to the Aldana.

Pietro Vercelis, son of Angelo Vercelis, currently heads the Bernoulli School. Angelo is Prince Bernoulli's current financial advisor, and reputed to inherit the Princedom if Gespucci dies. Pietro has headed the School for the last fifteen years. Though a Master of the style Pietro has little interest in the Crescents. Prince Gespucci put him in the position to either reward him or ensure his father's loyalty. Pietro's administrative duties are relatively small. The School has only three academies in Vodacce: on Bernoulli Island itself, in Porto Spatia, and in Jesalute. No schools exist outside of Bernoulli lands.

Pietro himself teaches at the school on Bernoulli Island. The rest of the time he spends negotiating matters with the Guild. Prince Gespucci has nothing against the Guild, unlike most Vodacce. He would be willing to negotiate with them to bring dueling law to Bernoulli, but he doesn't wish to appear weak. He uses Pietro as a go-between to keep them at arms length. The Guild has a Chapterhouse on Bernoulli Island, although it acts mostly as a haven for foreign duelists. Still, Gespucci has given his word he will protect it, and leaves that to Pietro.

Lucani

Kosar mercenaries first brought this unique broadsword style into Vodacce about 100 years ago. They had left their people in Molhyna and traveled westward seeking employment. All right-thinking Vodacce viewed the Kosar's basket-hilted broadsword with distaste. However, they couldn't deny the Kosars' effectiveness with it. The Kosars worked for several northern Vodacce princes on the mainland. Those same Princes had their men trained in the use of the weapon, and it soon came into favor as a military sword rather than as a dueling weapon. Despite that, some Vodacce soldiers defended their honor using whatever was at hand regardless of its social acceptability. Thus the broadsword found its way into numerous duels, particularly on mainland Vodacce.

When the Lucanis came to power in the 1560s, Mikel Lucani sought various means to establish his family as a "true" noble house despite their humble lineage. He announced that his family would adopt the broadsword style as its own. This didn't improve the other Vodacce nobility's impression of the Lucanis or the "mainland" broadsword, but it did allow the family to supplement their relatively meager income by selling Lucani training to those who wanted it for a small fee. Armed guards often sought training in the School.

The Lucanis applied for Guild membership when the Guild first formed, and easily received sanctioning. Since then, the Guild has found the Lucanis comparatively easy to work with considering the general attitude of Vodacce toward the Guild. Lucani students actually obey Guild dueling laws! The recent death of Prince Lucani has caused a setback, and the family lacks the wherewithal to try and force a Villanova or Mondavi to obey Guild law in their own lands. Still, the Guild is more than happy to provide Guild support to the Lucanis in return for their token acceptance.

Menandro Lucani, a stern taskmaster who wields a broadsword with a steady hand and lightning reflexes, currently leads the Lucani School. Menandro chafes at the treatment the other Princes give to his family. However, for now he realizes that it is better to lie low than challenge them. He accepted Mondavi rule over his family's land in exchange for being allowed to continue teaching the style. Lucani schools can be found in Guarre de Puertofino, Sant'Andrea, and Gorivari. No other Vodacce Prince wanted to accept the style, so the Lucanis have no schools elsewhere.

Avalon and Eisen have their own non-rapier styles and see no reason to take on another. Most Montaigne consider Lucani as beneath them, although a few Musketeers eschew the traditional Valroux style in favor of a weapon better suited to mounted work. Most Ussurans despise the Kosars and have little interest in learning their style, particularly when filtered through Vodacce sensibilities. The Vendel share the Montaigne's disdain for the heavier swords, while the Vesten have enough heavy weapon styles and don't see the need for another. Only in Castille has the Lucani School found any popularity. Gustavo horsemen have shown an interest in learning it and the Lucani are more than willing to teach anyone in return for money. Unfortunately, there is not yet enough interest to warrant a Lucani school in Castille.

Pirate Nations

While there many duelists work as pirates, and not a few pirates who are Guild members, the Guild has no power on the high seas. The captain's word and the ship's charter are the final laws aboard a ship. If a duel must be held, participants use the traditional style of dueling (*The Pirate Nations*, page 102). Only crewmen of approximately equal rank may duel among themselves.

The more villainous captains simply kill anyone so foolish as to try and challenge him or her straight out, or disrupt the ships' functions by attacking someone else. Even more honorable captains rarely tolerate insubordination, although they are more likely to let crewmen settle a grudge between themselves in whatever manner they choose.

The Rogers school of "swordfighting" has caused some debate among the Guild. While its practitioners wield swords, the school's tricks lack a modicum of honor. Despite that, from time to time the Guild has approached Rogers teachers to see if they wish to join the Guild. No Rogers teacher has ever accepted their invitation.



The Guild and the Secret Societies

Most secret societies in Théah have a severe disadvantage due to... well... their secrecy. Hidden causes can't attract money and resource the way public ones can, and the more people who know their agenda, the greater the risk of discovery. This need for secrecy extends to their fighting styles. Even if they were aware of them, the Guild wouldn't consider most secret society School suitable for dueling. As such, most secret society members swear to die rather than let their Schools fall into the wrong hands. Most styles are designed to eliminate someone quickly and permanently, so revelation of a society style rarely occurs.

The two most public "secret societies" are the exception to the rule. Most people know about the Rose and Cross's Desaix School, although the Guild does not sanction it because the Rose and Cross only teaches it to members. Teachers of the Explorer's Shield Man school never bothered to seek Guild sanctioning since they don't use the school offensively except when protecting archaeologists. The Shield Man school is primarily defensive, and rarely used for duels; the Guild probably wouldn't sanction it even if asked.



Chapter Two

Fleche



"When you step into a duel, you step into death. That is the first lesson."

Master Vito Borromeo glanced at the circle of young men around him, and gave a weary, exaggerated sigh of despair. "But you do not yet understand that, do you? And that is why your elders send you to me." He stepped over to the table holding an assortment of rapiers and main-gauches. He surveyed the selection, then extended one arm backward, pointing at a particular student. "You! Attend!"

Teodoro Mondavi glanced up from his reverie, startled. He had been pondering exactly why the family had sent him here. The Ambrogia School was famed throughout Vodacce, true. And no noble worth his name failed to learn at least one School of fighting. Still, why could not the Family's teachers tutor him?

"I said attend!" the Master snarled, without turning around.

Teodoro sprung to his feet and assumed a position of attention behind Vito. The Master paid him no mind, apparently enraptured by the bright shining steel before him. After a few seconds of silence, he stepped aside. "Choose your weapons."

Mondavi stepped to the table and considered the swords before him. The first thing he observed was that none of the tips were protected. He picked up one rapier and balanced it carefully in his hand. Facing away from the teacher, he slashed it through the air, once, twice. Then he put it down and picked up another. Again he put it through its paces, then put it down. He stopped at the third weapon, satisfied. He then picked up and tested a main-gauche in similar manner.

"Good choices," Borromeo said grudgingly. "But not the best. I allowed you to choose first, giving you the advantage. But do not give it up so easily." He reached forward and slapped Teodoro on the cheek. "Fool! Check every weapon, and then decide." The Master picked up one of the other swords and main-gauches on the table from the remainder that Teodoro had not selected.

The young Mondavi noble just stood there, his face smarting. No one in the class was foolish enough to laugh, but Teodoro could feel their smirks burning into his back.

Borromeo stepped back into the squared off practice area. He assumed what Teodoro recognized as the first, most basic defensive position of the Ambrogia style. Vito held the rapier in his left hand and the main-gauche in his right: the former held high, the latter held left. "At your convenience, Lord Mondavi," he invited, the courtesy so great as to be an insult.

Teodoro assumed his place in the practice square. Like any Vodacce nobleman, he already knew how to fight with a rapier, but the second weapon was new to him. Like the Master, he was left-handed and held the rapier accordingly. The main-gauche felt awkward in his right hand, but he did his best to mimic his teacher's stance.

"You may attack at your leisure."

Hoping to catch the teacher by surprise, Teodoro lunged. Borromeo casually deflected the rapier with his parrying blade and smashed Mondavi across the nose with the hilt. Stunned, Teodoro staggered backward and collapsed to the ground.

"Ambrogia awaits attack: it does not initiate an attack unless it has to. That is its strength, and its weakness. Let your opponent come to you, or wait until the optimal moment to go to them. Up! Are you some peasant, to be lazing about the fields all day?"

Teodoro lurched to his feet, blood dripping down his face and onto his shirt. "When you do cut," continued Master Vito, "Cut where they do not expect." Suiting action to words, he slashed left-right with the rapier. Ignoring his main-gauche, Teodoro tried to parry with the rapier. Borromeo simply shifted the blade off the line of attack and cut low, ripping the cloth covering Teodoro's upper leg and scratching the skin beneath.

"*Stupido!* The parrying blade is for parrying. You have two weapons: use them both! Are you a strutting Castillian?" Vito held up his weapons in demonstration. "The sword is for attack, not defense. You can block an opponent's sword with any weapon: why waste your blade's edge to do so? Again!"

Limping, Teodoro moved back to the marked starting position again. Again he tried to match his teacher's position, holding the main-gauche with a bit more confidence. He attacked, throwing in a surprise of his own that his Mondavi fencing teacher had shown him. He thrust with the rapier while holding the main-gauche at the ready, then twisted his left hand to slash upward at Vito's face.

The teacher brought his parrying blade up and deflected the cut. "Better!" He returned the attack with a thrust of his own, and Teodoro deflected it with his own second weapon. "Adapt! Adjust! An Ambrogia fighter uses whatever they can to win." Borromeo picked up the pace, weaving a pattern of steel before him with his own weapons. Teodoro was hard put to deflect the attacks. He parried once, twice, cut, parried again... Master Vito moved forward, pushing his advantage.

"When you have the upper hand, attack and do not wait!" he snapped, barely winded. "A weak opponent is a dead opponent! Never show weakness, and you shall live to fight another day!"

The Mondavi twisted his head to the side, not quite avoiding an upper cut. More blood spilled down his face.

"Do not only rely on your main-gauche for protection. Use your body for defense. It can also enhance your attack: observe!"

Master Vito cut to Teodoro's right shoulder. The nobleman could just catch a glimpse of the teacher twisting his wrist as cloth and skin parted beneath the blade. The entire upper length of his arm went numb.

"Move your hand just so, and the damage is that much greater," declared Borromeo, stepping back. Gasping for breath, Teodoro warily watched the man. "And finally..."

With a snap of his wrist, Borromeo threw his main-gauche butt-first toward his student. Teodoro dodged left, and heard it thump into one of his classmates behind him. Before he could react or recover, Vito lashed out with a kick that took Teodoro in the groin. The Mondavi dropped to his knees, his weapons falling into the sand.

"Your body is a weapon — the only weapon you can count upon to be there on every occasion. Treat it as you would any other weapon, but a thousand times more so. And pay attention! That one..." Vito gestured with his empty hand toward the student he had knocked unconscious. A bruise on his forehead showed where the butt of the parrying blade had hit. "...thought he had better things to concern himself with. He is wrong. All of you are. While you are here, you learn. Nothing else. If you die, it reflects badly on me. Avoid doing so."

Borromeo glanced at Teodoro. Despite the pain of the teacher's blow, he had not collapsed. "Good! You ... you have virtù. On this, the first day, no student could do better than you have." Vito glanced around the circle of students, making sure they got the message. "Any one of you could have been where this boy was. Remember that."

The Master reached down and grasped Teodoro's unwounded shoulder. Gently he helped him back to his feet. "Remember what I have shown you, and what I will show you in the weeks to come. And perhaps — perhaps — you will survive in the world outside these walls. Be seated."

Gratefully, Teodoro staggered back to his place in the circle and sat down. As Vito gestured to the next student to rise, the Mondavi youth considered the lessons he had learned here today ... and how he would apply them.

The Swordsman's Guild

Linnae Knute

Linnae was born the third child of a large family. His father was a Vendel merchant and his mother, Monique Knute, one of Eisen most famous swordsmen. Despite (or perhaps because of) her gender, Monique had mastered several Schools and even the Emperor knew of her skills. Among her children only Linnae displayed any real talent for the sword, but he seemed to make up for his siblings' deficiencies. Linnae soon showed he could rapidly assimilate and master multiple skills. Not only was he a polyglot, speaking 5 languages by the age of 8, but he soon learned multiple professions as well. By the age of 10 he could best men in Kirk twice his age, had learned his way around the Vendel courts, and had enough knowledge to become a licensed doctor.

It was then that tragedy struck. Between visits to her family Monique traveled to Montaigne and Eisen to sell her sword. She had challenged an offending Montaigne noble to a duel, but rather than fight her he hired men to shoot her down from concealment. Linnae swore to avenge her. It took two years, but at the age of 12 he killed the noble after extracting the names of the men he had hired. He then tracked down those men and killed them as well.

The experience impressed upon Linnae the fact that whatever noble purpose dueling once served, it had regressed to the point of slaughter. He swore to restore honor to the art, and soon found a new friend to help him: Magnus Desaux du Montaigne. Magnus had been an enemy of the noble who killed Monique, and had surreptitiously helped Linnae in his quest for vengeance. When he heard about Linnae's new quest, Magnus offered to assist him in his goal. The Montaigne mentored the boy, and suggested that he gain some influence in Eisen as part of their long-term goal to create the



Linnae Knute

Guild. Linnae traveled to Eisen, mastered the Eisenfaust style, and opened a school dedicated to its instruction. The Eisen, rarely impressed by outsiders, were amazed that Knute could best so many of them in their own national style of fighting.

Finally, in 1644 the time was right. Linnae approached the Vendel League with Magnus' plans for a new Guild. Seeing it as a sign of progress, the League agreed to accept it as long as Linnae himself represented them. Linnae also negotiated secretly with Emperor Reifenstahl, making sure that he signed as well. Finally the Guild came into existence in 1644, with Linnae as one of its core inner council essentially representing both Vendel and Eisen.

Since that time, Linnae has become one of the most feared fighters in Théah. His services are in great demand, and he has opened private schools in Charouse, Gottkirchen, and Carleon. Recently he reopened his personal fencing academy in Kirk, identifying it as a "Guild academy" rather than a "Knute academy." It was immediately swamped with membership applications. Knute teaches classes whenever he can, but rarely stays at any school for more than one week out of eight. The rest of his time he either tends to Guild business at Kirk, or travels the lands accumulating more fighting skills.

Linnae displays an uncanny knack for obtaining obscure Schools. He knows both Bogatyr and Villanova, something that no other known swordsman in Théah has accomplished. Most attribute his success to a glib tongue, which Knute wields quite effectively when he puts his mind to it. Linnae is also the “head” of the Eisenfaust School, since Emperor Reifenstahl turned that duty over to him just before the end of the War of the Cross. Despite his age, Linnae does not appear overwhelmed by his responsibilities. He continues to travel and fight as well as a man half his age.

Linnae is a handsome Vendel in his early 40's, with flowing blonde hair and a mustache. More than one person has commented on his resemblance to Jeremiah Berek. However, Linnae is a bit taller, wears his hair somewhat shorter, favors a less pointed style of beard, and has green eyes rather than blue. He's also several years older than Berek, and Linnae's one vanity is that he dyes his hair to avoid encroaching signs of age. He wears modest Vendel garb, eschewing the more expensive styles. He is a social chameleon, able to change from smooth diplomacy when trying to convince the Gaius to accept the Guild, to thunderous rage when dealing with a rogue Swordsman.

Miles Donovan

Miles was born in 1624 in a small village in Avalon. His father Oslac was a swordsman and a Master of the Donovan School, just like his father and his father's fathers before him. Miles is the great great grandson of Geoffrey Donovan, and grew up in the same tradition, displaying an aptitude for the smallsword unmatched since the days of Geoffrey himself.

Miles easily rose to Master level in the Donovan style, then traveled to the ancestral home of his grandmother, the Highland Marches. There he began to learn the MacDonald style, but soon grew unhappy with the Highlanders' attitude toward Avalon. He returned to his hometown and took over the management of the family's fencing academy from his father. But simple teaching soon bored Miles, and he sought to further improve his abilities. He traveled to Vendel to learn Leegstra. While he could have learned the School from any number of Vendel teachers, preferred to travel into Vesten lands and learn from the School's source.



Miles Donovan

Traveling through the Vesten islands in 1643, he was taken in by Hrodgeir himself and rapidly mastered that style as well.

Miles may have wandered Théah for many more years, seeking greater and greater mastery while occasionally returning to supervise his school. But Magnus Desaux du Montaigne contacted him on the docks of Kirk with an offer. Word of Miles' reputation had already spread, and Magnus and Linnae Knute agreed that a Donovan Master would make the most suitable third member of the Guild Inner Council. In a dark room the three of them drew up the Pact, then went forth to meet with as many rulers as they could. Miles traveled to the Highland Marches and met with King MacDuff, then went south to meet with Avalon's King Richard. Both of them were amenable to the idea of the Guild and signed. Miles then traveled to Eisen to meet with his comrades and approach the final signatory, Eisenfaust Reifenstahl.

Since then Miles has focused on the more “honorable” aspects of the Guild when not tending to the affairs of the Donovan School. He divides his time primarily between Kirk and his family's academies: he has little interest in visiting other nations this late in his life.

Miles is a burly man with little use for affectation and fashion. He wears simple loose-fitting garb, close-cropped straw-colored hair that

has yet to show any gray, and a bushy beard and mustache that he rarely takes time to trim. Donovan is a man of few words, and only speaks up when he feels a matter of honor is at stake. He's not a diplomat by any stretch of the imagination, and has little patience for fools or cowards.

Frantz Desaux du Montaigne

Frantz Desaux du Montaigne is the only son of Magnus Desaux du Montaigne, one of the Guild's founders. Magnus married in 1641, two years before forming the Guild. His wife Yolonda was content to remain at home and raise their child while Magnus went out into the world to create the Guild. He returned once every six months or so to visit with his family, but otherwise left them pretty much alone. This changed when Frantz came of age in 1658; Magnus personally trained the boy in the gentlemanly art of fencing.

Frantz had already come to enjoy the social life of the Royal Court of Montaigne, and saw his father's training as somewhat of a trial. He realized how useful dueling could be, though, and dutifully undertook the training. A natural athlete, Frantz soon became a formidable fighter. During their sessions, Magnus discussed his plans for the Guild, and soon made it clear that he expected Frantz to succeed him when he died.

Frantz disliked the idea intensely. As far as he was concerned, the Swordsman's Guild was a boring administrative organization fit only for merchants, not nobles or fighters. He didn't dislike the Vendel League and its Guilds, but saw no place in it for a noble such as himself. Magnus' orders were explicit, however and when he died in a duel in 1665, Frantz discovered that his father ensured he took his seat in the Guild whether he wanted to or not. Magnus' money went into a trust under the control of a Vendel lawyer, Gregor Altherr, who only released a certain amount of money each year, and only as long as Frantz served in the Guild to the best of his abilities.

Frantz was enraged. He tried to bribe Altherr, but the interest from the trust went to the lawyer's fee which made it far more than Frantz could match. Deeply irritated, he took over Magnus' position in the Guild. Since that time he has done as little as possible while still trying to collect



Frantz Desaux du Montaigne

from the trust. He takes out his frustrations by dueling: he is the most active of the three Guild leaders and spends more times perfecting his existing skills than learning or teaching.

Frantz doesn't have a lot of spare time, however. Unlike his fellow Guild leaders, he spends a great deal of time sampling the social life of Vendel. He used to travel to Montaigne quite often, purportedly to administer the Valroux schools but actually to attend social events. Since the Revolution, however, he stays in Kirk, politicking with the noble emigrés and letting proxies keep an eye on the Valroux academies. Frantz plays the social game with consummate skill, and currently is owed more favors than he owes to others.

The one exception may be Veronica Ambrogia. The famed Vodacce courtesan was a companion to his father, a situation that troubled Yolonda deeply. Since Magnus' death, Veronica has taken up with the son. When in Vendel and her schedule corresponds with Frantz's, the two often appear arm-in-arm at balls and parties. Frantz is the only one of the Guild leaders who can enter Vodacce with relative safety, but only when accompanied by Veronica. When Frantz and Veronica attend a Vodacce party, the situation always grows tense.

Veronica's presence protects Frantz against simple assault, but it does not protect him against

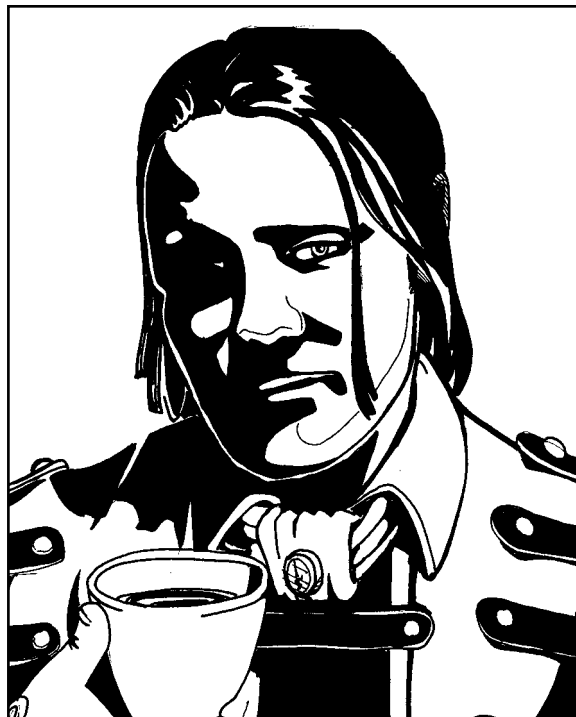
all dangers. Several young Vodacce swordsmen have challenged Frantz to duels while their elders looked on to assess the young Montaigne. Frantz killed each one with a ruthlessness that impressed even the Vodacce nobility. Since then, Frantz's opponents limit themselves to verbal sniping. Fortunately, the Guild leader is as quick with an insult as with a blade.

Frantz is a young man in his mid 20's, with black hair styled in the latest Montaigne fashion. He wears a long mustache beneath a beaky nose (but no beard), and the most expensive and fashionable Montaigne clothing, although he avoids the more impractical styles as they might interfere with his fighting. He is often impatient, given to pacing back and forth when the situation allows it. Frantz gives the impression of a man with a constant appointment to keep. He always has social functions, dinners, and rendezvous with the opposite sex to attend.

Renato Marchello

Renato was born of a peasant family in Lucani province. He spent the first ten years of his life working in the fields and living a simple, poor life. Then one day, a breathtakingly beautiful woman came to the farm in an expensive carriage and spoke with Renato's father. Money was exchanged, and the next thing Renato knew he was whisked off to one of Veronica Ambrogia's palatial estates. She told him that he would serve her now. Marchello never questioned his good fortune. His new patron arranged for his training in her own Ambrogia School, then sent him to Charouse to learn the Valroux style. In short order he demonstrated enough skill to serve her needs. She then made those needs clear: she had a seat on the Swordsman's Guild, and wished him to become the new leader of their enforcement branch, the Razors. Renato owed her everything, and gladly accepted the position. If the Guild leaders had any problem with his assignment, they didn't say anything about it.

Renato has served as the head of the Razors for the last five years. He is ruthless in his duties,



Renato Marchello

and proudly points out the dangers he faces. There is nothing more dangerous than a Swordsman gone rogue. Many of them fight back when he and the Razors collect them: a further sign of guilt as far as Marchello is concerned. The Guild is not entirely happy with his reputation, but given their limited ability to enforce Guild law without the cooperation of the locals, it serves to bolster their standing. Many Swordsmen are far more reluctant to break Guild law if Marchello comes after them.

Though he holds the rank of Master, Renato is not a particularly skilled swordsman compared to other high-ranking Guild members. Instead, he relies on his knowledge of the weaknesses of many Schools to defeat his opponets. Renato fancies himself a Villanova, although he lacks the lineage. He dresses entirely in black, with his Guild pin and Razors' Badge prominently displayed at all times. He tends to go clean-shaven, although his five o'clock shadow is thick and noticeable. He wears his long black hair tied back with an expensively decorated braid. The dagger he uses for Ambrogia- and Valroux-style fighting is equally ornate. Renato moves with the easy boneless grace of a cat, and his black clothing aids his efforts at stealth.



Teachers

Hrodgeir

Hrodgeir has no known family name and no one claims him as kin. Vsetmannavnjar oral histories make scant mention of him, though references to him, or someone skilled in Leegstra bearing the same name and general appearance, date back millennia. Some still living remember Hrodgeir as a man they encountered 50 years ago, no different then as he was now. Some believe he may be one of the Living Runes.

Hrodgeir refuses to answer any inquiries about his background. He only answers questions relevant to Leegstra. A skilled skald, he often expresses himself with riddles and examples from ancient stories. He has no friends and fights for no cause.



Hrodgeir

Despite that, he is a respected warrior. Hrodgeir will happily pit himself against anyone who challenges him. To this day he remains undefeated.

Hrodgeir never leaves his cave on a mountain on Viddenheim near Tärn. While some Leegstra teacher-champions venture forth to champion a cause, Hrodgeir never does so. He refuses to take sides with the Vesten against the Vendel, and teaches anyone who comes to him. A few dared to accuse him of being a Vendel sympathizer: Hrodgeir responds by beating them senseless and then letting them explain their mistake to other. He doesn't kill unless he absolutely has to, but sometimes he must.

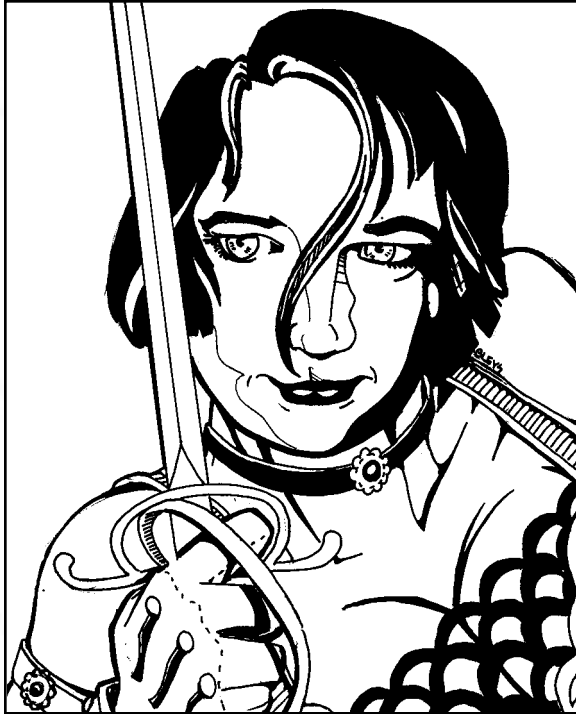
Hrodgeir is a huge figure of a man, standing 6'6" and almost as wide as he is tall. He has a huge mane of graying hair and a bushy beard. Despite that, Hrodgeir is of indeterminate age. He appears to be in his 50's, but his face lacks the lines of age and he moves with the grace and agility of a far younger man. Hrodgeir dresses in scuffed Vesten warrior garb, of a style some hundred years out of date. He always carries a Vesten battle axe in his hands, either to demonstrate a move or to drive home a point with a student via a quick rap of the handle.

Lydia Larsen

Lydia is the only child of Ralf Larsen, former Shield Man for the Explorer's Society and the founder of the Larsen School. Her mother died in childbirth while Ralf was out in the field. Lydia grew up with her aunt since her father refused to abandon his duties to the Guild. He provided for her from the wages he earned, but the two were never really close. Ralf only saw his daughter when he returned home between trips to ancient archaeological sites.

The situation changed in 1663 when Ralf retired. He returned to Vendel and took up parenting full-time. The two originally did not get on very well. For one thing, Ralf insisted that his daughter know how to defend herself. Lydia had been raised by her aunt as a proper young Vendel woman, and originally resisted the idea of learning to fight. She soon discovered she had a natural aptitude for combat, and took to the sword whole-heartedly. Ralf often sought her assistance to help test his theories on his lantern-and-sword school. She soon became the first Apprentice and then Journeyman of the Larsen School, even though it did not yet formally exist.

When Lydia came of age, she enrolled in the Kirk City Guard just like her father. Ralf was not



Lydia Larsen

entirely happy with her decision. He hoped that she would marry and bear a child to carry on the family. Still, he could hardly refuse her. He wanted her to learn to fight didn't he? Why teach her if she couldn't practice it in the outside world? He used his influence to get her accepted into the City Guard.

Shortly afterward Lydia became a Master of her father's new style of fighting. The city of Kirk soon approached Ralf and asked him to create a formal School for their watchmen, then get it sanctioned by the Guild. Once he did so he could begin teaching other City Guards. Ralf didn't see the need for Guild sanctioning, but dutifully applied to the Guild for testing. They were reluctant to accept the style, and tested him rigorously. Lydia sat proudly in the spectator seats as she watched her father defeat the Masters of Ambrogia and Valroux, and hold his own against Miles Donovan and Linnae Knute. The Guild sanctioned the Larsen School and Ralf and Lydia began teaching it from their home while continuing their duties as City Guards.

Tragedy struck when Ralf was shot and killed by a fleeing duelist during a routine patrol. Lydia witnessed the murder but chose to go to her father's aid rather than follow the killer. He escaped and Ralf died, for which Lydia has apparently never forgiven herself.

She inherited the Larsen School, and plans to keep it going. She still serves as a City Guard by night while teaching students by day. Many residents of Kirk look upon Lydia as a beloved hero of the city—one of its most valiant defenders. They also feel great sympathy toward her plight. Lydia prefers to travel the streets of Kirk alone when on patrol, and some fear that she may follow her father some day. To date she has never failed in her responsibilities, and typically brings in several criminals each night.

A few young men have approached Lydia expressing an interest in romance. She turned each of them away with a sorrowful smile and warm thanks for their interest. She tells them that her responsibilities are more than enough to occupy her time. To further add to her concerns, the Kirk town council recently charged her to find the person or persons responsible for the death of four Rasmussen duelists in Kirk, and to try to keep a lid on any conflicts that might arise between the pistol and anti-pistol dueling factions. She struggles to reconcile her duty with the anger she still feels at the loss of her father.

Lydia is a surprisingly young woman in her early 20's. She is on the small side which, combined with her youth, often misleads opponents who can't believe they are facing a Master swordsman. She keeps her hair cut short (so as not to interfere with her fighting), and her eyes are blue, with extraordinarily large irises. She wears the typical garb of a Kirk guardsman while on duty, which is most of the time. Lydia dresses up quite nicely on the rare social occasion, but she usually lacks the time or the interest to do so.

Jamie Bejarano de Guzman del Castillo

Jamie was born into the Torres clan. His father Selatse Gallegos del Guzman belonged the ruling family by marriage. While he did not aspire to rulership, he happily shared the duties with his relatives, particularly his brother Javier. Selatse helped his brother by acting as a liaison to the dons of other Ranchos. He took his second son Jamie with him on trips outside of Rancho Torres and instructed the boy in the Torres style of fighting.

Jamie grew into adulthood, and his one dissatisfaction came from the scorn other fighters heaped upon the Torres style. Other than that, Jamie



Jamie Bejarano de Guzman del Castillo

would have lived a happy life if the Montaigne had not invaded in 1667. Selatse immediately returned to Rancho Torres with his son. Their holdings were close to the northern border, near Barcino, and among the first to fall to the Montaigne invaders. Putting Jamie into safekeeping, Selatse went to rescue what he could from his family's home... and was killed by the Montaigne soldiers who had already murdered his wife.

Now an orphan, Selaste's brother Javier took in Jamie. The older man swore to remain in Rancho Torres and fight the Montaigne until his dying breath, but despite his fighting skills, he was really more of a diplomat than a fighter. By mutual agreement, Javier and Jamie decided that Jamie would use his unique abilities to seek allies outside of Castille, rather than serve as another guerilla fighter. Further, in honor of his brother's memory, Javier made Jamie the head of the Torres style. Granted, the position held little significance. There was only one Torres school (in Altamira) outside of its home Rancho. Nor could the Torres schools operate publicly as the Montaigne swept south toward Rancho Zepeda. Still, Jamie was honored by the position, and his duties were light since all Torres school operate in secrecy. Jamie let the Torres teachers administer their schools as they see fit.

With the end of the war, Jamie remained abroad. Though the Montaigne had departed, they left a

great deal of destruction in their wake. Rancho Torres needed time and resources to recover, and while the Torres style may now be practiced openly, it will take money to open a proper academy. Jamie works hard to secure such aid from foreign sources. He travels primarily to Avalon, Eisen, and Vendel. In Avalon he spends much of his time at the Queen's court, attempting to convince her to aid the Torres family. He has befriended Jack Webster, head of the Robertson School and a man with connections at Elaine's court. In Eisen he tries to hire mercenaries, while he spends most of his time in Vendel with the Swordsman's Guild. He finally persuaded them to sanction the Torres School in late 1668 — just after the end of the war, he noted with a certain bitterness. The rest of the time Jamie spends in Altamira.

Jamie is a tall, lanky Castillian with long black hair that he keeps carefully groomed. He wears the finest clothes, has a nose sharp enough to cut cheese with, and a piercing stare. He goes clean-shaven so as to minimize his grooming needs: he is typically far too busy travelling from one country to the next seeking aid for his impoverished Rancho. He has a habit of wringing his hands if he doesn't keep them occupied, and tends to keep one on the hilt of his sword at all times, giving him a somewhat menacing appearance. In more relaxed times he is quite the ladies' man, but his duties as an Ambassador for the Torres rarely permit him the luxury.

Silan

At one time, Silan was the greatest bogatyr in Ussuran history. For almost fifty years he fought for whatever righteous cause he could find, and he found many. He defended peasants, killed great beasts, and battled the greatest warriors of the armies he opposed. Then, in 1648, he disappeared. Some thought that he might have died, although that made little sense. Any fighter skilled enough to defeat him would surely have boasted of their triumph. Others thought he went exploring, perhaps to Cathay, perhaps to Crescent, and perhaps to some far more distant land. Most believed he died alone and unacclaimed at the hands of some great beast, or perhaps in an accident. And a few claimed that he was still alive. Tavern owners occasionally reported that a man matching Silan's description would come in late at night when their bars were empty, accompanied by a group of other, older



Silan

Bogatyrs. Like many Bogatyr Masters, they would pay for several huge barrels of vodka and cider, talk among themselves, and leave as mysteriously as they came.

Slowly, newly trained Bogatyrs began to tell similar stories. Each claimed that a man who matched Silan's description taught them the Bogatyr School. Their stories all had common elements: they were travelling through the woods only to be swept up by a sudden blizzard. After several days' travel, they found themselves at a small hut. A man matching the oral descriptions of Silan greeted them as if they were old friends, but refused to introduce himself. He then took them in, fed them, and began training them in the Bogatyr School. When he was satisfied that they had learned all that he could teach, he told them to go out into the storm, where they would somehow stumble back to civilization.

Ussurans who hear these stories recognize the hand of Matushka at work. Some claim that Silan may have merged with Matushka in some manner, and become as immortal as she is. Others claim he is a ghost who travels from the other side to pass on his knowledge. Only time will tell if stories of his existence still continue. None can dispute that the Bogatyrs who tell of their encounter are among the most formidable warriors in all the land.

By all accounts, Silan appears fat at first glance, but appearances are deceiving. His body is

made up of solid muscle. He is totally bald and clean-shaven, with a practically non-existent neck. He appears to be in his late 30's, and wears the common garb of an Ussuran peasant. He always has an Ussuran battle axe close at hand or slung across his back.

Pietro Vercelis

Pietro is the son of Angelo Vercelis, Prince Gespucci Bernoulli's financial advisor and right-hand man. Gespucci appointed him the master of the Bernoulli School when he realized that his sons and other relatives lacked the discipline to administer the family style. Gespucci also felt that by placing Angelo's only son in a position of power, he would further assure his financier's loyalty.

Pietro is a talented swordsman and teacher, but has little interest in politics. This, plus his unswerving obedience to his father, are the primary reasons why Gespucci selected him to administer the School. Interestingly, Pietro has no interest in the Crescent nations. He never traveled there and only knows their language and fighting style through Gespucci's now deceased father, the former head of the Bernoulli School who instructed him.

Pietro has headed the Bernoulli School for the last 15 years. He is an effective administrator,



Pietro Vercelis

and Gespucci and Angelo let him conduct matters as he sees fit. He reports to them once a year, but otherwise they leave him to his own devices. This suits him fine: he has little use for the hedonism of Gespucci's sons, and seems to be in a constant state of despair over the decadence that surrounds him. Pietro also administers Guild affairs, since they have a Chapterhouse on Bernoulli Island. Though he himself accepts Guild presence in Vodacce, he knows that the other Princes do object. Pietro spends much of his time protecting the Chapterhouse from the occasional "accident."

Pietro has bushy eyebrows and a protruding brow that effectively shadow his eyes. Those who catch a glimpse of them swear they are silvery-gray, a match for the flowing mane of hair slicked neatly back from his forehead. A beak nose sits squarely in his face over a thin-lipped mouth. Pietro always has a perpetual move of distaste upon his face, as if he takes displeasure at the entirety of the world. He lives simply and spartanly, preferring the stark surroundings of the academy to the decadence of Bernoulli's isle.

Jack Webster

Jack Webster grew up in Carleon, the third son of a wealthy merchant. Since he had little chance of inheriting the family fortunes, he sought to make his living as a swordsman. His father dealt with many foreigners, and Jack heard many of them come into the shop and make disparaging remarks about the Donovan style. Taking their words to heart, he set out to master some other style of fighting, but there were few to be found. Then in 1647 he discovered the unsanctioned Robertson School. Enchanted by the dashing image that the Robertson fighters cut with their rapier and cloak, Jack approached the School's teacher, David Robertson, and asked to train. Impressed by the young man's determination, Robertson agreed.

Jack proved a quick study, and quickly mastered the School in record time. Further impressed, David asked Jack to stay on as his assistant and man the school while David traveled to Kirk to once more seek the Guild's sanctioning of his style. Unfortunately, an offended Donovan Swordsman killed Robertson in a duel as he made his way to the docks. The duel was an illegal one, although the Donovan fighter started the matter: David had merely defended himself. Had he survived the



Jack Webster

encounter, he probably would have been cleared of any charges. But such was not to be.

Jack was heartbroken; David was like a father to him and he had no idea how to proceed without the older man. Robertson had no heirs, and Jack closed down the school for a week to arrange his mentor's funeral. Then he reopened the school, determined to keep his teacher's legacy alive as best he could. He promised himself he would receive sanctioning from the Guild, regardless of the cost. It took several years for Jack to reestablish the school and train to the point where he could hold his own against other styles. In 1657 Jack went before the Guild and won sanction through a unanimous vote.

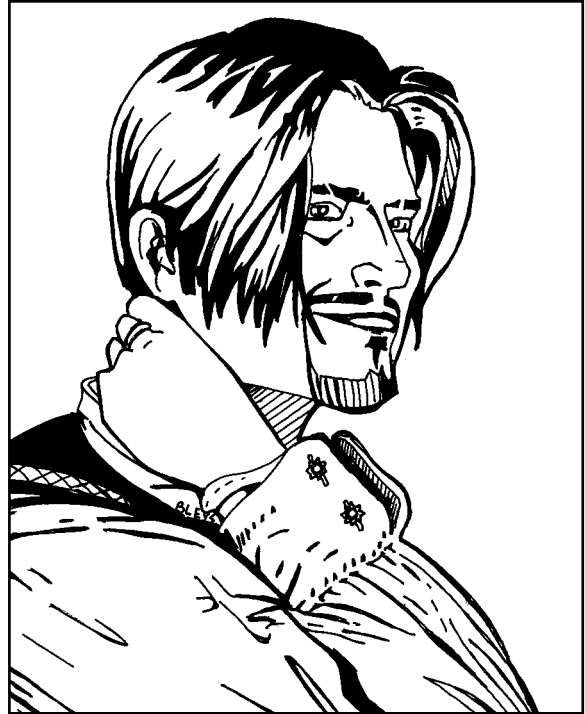
Since that time Jack has continued to teach the Robertson style. With official recognition under his belt, he contacted the Torres School, (the inspiration for his teacher's own sword-and-cloak style) and put forth substantial effort to try to get them sanctioned as well. He also associated with the students and teachers of other Avalon Schools, ensuring that they respect his style as they would any other.

During all this, Jack discovered a flair for the political and social side of things. He soon became a favorite at the court of Queen Elaine. Jack enjoyed the attention but never let it divert him from the promotion of the Robertson School. Rumor has it that none other than Bors

MacAllister recently approached Jack for personal training. Some suspect that the “Black Knight” might be looking for a subtler weapon than his typical smallsword. Jack neither confirms nor denies such rumors.

Due to his School’s connection to the Torres family, Webster has spoken on their behalf to the Queen on several occasions. Although Elaine is not well inclined toward Castille in general, she sympathizes with the plight of Rancho Torres, and has occasionally sent financial and medical assistance.

Jack has a broad open face with which he cheerfully beams out upon the world. He keeps his brown hair short, and has adopted a neatly trimmed mustache and short beard: the better to enhance his appearance when at court. Jack typically dresses in the current style adopted by Avalon nobility. Still, despite his grace and style he projects an aura of a warrior playing at dress-up, rather than someone born to the courts.



Otavio Gallegos de Consone

Duelists

Otavio Gallegos de Consone

The Consone family is a minor noble line of the Rioja family. Otavio’s father, Xayvion Consone lived in the city of Rioja and pursued the merchant trade. He managed to catch the eye of a Gallegos woman, Anuncia, and then win her heart. Their one and only child was Otavio. Anuncia led a sheltered life in Xayvion’s luxurious manor, and so it fell to the father to train his son in the ways of the world. Otavio proved an adequate tradesman, but soon grew bored with the life and sought excitement elsewhere. He used his father’s connections to obtain membership in a Gallegos school and rapidly became a Master.

Otavio found the excitement he sought as a member of the Swordsman’s Guild. He never accepts a commission simply to challenge; he prides himself on his fighting ability. He does

accept duels to first blood, but prefers them to the death. So far he has survived every one, and killed twenty-two opponents over the last five years.

Like his father, Otavio has an eye for the ladies. Unlike Xayvion, he is not content to choose and marry one senorita. Currently Otavio is wooing women across the width and breadth of Castille without committing to any one of them. Several of his rivals have disappeared under mysterious circumstances, but in most cases the families of the women favored Otavio over his rivals. Most assume that the rivals simply left when they saw they were outclassed.

Otavio favors tight trousers and a blousy white shirt. He wears his hair black and relatively short, and maintains a closely trimmed goatee. His eyes are a bright green, unusual in Castille. He is incredibly attractive, and radiates a charisma that appeals to men and women. He typically has a tight, confident smile on his face that never fades even under the worst circumstances.

Albion Riché du Paroisse

Following the recent death of Remy du Montaigne, Albion stands behind only Sébastien Valroux de Martise as the greatest duelist in Montaigne. He currently stands as the greatest Valroux duelist in all of Eisen ... but that may not

be much of a distinction. The Paroisse family sent him to Freiburg to watch over his younger brother Yan. Paroisse Mercantile is making the family a great deal of money, which they need in wake of the Revolution. Yan handles the day-to-day business of Paroisse Mercantile, while Albion provides the "muscle."

Albion was born into the noble family and led a relatively undistinguished life. Other noble children teased him mercilessly about his obesity until the day he was allowed to pick up a sword. Many soon discovered to their misfortune that Albion's innocuous figure disguised the mind and body of a cunning swordsman. Mariana, never one to let talent go to waste, hired a Valroux Master to personally tutor Albion. Though an apt pupil, he had a short attention span. and spent too much time in the local taverns in Tamis, trying to woo attractive ladies with his poetry. The local peasant women found this odd to say the least, but were hardly in a position to say no to the son of the Duchess who ruled the province. Albion was rather shy, and enamored of the romantic ideal. And the women agreed that his poetry was quite good.

Albion eventually mastered the Valroux style, and Mariana set him aside as it were until such time as he had need of him. Albion spent the time roaming the countryside, attempting to become a great romantic lover. He learned the Tout Pres



Albion Riché du Paroisse

style at many of the taverns he visited and the Gaulle School when he visited a distant cousin in La Motte. After a few years, he traveled to Atemlos in Eisen, and enrolled in the Durchsetzungburg University. He gained a scholarly degree and switched from writing poetry to historical treatises on dueling in Montaigne.

Just as he graduated in '67, the Duchess Mariana summoned him back to Paroisse. A mysterious "incident" in Tamis had somehow shut down all Porté sorcery within that city. To ensure the safety of the family's Porté sorcerers, they were to be sent out of the province so that if the incident repeated itself, they would not be affected. Mariana sent Albion's younger brother Yan to Freiburg to start a mercantile business and told Albion to go with him and provide protection. Albion shrugged and packed up his bags.

His duties became relatively light once word of his reputation spread around. While the Revolution caused a fair amount of upheaval in his family, the Duchess's dispersal ensured that most of them reached exile safely. Albion and his brother continued in Freiburg as they always had. When he is not dueling on behalf of the family business, he spends his time as the Valroux Master at the Guild Chapterhouse, touring Freiburg's taverns or writing historical papers. He spends much of his time at the Fat Mug (*Freiburg*, page 19) and has found a certain amount of social camaraderie there that he could never have back in Paroisse. He remains shy around the women, and would never dream of hiring a jenny. He still writes the occasional love poem, however, and offers his services free of charge to a woman needing a Swordsman. He seems content to spend his life in Freiburg, or wherever else his grandam sends him.

Albion is in his late 20's, a short roly-poly figure with a beaming smile that appears a more than a tad idiotic. He is prematurely balding and has a black spade-cut beard. More than one opponent has taken him for a dull-witted fool, the last thought many of them have ever had.

Sébastien Valroux de Martise

To hear Sébastien tell it, he is only one great duelist in Montaigne. He considered Remy du Montaignes status quite overrated, and secretly cursed the Revolution which killed the man



Sébastien Valroux de Martise

before he could formally duel him. Sébastien was born into the heart of wealth and luxury, the son of Victor Valroux de Martise. He lacked for nothing while growing up, and received private tutoring sessions by a Valroux Master. At the age of 15 he went to stay with his grandmother Madeleine. Most suspect that Sébastien's departure had something to do with the dark rumors concerning his alleged criminal activities. No one in the family spoke on the matter.

After a few years of life with his grandam, the young noble traveled Kirk at the old woman's behest. There he was to negotiate with Vendel merchants who sent their goods to Echine, and gain valuable experience in the family affairs. While there, Sébastien learned the Vendel fighting styles. Following his stint there, he headed south to learn the Aldana and Gaulle Schools.

Then things changed. Sébastien eventually returned to Echine and began to wander the city, refusing to make a comfortable life for himself in the Valroux courts. Echine teemed with duelists of all types and Sébastien made a comfortable living selling his services as a Swordsman. In addition to that, he began attacking criminals, though no one knew who hired him to do so. As far as anyone could determine, Sébastien attacked the underworld in the spirit of noblesse oblige. His reputation allowed him to survive the Revolution unscathed, and he remains in the city

to this day. He also sells his services to merchant ships needing protection against pirates, and has gained a reputation as a skilled shipboard fighter. Currently Sébastien is loved and respected by the people of Echine. His battles against the criminal and pirate elements have only enhanced his status as a duelist.

Now in his late 20s, Sébastien strides the world like a titan: he is the best swordsman in all of Montaigne, perhaps all the known world, and he knows it. He disdains the use of a wig and wears his black hair long, a "peasant" affectation that further endears him to the people. A goatee and brief mustache accentuate his attractiveness, and no swordsman has ever gotten close enough to scratch his countenance. He is well muscled and proportioned, and dresses in the finest styles Revolutionary fashion allows.

Ignatius von Kleist

Ignatius is the son of a minor Hainzl noble. His parents were scholars and he led a childhood devoted to books and learning. It wasn't until Ignatius went to Durchsetzungburg University and witnessed his first duel that he realized there was more to life than black and white print. He took to fencing with a white-hot passion and reveled in the thrill of swordplay.



Ignatius von Kleist

Perhaps too much so. Ignatius left Durchsetzungburg University under a cloud of suspicion before he could graduate. He supposedly killed at least one opponent during a training exercise, though neither the Board of Durchsetzungburg or Albert Sydow speaks of the matter. Many believe that they wish to protect the university's reputation, while some dismiss the stories as apocryphal. Ignatius ignores anyone who queries him on the reasons behind his abrupt departure.

Since that time Ignatius has travelled the length and width of Théah as a Swordsmen for hire. He only accepts commissions for duels to the death, and only against fellow Masters. He never shows pity to an opponent. During a duel he repeatedly cuts and slashes his opponent's extremities, until they bleed from dozens of cuts. Once they collapse, von Kleist steps forward and finishes them off with a single thrust through the heart.

Ignatius is a stick figure of a man in his mid 30's. He has a protruding forehead that appears even larger due to his fringe of brown hair. He has a habit of thrusting his head forward on his neck when studying something. That, along with his beaky nose, gives him a rather vulture-like appearance that he is aware of and sometimes uses to intimidate his opponents. By contrast, he wears the casual clothing of a university scholar. This combination acts to make him appear totally unthreatening until he chooses otherwise.

Donisa Chippari

No one knows Donisa's true origins. This fiery young woman, a graduate and Master of the Ambrogia School, became a Guild member in 1666. All investigations into her background have ended at her admission records: sealed by order of Veronica Ambrogia herself.

Since joining the Guild, Donisa has accumulated an impressive record of wins. She accepts almost any commission, but prefers to duel Vodacce whenever possible. Given Vodacce's relationship with the Guild, this can sometimes prove difficult. She remains outside of Vodacce, and occasionally takes commission to duel her countrymen when they travel abroad. Donisa seems to take great pleasure at the look of surprise on their faces when they find they are dueling a woman—and a Vodacce woman no less! She takes even greater pleasure in cutting them down, using impressive flourishes to toy with them as a cat with a mouse.

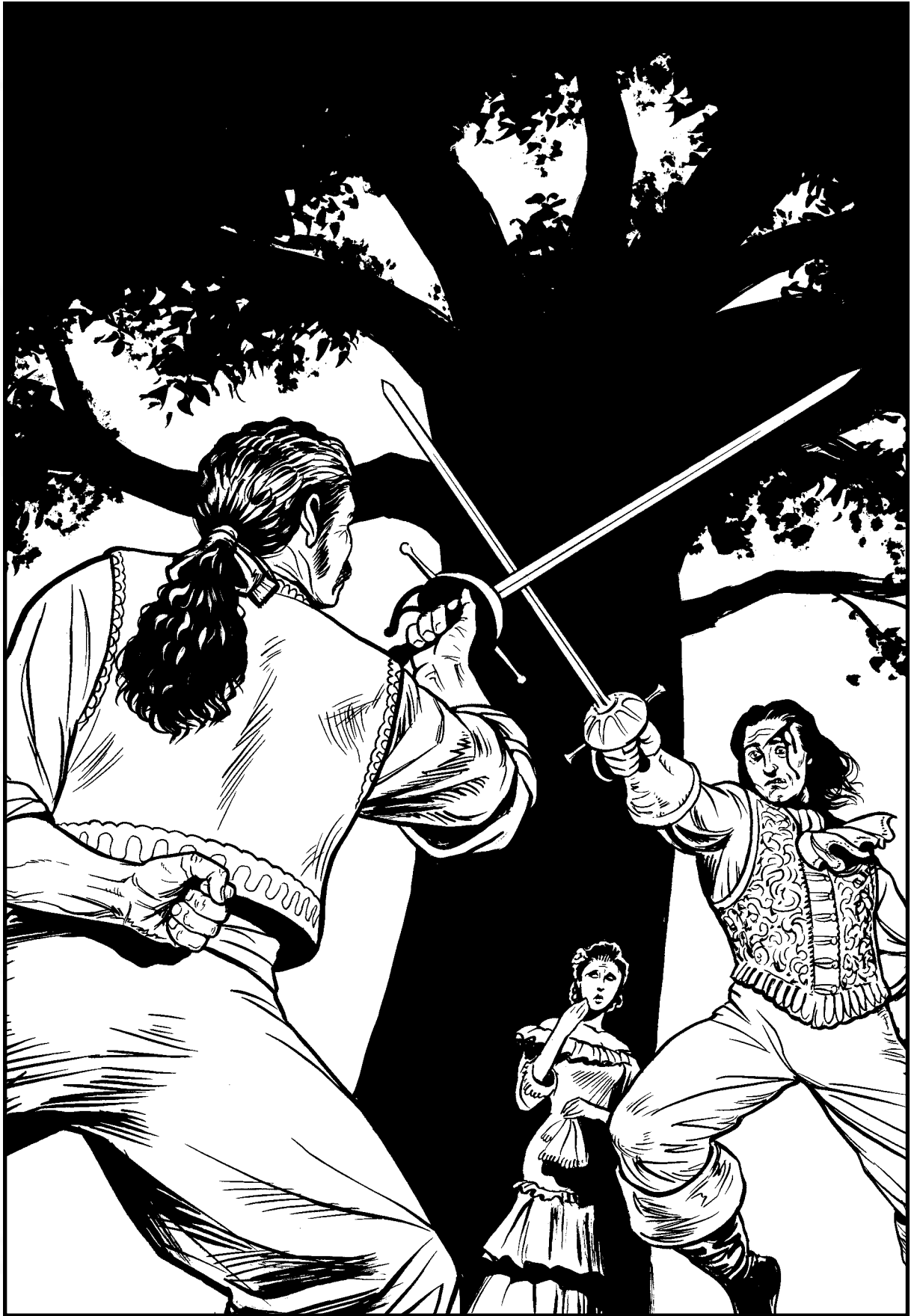


Donisa Chippari

Rumors abound that someone in Vodacce has put a price on Donisa's head... for her capture and return, rather than her death. No one knows who exactly is offering the reward, although several fighters, criminals, and brigands have attempted to claim it. None have survived.

Donisa has expressed no interest in either returning to Vodacce or discussing her background. When not fighting she occupies her time by spending her money as fast as she can accumulate it. She can drink most men under the table, and dance the whole evening away in the process. Donisa prefers social life on the lower end of the scale, choosing taverns over nobles' courts. She has a number of men romantically interested in her, but keeps them all at arms length.

Donisa is an attractive young woman in her early 20's, with a flaming shock of long red hair. Only a protruding set of ears and a slightly bent nose mars her perfect beauty. Donisa wears tight revealing clothing, having found that it often has a distracting effect on male opponents.



Chapter Three

Riposte



Cedro Gallegos de Yañez swiped his Gallegos blade through the air, admiring the whistling sound it made as he began his sequence of warm-ups. The man across the Circle from him couldn't be bothered. He merely stood there, sword in hand, waiting. He didn't study Pilar for any weakness. Rather, he seemed to be contemplating the woman behind Cedro.

Swine! Cedro swore to himself. How dare Otavio Consone treat him in such a manner? Bad enough that he had come to Puerto de Sur and tried to woo Alandra's heart. True, she was attractive enough to warrant the attentions of any man, but Consone had persisted well beyond the point of good manners, and even after Alandra had made her relationship with Cedro clear.

Thinking of his beloved encouraged Cedro to turn and smile at her. Alandra appeared reassured by his easy confidence. As long as he protected her, she would never have anything to fear. Cedro had sworn his most fervent oath to her last night on just that point. Now he wore her handkerchief, a mark of her favor, tied around his left arm.

The young Castillian surveyed the Gallegos Circle. Like every such circle, it showed the anatomical sketch of a man and the chords of

attack and defense. Not that Cedro needed them: he was a Master of the School, and memorized the arcs and curves completely as part of his final graduation from his school. His teacher Oihan would be proud.

Not that Oihan, or anyone else, would witness his triumph. This duel to the death was private: an affair of honor. Although both men wore the gold Guild pin, they fought this battle over the offense to Alandra. The Guild had no business here. This was Castille, where a man who would not fight for his honor was no man at all. Still, word would spread, as it always did, that he defeated Consone. Cedro's reputation would be greatly enhanced. He smiled at the thought as he ended his warm-up.

"Are you ready, young Master?" Consone called out mockingly. Cedro swore under his breath again. The cur would pay for every insult he had heaped on Cedro and Alandra. But he did not lose his temper. He gave an abrupt nod to his opponent then stepped into his position on the Circle. Consone sketched a mocking bow to Alandra. Then he stepped on to his side of the Circle, and assumed the first position. But it was... odd. It was basically the initial Gallegos stance, but the trailing foot turned the wrong way. Otavio held his off-hand to the side rather than tucked tightly behind the back. Let the blackguard use whatever style he wanted. The Gallegos style was superior, and nothing would stand against it. Cedro raised his weapon into the first defense position. "At your convenience, *senor*."

Consone moved counter-clockwise along the Circle with the languid ease of a panther. His blade danced through the air, seeking Cedro's heart. Cedro circled right, keeping his face toward his opponent as the Gallegos style taught.

Consone just chuckled. Rather than take his time and assess his opponent, he immediately slashed high. It was a feint, however, and Cedro almost fell victim to it. He stepped backward as the real attack cut the air where he had been, then forward again and attempted a feint of his own.

Otavio held his ground and readily deflected, then cut again with his blade. There was the rip of cloth, and Alandra's sleeve fell to the ground.

Enraged, Cedro launched a dazzling series of cuts. Each one clattered against the impenetrable wall formed by Consone's rapier and main gauche. Cedro frowned. Again, Otavio's style was just a tad off. The feint and tag were distinctively Gallegos, but the stance was not to standard. Could Otavio be a Grand Master? And if so, of what? Cedro had fought many opponents, but the man's variations matched no style that he recognized.

Could Consone be a member of some Society? Cedro heard tales of the Desaix School that the Knights of the Rose and Cross practiced, but Otavio lacked the nobility to qualify for that group. The variations appeared to be Valroux: Cedro had fought Valroux swordsmen, but never using Gallegos as well. Most likely the style was Valroux then: a perfect match to his opponent's mocking sneers and veiled insults.

As if to confirm his suspicions, Consone raised his weapon as if in surrender. Cedro had seen Valroux swordsmen use a similar maneuver in the past: "raising the stakes," they called it. Admittedly, they had never been as inviting as Otavio was. Still, Cedro had dealt with the maneuver before, and he would handle it now. Cedro lunged forward in full extension...

...and found the man's blade in his chest. Startled by the sudden pain, Cedro's sword wavered and slid to the side. With a totally unnecessary flourish, Consone withdrew his blade, brought it up in salute, then stepped back to watch Cedro collapse to the ground.

The young Castillian stared up at his opponent as darkness began to creep in around the edges of his vision. Otavio simply smiled, then wiped his blade clean on Cedro's shirt.

Consone's eyes bored into Cedro's, as if looking for something. Then he nodded in satisfaction. As Cedro fell to the ground, he heard the man say as if through a thick fog, "And now that my rival for your affections has been removed, my dear Alandra, let me tell you of the life you are to lead..."

Swordsman's Guild Membership Benefits

This section covers new rules involving the Swordsman's Guild, as well as clarifying and organizing older mechanics which pertain to them.

Each Swordsman in the Guild is considered to have a Rank of 0 in every Swordsman School's Exploit Weakness (School) Knack when they join. Guild members may purchase Ranks in these Knacks by spending XP as normal. The cost of improving an Exploit Weakness Knack for a School sanctioned by the Guild is reduced by 1 XP (to a minimum of 1 XP).

Members of the Guild are the only people in Theah legally allowed to issue challenges. They can also hire their services to act as champions in duels.

Members of the Guild may, upon achieving Master level in a School, qualify for Membership in the Razors.

Special Training

It is possible under certain circumstances to reach Rank 6 in certain Knacks. First, the Hero must have a Rank 5 in the Knack to begin with. Then he must find a fellow Swordsman sufficiently knowledgeable to instruct him and convince him or her to pass on what they know. Instruction costs 25 XP and can take anywhere from one month to one year, depending on the circumstances (the GM has the final word). If these conditions are met, the Hero's Rank increases to 6. Keep in mind that the Hero can never teach a Rank 6 Knack to others; it simply means that he has it himself. Normally, only NPCs and retired Heroes have a Rank this high.

Three Swordsmen have attained Rank 6 in a Knack, and can teach what they know to others. Information on the trio can be found in Chapters Two and Four:

Attack (Heavy Weapon): Hrodgeir, Viddenheim

Footwork: Linnae Knute, Kirk (and elsewhere)

Parry (Knife): Sébastien Valroux de Martise, Echine

New Backgrounds

Unsanctioned

This Background may only be purchased when you buy a School. While you learned that School's techniques, you did not do so in the normal fashion. Perhaps a friend took pity on you or your mother taught you independently. It could be that you picked up the style on your own. In any case, Schools do not like it when students learn their styles without permission. Sanctioned members of the School will attack you for using their style. The number of points you have in this Background indicates the frequency and intensity of that School's dislike for you. When you purchase this Background for a School that normally gives the Swordsman's Guild Membership Advantage for free, you do not receive that Advantage; instead you get one free Rank in one of that School's Swordsman Knacks instead.

Infamous Teacher

The person who taught you how to fence was not particularly popular in professional circles, probably because of some less-than-legal things he did on the side. Every so often, his past deeds cause new trouble for his students. Perhaps you are suspected of abetting his crimes. Maybe the authorities just want to ask you a few questions. On the other hand, some of his criminal acquaintances might decide to use you as a hostage for bargaining with him. In any case, your life becomes more complicated because of him. The more points you have in this background, the worse your teacher's crimes.

New Civil Skill

Teacher

At universities professors give theoretical instruction to large classrooms full of students. Teachers provide practical instruction to their students. They usually instruct a smaller group of students at any one time than a professor would. They can also act in much the same way that a personal trainer, drill instructor, or coach would today.

Basic Knacks

Oratory: Sweet words of praise flow as easily from your lips as whispered words of poison. Oratory allows you to persuade your listeners more easily of any argument.

Research: What is unknown can prove to be the most valuable part of any endeavor, and you know how to ferret out vital information. You have studied the ways that knowledge is gained--where to look and who to ask.

Writing: Your quill flies across the page with the gift of prose, setting down words that can entertain the reader, outrage the nobility, or call the people to arms. Your words can make beggars into kings or topple the most entrenched tyrants. This Knack encompasses poetry, plays, and other written works. Teachers most commonly use this Knack to write training manuals and treatises on the subjects on which they consider themselves to be experts.

Advanced Knacks

Cold Read: This is the art of deducting things about a person from his or her appearance and mannerisms. Handedness might be determined from a callous upon a knuckle, while a nervous

twitch could reveal much to an observant eye. With this Knack you can always enter a conversation with at least a little information about the other person. More often than not this Knack will be used with Contested Rolls against the Resolve of another, or against one of his other Knacks.

Incitation: You can inspire men to victory. They listen to your words before and during combat or other trying situation, and they know that they will be successful. They know that you will make the right decisions, and that they will not risk their lives or their Reputations for nothing. This Knack is used (mostly) with the mass combat rules, which the GM has access to in his *Guide*.

Leadership: Once you use the Incitation Knack to make your followers believe in you, this Knack will help you live up to their expectations. You can determine what tasks each man is capable of, and give them advice on how better to do their job without getting in the way. This Knack is used (mostly) with the mass combat rules, which the GM has access to in his *Guide*.

Storytelling: Seated around a flickering fire, all attention is on you. Your voice and mannerisms are calculated to enthrall your audience completely. Storytellers can, in addition, sometimes collect small sums of money for telling their tales. Teachers often tell stories to try to make a point to their students.

Training: This Knack allows you to train characters, including Heroes, Henchmen and Brutes. By spending a Scene with a Brute Squad or any individual character, the teacher may try to temporarily train it in a Knack until the end of the Act. This involves a Resolve + Training roll. The TN to perform this is 40, minus five times the Wits (or Threat Rating, in the case of a Brute Squad) of the student. Success grants a one Rank bonus in any Knack that the teacher has. A teacher may only train someone in a Knack that he has a Rank of at least 1 in, and may not train anyone to have a temporary Rank in any Knack that is higher than his own. For each Raise that the teacher makes on the roll, the student can gain an extra Rank.

If the teacher calls for two Raises for no other benefit and spends a Drama Die, the student's cost to improve the Knack or to learn one of the teacher's Skills that has that Knack (if he does not have that Knack already) is reduced by 1 XP. Teachers may not reduce this cost more than once, and no student may get this benefit multiple times for the same Knack. A Swordsman Knack's

XP cost may be reduced in this manner, but the cost to become an Initiate or an Apprentice in a School cannot be reduced.

Sanctioned Swordsman Schools from Previous Books

The following list provides basic details for all the Schools from previous books which are sanctioned by the Swordsman's Guild. **NOTE:** If a School from a previously published book is not listed here, it does not give free Membership to the Swordsman's Guild. If such a School does not already say that its students get one free Rank of one of its Swordsman Knacks, revise that School to include that text.

The first line of each entry lists (in order), the School and the country which it originated. The second line lists the sourcebook where it can be found, and the weapon it employs. The third line includes the Skills it gives the user, the fourth covers the Knacks it employs, and the remainder of the text covers the special techniques learned by Apprentice, Journeymen, and Masters.

AD = Active Defense/Actively Defend

DD = Drama Die/Drama Dice

DW = Dramatic Wound

FR = Free Raise

ML = Mastery Level

A= Apprentice

J = Journeyman

M = Master

NOHP = Negates Off-Hand Penalty

Aldana (Castille)

Players' Guide, Rapier

Courtier, Fencing

Feint (Fencing), Riposte (Fencing), Tagging (Fencing), Exploit Weakness (Aldana)

A: +(ML)k0 to Initiative roll.

J: Add +5 to your TN to be hit.

M: Gain Wits Rank in Focus Dice per Round. Focus Dice become +1k0 bonuses to Attack Rolls, or AD. Use of Focus Dice must be declared before rolling.

Ambrogia (Vodacce)

Players' Guide, Rapier/Knife
Fencing, Dirty Fighting
Feint (Fencing), Pommel Strike (Fencing),
Riposte (Fencing), Exploit Weakness
(Ambrogia)

- A: Free Left-Handed Advantage. NOHP using dagger or main-gauche. +2 damage with fencing weapon or dagger.
J: When inflicting a DW, suffer 1 DW to inflict 1 more DW.
M: If opponent's attack does not hit you, your next attack against him has TN 5 (effective until the end of the round only).

Bernoulli (Vodacce)

Vodacce, Saber
Fencing, Pugilism
Beat (Fencing), Corps-à-Corps, Lunge
(Fencing), Exploit Weakness (Bernoulli)

- A: Add ML to TN to be hit.
J: Fleche: Lunge & give up any number of extra Action Dice. Each extra Action die you give up gives +1k0 to Damage Roll and +5 TN to AD. Free +1 Rank in Lunge.
M: Once per Round, reroll an unsuccessful Attack Roll.

Bogatyrr (Ussura)

Ussura, Axe Hunter, Heavy Weapon
Lunge (Heavy Weapon), Pommel Strike
(Heavy Weapon), Throw (Heavy Weapon:
Axe), Exploit Weakness (Bogatyrr)

- A: FR to attack with an axe. Guild rights in Ussura. 5 Knacks from Hunter Skill instead of 3.
J: +1k1 damage with an axe.
M: +2 Fear Rating. 2 FRs to resist Fear.

Donovan (Avalon)

Players' Guide, Fencing
Weapon (Smallsword)/Buckler
Fencing, Buckler
Bind (Buckler), Disarm (Fencing), Riposte
(Fencing), Exploit Weakness (Donovan)

- A: NOHP for Buckler. FR when using Buckler.
J: Donovan's Twist: When you succeed with Parry (Fencing) Active Defense, deal 1k1 (do not add Brawn) damage, +1k0 for every 5 points you exceeded your opponent's Attack Roll by.
M: Edwards' Thrust: Once per Round use an Interrupt Action to attack.

Drexel (Eisen)

Eisen, Zweihander
Dirty Fighting, Heavy Weapon
Disarm (Heavy Weapon), Lunge (Heavy
Weapon), Pommel Strike (Heavy Weapon),
Exploit Weakness (Drexel)

- A: 2 Stances. +5 Initiative Total with zweihander.
J: +1 Stance. +1 Fear Rating. 1 FR per Fear Rating to Leadership checks, Intimidation Attempts, and Panic Checks. When leading men, your Fear Rating cancels out the effects of opposing Fear Rating on a 1-for-1 basis for you and your men.
M: +1 Stance. +1 Fear Rating.
Zweihander Stances: Bittner (Forward), Gerbeck (High), Kohler (Low), Metzger (Back)
Bittner Stance: 2k2 damage
A: No Action cost to reset zweihander. FR to Parry Active Defense.
J: 2 FRs to Parry AD. Action Dice are considered 1 lower when performing AD.
M: 3 FRs to Parry AD. Action Dice are considered 2 lower when performing AD.
Gerbeck Stance: 3k3 damage
A: Attack while resetting zweihander: 1k2 damage.
J: Attack while resetting zweihander: 2k2 damage.
M: Attack while resetting zweihander: 3k2 damage.
Kohler Stance: 2k2 damage



- A: +10 Initiative Total (in addition to normal +5). Action Dice are considered 1 lower to attack, AD, or reset zweihander (minimum 1).
- J: Action Dice are considered 2 lower to attack, AD, or reset zweihander (minimum 1).
- M: Action Dice are considered 3 lower to attack, AD, or reset zweihander (minimum 1). Metzger Stance: 4k3 damage, user's Passive Defense is reduced by 5, +5 TN of any AD the user attempts.
- A: Action Dice are considered 1 lower (minimum 1) when attacking.
- J: Action Dice are considered 2 lower (minimum 1) when attacking.
- M: Zweihander inflicts 4k4 damage. Eisenfaust (Eisen) Players' Guide, Broadsword/Panzerhand Heavy Weapon, Panzerhand Beat (Heavy Weapon), Bind (Panzerhand), Disarm (Panzerhand), Exploit Weakness (Eisenfaust)
- A: Use broadsword one-handed. NOHP with panzerhand. If enemy misses your Passive Defense, you gain 1 FR on your next attack against him per 5 points he missed you by (they must be used by the end of the round, and before the opponent attacks you again).
- J: Make AD with Parry (Panzerhand), spend 1 DD to try to break weapon. Make Brawn test against a TN based on weapon type.
- M: Each Phase you Hold an Action (maximum Resolve Rank) grants +1k0 of damage if that action is used to attack. While holding this action, you may only Hold or AD with your other Action Dice.

Gallegos (Castille)

- Castille, Rapier Athlete, Fencing Feint (Fencing), Riposte (Fencing), Tagging (Fencing), Exploit Weakness (Gallegos)
- A: FR when Parrying with Fencing Weapon. When Holding an Action, increase the Phase of the die by 1 at the end of the Phase.
- J: Free +1Rank in Riposte.
- M: +10 to TN to be hit.

Larsen (Vendel)

- Vendel/Vesten, Rapier/Lantern Fencing, Streetwise Ambush, Exploit Weakness (Larsen), Feint (Fencing), Parry (Lantern)

- A: Free Night Trained Advantage (-1k1 in dim lighting, -2k1 in total darkness). NOHP when using Parry (Lantern).
- J: Darkness penalties reduced to 1k0 in dim light, -1k1 in total darkness. Dazzle: Spend Action, Contested Roll of Wits + Feint vs. Wits; if successful, your opponents remaining Action Dice increase by number of Raises you made on the roll (those increased past 10 are lost).
- M: No penalty in dim light. +10 to TN to be hit in dim light, +15 in total darkness.

Leegstra (Vendel)

- Players' Guide, Broadsword or Axe Heavy Weapon, Wrestling Beat (Heavy Weapon), Corps-à-Corps, Lunge (Heavy Weapon), Exploit Weakness (Leegstra)
- A: Give up Action Dice before an Attack Roll; each will give +1k1 damage.
- J: Give up Action Dice before a Wound Check; each gives +1k1 to the roll.
- M: Treat Heavy Weapon damage as Firearm damage for determining DW.

MacDonald (Avalon)

- Avalon, Claymore Athlete, Heavy Weapon Beat (Heavy Weapon), Lunge (Heavy Weapon), Pommel Strike, Exploit Weakness (MacDonald)
- A: Ignore claymore's penalty to Attack Roll.
- J: Take -Xk0 penalty to Attack Roll to get +Xk0 damage.
- M: Claymore is treated as a 5k3 weapon.

Pösen (Eisen)

- Eisen, Boar Spear Polearm, Rider Beat (Polearm), Charge (Polearm), Lance (Polearm), Exploit Weakness (Polearm)
- A: +15 Initiative Total during first Round of each combat. If have enough space, can cause +1k1 damage with Lance (Polearm) Knack. 5-pt discount if you take the Dracheneisen Advantage.
- J: During first Round of each combat, can add +1 Rank to Brawn, Finesse, and Resolve, then subtract 1 from each for the rest of the Scene. If any Trait reaches 0 because of this, you are immediately Knocked Out.
- M: At start of a Round, can take Actions from the next Round and use them this Round. Can only do this one every other Round.

Soldano (Castille)

Castille, Rapier/Rapier Athlete, Fencing Double-Parry (Fencing), Tagging (Fencing), Whirl (Fencing), Exploit Weakness (Soldano)

- A: NOHP when using a Fencing Weapon in each hand. Get your ML in DD at start of Battle; lose any unspent ones at end of Battle.
- J: When you inflict damage, spend DD; each gives -5 to number required for them to take an extra DW (minimum 5).
- M: At start of Round while engaged with a Villain, use Intimidation Action without Spending an Action, (+1 to the roll per Brute you've killed this fight and +5 per Henchman). If you succeed, instead of Intimidation effects, steal 1 DD from the GM, plus 1 per 5 you won the roll by.

Torres (Castille)

Castille, Rapier/Cloak (Now includes Guild Membership)
Cloak, Fencing
Double-Parry (Cloak/Fencing), Tagging (Fencing), Side-Step, Exploit Weakness (Torres)

- A: NOHP when using a cloak. Side-Step may affect 1 extra Action Die per ML.
- J: Lower Action Dice by 1 Phase per ML for AD.
- M: Free +1 Rank of Wits and +1 Wits Maximum.

Valroux (Montaigne)

Players' Guide, Rapier/Knife, Fencing, Knife Double-Parry (Fencing/Knife), Feint (Fencing), Tagging (Fencing), Exploit Weakness (Valroux)

- A: NOHP with dagger or main gauche. FR when parrying with dagger or main gauche in off-hand.
- J: If you Raise on an Attack against an enemy and succeed, he must make at least as many Raises to his next Attack against you.
- M: Free +1 Rank of Panache and +1 Panache maximum.

Villanova (Vodacce)

Vodacce, Rapier/Knife
Fencing, Knife
Double-Parry (Fencing/Knife), Feint (Fencing), Stop-Thrust (Fencing), Exploit Weakness (Villanova)

- A: NOHP for knife. FR when using Parry (Knife).
- J: Free +1 Rank of Feint (Fencing), raising the Maximum to 6.

M: Invitation: Lower TN to be hit in increments of 5 (minimum 5); If you are attacked and perform a Stop-Thrust, get 1 FR to Stop-Thrust per 5 you lowered your TN to be hit.



Andrews

At first glance, this style greatly resembles the Aldana School. At the beginning of a duel, the duelist stands with his rapier in one hand and his body turned sideways to his enemy. His off-hand is kept behind him and held with its hand on the other side of the fencer's head from his sword. This is where the similarity ends. Andrews features no dancing; in fact, there is hardly any lateral motion at all. Much as a student of Gallegos learns to fight within imaginary circles, the student of Andrews learns to fight within long, narrow rectangles. He focuses on defending himself from attack while awaiting an opportunity to strike. Upon seeing an opening, he lunges forward with all his power. The main weakness of this style is the inability of many of its students to think outside their box.

Country of Origin: Avalon

Basic Curriculum: Fencing, Athlete

Swordsman Knacks: Lunge (Fencing), Feint (Fencing), Riposte (Fencing), Exploit Weakness (Andrews)

Apprentice: The School's defense-first attitude is ingrained into all of its students from the very beginning. The student gets a +2 to TN to be hit per Mastery Level, except when performing a Lunge.

Journeyman: The defensive emphasis of the School develops further in the Journeyman's style. He gets a Free Raise to all Active Defense rolls, and now receives a bonus equal to his Mastery Level to his TN to be hit while performing a Lunge.

Master: The Master has perfected his attack, allowing him to lunge with more force and speed. He rolls & Keeps one extra die of damage when making a Lunge (+3k1 total). His TN bonus to be hit when lunging increases to equal twice his Mastery Level.

Durchsetzungburg

This school is named for the small university in Hainzl where it originated — a school more famous for fine mathematicians than training warriors. It grew out of a desire for a non-lethal method for settling arguments between the students, and focuses on accuracy and precision. Duels between students are rarely fatal, but scars are common and masters of this style can be very deadly indeed. It uses a long saber with a large basket hilt. A practitioner of stands perfectly square to his opponent with his off-hand tucked into the small of his back. He moves only his sword-arm, which serves for both offense and defense. This stance and immobility is the style's primary weakness.

Country of Origin: Eisen

Basic Curriculum: Fencing, Scholar

Swordsman Knacks: Riposte (Fencing), Tagging (Fencing), Wall of Steel (Fencing), Exploit Weakness (Durchsetzungburg)

Apprentice: Durchsetzungburg is a style of pinpoint accuracy. You get a Free Raise per Mastery Level to make a called shot with a fencing weapon.

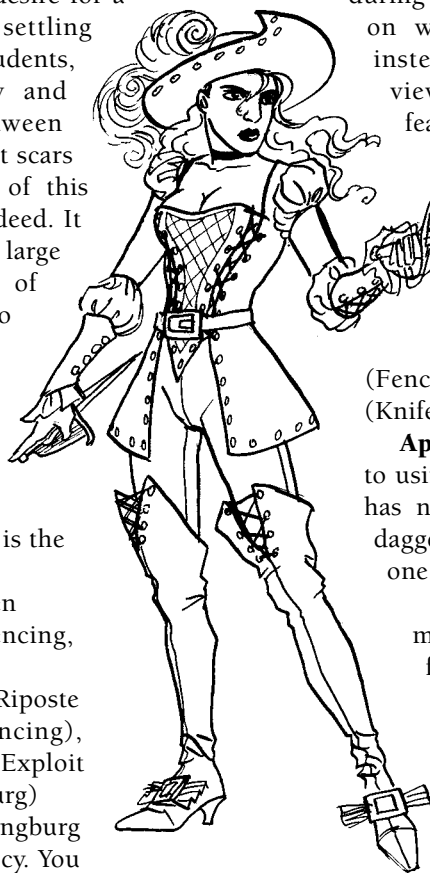
Journeyman: The School's emphasis on precision allows you to make your opponent look especially foolish. You get one free Rank of Tagging, which may increase your Rank to a 6 if appropriate. If it does not, you may later spend 25 XP to increase it to 6. Also, you may add your Rank in Tagging to attempts to make a called shot with a fencing weapon.

Master: Your point control is deadly, allowing you to fit your blade into the tiniest chinks in an enemy's defenses, hitting him in the most

vulnerable areas. All Raises made for called shots with fencing weapons now give you +1k0 to your damage roll.

Gaulle

Gaulle uses a rapier in its main hand and a variant of the main gauche, the triple dagger, in the other. The dagger serves to bind or disarm an opponent, allowing the rapier to attack unimpeded. In contrast to the Valroux School's taunting, Gaulle teaches its students to be silent during the duel, allowing them to concentrate on wounding their opponents with steel instead of words. This business-first viewpoint is one of the School's best features, but the disdain it



teaches for elaborate moves can also undo its practitioners.

Country of Origin: Montaigne

Basic Curriculum: Fencing, Knife

Swordsman Knacks: Double-Parry (Fencing/Knife), Bind (Knife) Disarm (Knife), Exploit Weakness (Gaulle)

Apprentice: The Apprentice becomes used to using a triple-dagger to defend himself. He has no off-hand penalty for using a triple-dagger, and he gets a Free Raise to parry with one as well.

Journeyman: The Journeyman has mastered the art of disarming. He gets a free Rank of Disarm, which may increase it to a 6 if applicable. If not, you may later spend 25 XP to raise it to 6. Furthermore, whenever the student successfully Binds his enemy's weapon with his triple-dagger, he immediately gets one free Action, which must be used to attempt to Disarm his opponent. The TN to perform this Disarm is increased by +5.

Master: The Master of the Gaulle style is adept at defending himself from harm by using his triple-dagger. You may use Bind (Knife) as a Parry Defense Knack. If you use it as an Active Defense Knack and succeed, you have bound your opponent's blade as normal, and may use your Journeyman technique upon him as well.

Kjemper

Kjemper is one of the most ancient styles of personal combat of the Vestenmannavnjar, dating back to only a few generations after the Living Runes fought with the Great Wyrms. It has endured through the ages not only because of the Vestenmannavnjar's sense of tradition, but also because its technique is so sound. The style makes use of a longsword for offense and a round shield for defense. Often, the target of the swordsman's attacks will not be the enemy, but rather his weapon or shield. Kjemper experts delight in breaking their opponent's weapons and then continuing their onslaughts. When facing an aggressive opponent, the Kjemper student will stand behind his shield. When his opponent has exhausted himself, the student attacks with his shield, and then follows up with a series of blows from his sword. If an enemy gets too close, he will find himself knocked to the ground by a vicious bash. The weakness of the Kjemper style is its focus on eliminating threats to itself rather than creating a threat to its opponent.

Country of Origin: Vestenmannavnjar

Basic Curriculum: Heavy Weapon, Shield

Swordsman Knacks: Attack (Shield), Corps-a-Corps, Wall of Steel (Shield), Exploit Weakness (Kjemper)

Apprentice: Kjemper's Apprentices learn the art of using a shield and longsword together. You may use longsword one-handed without any penalty. You have no off-hand penalty when using a shield, and you get a Free Raise to Parry with a shield.

Journeyman: By the time the Swordsman becomes a Journeyman, he has learned to use his sword to break his enemy's items. You may use your longsword to attempt to shatter equipment, especially shields and fencing weapons, with your mighty blows. Roll Finesse + Attack (Heavy Weapon) to hit the weapon, against a TN equal to the TN to hit your opponent, plus two Raises for a called shot to the weapon. If you hit, make a Damage Roll against that weapon. In order to break it, your damage must meet a TN based on the kind of item you are attempting to destroy. This attack may not be parried with the weapon or shield being attacked, as doing so automatically allows the attack to connect with its target. Each additional Raise made to the TN to hit the item will result in one extra rolled die (+1k0) for the Brawn check to break it.

Fencing Weapon — 25

Knife, Dagger, Main-Gauche — 25

Heavy Weapon — 35

Shield or Buckler — 30

Other Weapons — As GM allows, but TN is at least 40.

These TNs can be adjusted by the following modifiers:

+5 for a quality weapon or shield.

–5 for an inferior weapon or shield.

+10 for a dracheneisen weapon or shield.

Master: Years of swinging his heavy blade have made the Master's blows mighty swings that shatter shield and enemies easily. You Keep one extra die (+0k1) when dealing damage with a longsword.

Lucani

The Lucanis based their private style around the broadsword introduced to their land by Kosar mercenaries. Eventually, this School became open not only to members of the family but also to their servants and soldiers as well. The family allowed anyone who could pay a modest fee to receive instruction in the style, and have maintained it even in the face of their Prince's recent demise. This style, which is not especially fashionable in Vodacce, uses a broadsword in one hand and holds the other in a closed fist, and attacks with either one. It is very aggressive and energetic, and does not avoid bodily contact with the opponent. While this can be a great strength, the eagerness with which Lucani fighters close with their foes can also be their undoing.

Country of Origin: Vodacce

Basic Curriculum: Heavy Weapon, Pugilism

Swordsman Knacks: Beat (Heavy Weapon), Pommel Strike (Heavy Weapon), Corps-a-Corps, Exploit Weakness (Lucani)

Apprentice: Lucani teaches its students to attack with their swords and defend with their feet. You may use a broadsword one-handed without any penalty, and you get a Free Raise to any Active Defense made using the Footwork Knack.

Journeyman: The Journeyman's body is almost as dangerous a weapon as his broadsword. You get a free Rank of Corps-a-Corps, which can increase your Rank to 6 if applicable. If not, you may later increase it to a 6 by spending 25 XP. You also get a Free Raise to any attack using the Pugilism Skill, including uses of its Attack, Jab, and Uppercut Knacks, due to the sudden torquing movements of this style.

Master: The Master of Lucani has learned to make an attack with his fist and another with his broadsword in rapid succession. You may spend one Action die to make a combination attack, which must be either a punch and then a sword attack or a sword attack and then a punch. When you make this attack, use the Jab Knack for the punch attack and the Attack (Heavy Weapon) Knack for the sword attack. The TN to hit for each attack is increased by +5, not +10 as normal for Jab.

Robertson

David Robertson created this style after traveling to Castille and learning the Torres School, which he then adapted to fighting in urban settings. The narrow alleys and congested streets of Avalon cities do not allow a swordsman as much room to side-step as a bullring does. Fencers from this School use a rapier in their main hand and a cloak in their off-hand. They stand roughly square to their opponents, though they sometimes stand with one side leading somewhat ahead of the other, depending on what maneuver they are about to perform. The Robertson style involves entangling an opponent's blade with the cloak and launching a series of brutal slashes upon him. The weakness of the school is its reliance on the cloak as its primary means of defense.

Country of Origin: Avalon

Basic Curriculum: Cloak, Fencing

Swordsman Knacks: Double-Parry (Cloak/Fencing), Entangle (Cloak), Feint (Fencing), Exploit Weakness (Robertson)

Apprentice: The Apprentice has learned how best to use a cloak to defend himself. He has no off-hand penalty for using a cloak and he gets a Free Raise to actively defend with a cloak.

Journeyman: The Journeyman has mastered the art of entrapping his enemy's blade within the folds of his cloak. He gets a free Rank of Entangle. This may increase his Rank in Entangle to a 6. If it does not, he may later improve it to a 6 by spending 25 XP.

Master: The Master of Robertson acts reflexively when he has entrapped his enemy's weapon, launching an immediate strike. Once you successfully Entangle an enemy's weapon with your cloak and made one Raise, you immediately get one free attack against him, which does not count against your Actions this round.

Snedig

Snedig is a derivative of the Leegstra style, using fencing weapons instead of broadswords or axes. The style combines Leegstra's shear determination with a surgeon's knowledge of internal anatomy. While the rapier cannot match a heavy weapon's brute force, it can penetrate deeply into the vital areas of the body. The style teaches its students to target vital organs in order to maximize the damage and shock caused by its attacks, but concentrating first and foremost on defense. The style's weakness is similar to that of its parent, Leegstra.

Country of Origin: Vendel (cost is 20 HP if you already have the Leegstra School)

Basic Curriculum: Fencing, Doctor

Swordsman Knacks: Beat (Fencing), Feint (Fencing), Lunge (Fencing), Exploit Weakness (Snedig)

Apprentice: When learning the Snedig style, you learn how to focus your rapier attacks on vital organs. You may choose to give up Action dice in order to deal extra Kept Damage dice (+1k1), should the blow cause damage. You may give up as many Action dice as you desire, on a one-for-one basis. This must be declared before the Attack Roll is made, and if you miss, the sacrificed Actions are wasted.

Journeyman: Journeymen have learned to deflect attacks that would kill lesser men. You may trade Action Dice for kept Wits dice (+1k1) on Active Defense rolls. Also, you can now use your Exploit Weakness (Snedig) Knack as Exploit Weakness (Leegstra) when you are fighting against someone who is using that style.

Master: The Master's Keen knowledge of anatomy and grim determination to deal a mortal injury make his attacks with a rapier extremely dangerous. When your opponents fail a Wound Check after being struck by your Attack (Fencing) Knack, they take one Dramatic Wound plus an additional Dramatic Wound for every 10 points they missed the roll by, much as if they'd been hurt by a firearm.

Swanson

This style is nominally meant to be used with a fencing sword in one hand and its sheath in the other, but hardly anyone carries their sword loose (most prefer to attach their scabbards to their

sword belts). The only variety of fencing weapon not normally worn at the belt is the swordcane, which the Swanson style now caters to almost exclusively. Without Swanson the swordcane's lack of a guard, coupled with the tendency of the discarded sheath to get in the way, would be a considerable impediment in a duel. The school's main weakness is that it necessarily requires its student to stand closer to his enemy because of the shorter blade used.

Country of Origin: Vendel

Basic Curriculum: Dirty Fighting, Fencing

Swordsmen Knacks: Conceal, Double-Parry (Swordcane/Sheath), Pommel Strike (Fencing), Exploit Weakness (Swanson)

Apprentice: The apprentice can use the swordcane's sheath as a Fencing Weapon that does 1k1 damage, but it suffers the same penalty to parrying as an Active Defense as a swordcane. The penalty for using the sheath in the off-hand is negated. The student does not suffer the swordcane's penalty to parry when performing a Double-Parry with the swordcane and its sheath.

Journeyman: The Journeyman has learned the Swanson School's signature maneuver, nicknamed the Wooden Horse. The swordsman holds his sheath in between his enemy's thighs, restricting his mobility. To perform this maneuver, you must declare that you are performing it and roll an attack with the sheath with one Raise. If you succeed, you inflict no damage but have placed your sheath in between your opponent's legs. Decrease the swordsman's TN to be hit by 5 because his arm is left exposed to attack while the sheath is between his opponent's legs. However, while the sheath remains there, the opponent may not run away and cannot use Footwork, Balance, or any other Knack that depends on being able to move one's legs as his Defensive Knack. The sheath may be held there as long as the swordsman likes, but he is easier to hit as long as he keeps it there.

Master: By the time the swordsman becomes a Master of Swanson, he has come to realize that economy of motion is the key to victory. The Master may draw and use his swordcane's blade without any form of penalty to attack or defend. Once per Round, the Master may make an Active Defense using a swordcane without spending any Action Dice to do so. This Active Defense must be either a Parry or a Double-Parry.

Urostifter

Another ancient fighting style of the Vestenmannavnjar, Urostifter uses a pair of longswords to great effect. It is not as defensively oriented as the Kjemper style, preferring to confound an opponent, which the swordsman accomplishes this by beating his opponent's blade and using dazzling feints to create openings for his attacks. This is usually accompanied by a steady stream of banter, mocking the opponent. It lacks the style and flair of a Valroux Swordsman, who will belittle his opponent's skill with the blade or fashion sense, but makes up for it in sheer vitriol. Urostifter's students tend to say horrible things about their opponent's wife, mother, sister, size, weight, and intelligence. Some think that the Urostifter's weakness is that it becomes useless when the Swordsman loses one of his blades, but this is not the case. If one of his swords breaks or is lost, he is quite capable of defending himself with the remaining weapon. The real weakness of this school is that it focuses too much on trickery and taunting, so if the enemy does not react to the goading, the Urostifter swordsman is thrown off his stride.

Country of Origin: Vestenmannavnjar

Basic Curriculum: Athlete, Heavy Weapon

Swordsmen Knacks: Beat (Heavy Weapon), Double-Parry (Heavy Weapon), Feint (Heavy Weapon), Exploit Weakness (Urostifter)

Apprentice: Urostifter teaches its students to use two longswords at the same time. You may use longsword one-handed without penalty, and you do not have any penalty for using a longsword in your off-hand. You get a Free Raise to Parry with a longsword.

Journeyman: Time and practice has made you adept at confounding your enemies. You gain a Free Raise to your Feint and Beat attempts when using one or two longswords, and you get one Free Raise to any attempt to make a Taunt Repartee Action.

Master: The Master's ability to shatter an opponent's confidence is matched only by his ability to shatter an opponent's body. You roll one extra die (+1k0) when rolling damage with a longsword. You also get one extra Action per Round (roll and Keep an extra die when you roll Initiative) which must be used to make a Taunt Action.

New Advantages

Membership: Razors (5 Points, not for starting Heroes)

You must be a Master in at least one sanctioned Swordsman School to join this organization. Members of this group get an additional discount of -1 XP to the cost of purchasing a new Exploit Weakness Knack or improving an existing one, whether or not that Knack is for a sanctioned Swordsman School. They serve as the internal security force for the Swordsman's Guild, which means that they have extra authority within the Guild. They may attack another Swordsman with impunity if that Swordsman has violated the rules of the Guild.

While Heroes may not normally begin play belonging to the Razors (the HP cost is for NPCs), they are welcome to join later on in the game, provided they have Mastered at least one Swordsman School and are members in good standing with the Guild. As always, the GM has final discretion, and players should be aware that joining the Razors entails added responsibilities, not just the ability to kill Swordsmen.

Lightning Reflexes (4 Points)

You react very quickly to threats against you, allowing you to get out of harm's way. When you use an Interrupt Action to make an Active Defense, it costs you one less Action Die than normal (minimum 1).

Firm Grip (2 Points)

Your hands are extremely strong, and can hold things as firmly as a vice. You receive a Free Raise to any rolls involving your Brawn when determining if you can hold onto something. This includes Grappling, and Bind (Panzerhand) rolls, as well as rolling to resist a Disarm attempt.

Fencing Academy (Varies, School members only)

Cost: -1 for Swordsman's Guild members (minimum 1)

The character has an academy where he teaches his arts. The size of the academy is indicative of the number of students and assistants that he can have at any time. Assistants are students of the same Swordsman School as the Hero, and the students are in the process of learning the basic curriculum. Treat assistants as 75 pt Henchmen and students as Threat Rating 2 Brutes. The size will also determine the number of salons (teaching rooms) and the academy's net profits after paying for its operating expenses.

1 Point: Tiny

- 0 Assistants
- 1 Salon
- 2 Students
- 30 G profit per month

3 Points: Small

- 1 Assistant
- 2 Salons
- 6 Students
- 80 Guilders per month

5 Points: Average

- 3 Assistant
- 4 Salons
- 12 Students
- 150 Guilders per month

7 Points: Large

- 4 Assistants
- 5 Salons
- 20 Students
- 200 Guilders per month

Inaccessible (6 Points)

The academy is not open to the general public. In fact, its very location is a tightly-held secret. The academy maintains its secrecy by being very selective about its members. Students of this

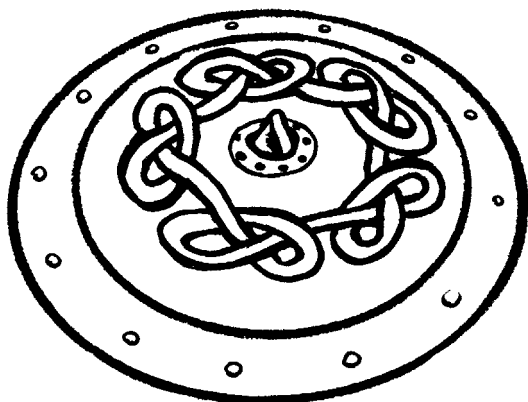
academy are Brutes with a Threat Rating of 3 instead of Threat Rating 2 and Assistants are 100 pt Heroes, Scoundrels, and Villains instead of Henchmen. Only the Students, Assistants, and Hero know exactly where the academy is located and how to get into it.

Secure Building (5 Points)

The academy is in a strong, solid building, with sturdy stone walls and excellent locks on its doors. All Climbing and Lockpicking rolls made in relation to the building add +10 to their TN.

Secret Entrance (2 Points)

In addition to the main entrance, the School has a secret door hidden in one of its Salons. Only the Students, the Assistants and the Hero know where it is. In terms of the Chase Rules (see pages 169-172 of the *Game Masters' Guide*), it gives a 4 Phase advantage over any pursuers if they exit through it.



Knacks For Sanctioned Swordsman Schools

Beat

When attacking an enemy, you can declare a Beat. You roll Finesse + Beat, and must roll a number of Raises equal to your enemy's Brawn in order for your Beat to be successful. If you are successful, he cannot avoid the attack using any Active Defense.

Bind

A Bind is only usable against an opponent's fencing weapon. It locks your sword (or buckler, or panzerhand) and his sword together. To use this attack, you declare that you are attempting to Bind your opponent's weapon, and then roll to attack using this Knack. If successful, you have momentarily bound his sword. While the two of you are in the Bind, neither of you can use your bound item.

To try to break your hold, your opponent spends 1 Action die (remembering the rules on Interrupt and Held Actions) and then rolls a Contested Roll of his Brawn + Parry (in the weapon you have bound) versus your Brawn + Bind. If he wins, the hold is broken; otherwise, it holds fast. You on the other hand, may spend Action dice (remembering the rules on Interrupt and Held Actions) to improve your hold. Each action die you spend gives you one Free Raise from now on when your opponent tries to break your hold. If your opponent wishes, he may simply release his weapon, but that would leave it in your hands.

Charge (Polearm)

Students of the Posen School try to hit early and often, then withdraw to a place of safety. You may lower one of your Action Dice by your Rank in this Knack (to a minimum of 1) just before Phase 1 of the first Round of each combat.

Conceal

A woman with a dagger in her bodice has a means of defense, even though she may appear helpless. If you wish to get a pistol into a well-guarded ballroom, or a lockpick into a jail cell, you need this Knack. To use this Knack you must make a Simple Roll with it, and the total generated becomes the TN for anyone nearby to see through the concealment. Anyone searching you receives a Free Raise, and anyone thoroughly searching you receives two Free Raises. This is identical to the Conceal Knack that appears in the Players' Guide, but it counts as a Basic Knack for members of the Swanson School.

Corps-a-Corps

Corps-a-corps is the art of close, or body against body, fencing. You declare that you are using this Knack instead of the Attack Knack. If your attack gets through, you inflict a 0k1 bare-handed attack, and your opponent then falls down and becomes prone.

Disarm

You can only use this Knack after an opponent has just missed your Passive Defense. Spend an Action Die to make a Contested Roll of your Brawn + Disarm versus his Brawn + Attack (in the weapon he is wielding). If you win, the weapon is knocked out of his hand. If you perform this move with two Raises, you can wind up holding the weapon if you choose.

Double-Parry

A double-parry is parrying with two blades (usually a fencing weapon and a main gauche) crossed before you. You may declare that you are

using this Knack instead of an ordinary Parry as an Active Defense. Success grants one Drama Die, which can be used for a number of Phases equal to your Rank with this maneuver. In any event, if you do not use the Drama Die by the end of the Round, you lose it.

Exploit Weakness (School)

Once you have attended a School, you have not only learned its strengths, but its weaknesses as well. Whenever you duel against someone who is using a School whose weakness you are familiar with, even if you aren't currently using that style of fighting yourself, you gain a number of unkept dice (+1k0 each) equal to your Rank in your Exploit Weakness Knack to all your Attack and Active Defense rolls. A Swordsman who attends more than one School obviously knows more than one weakness...

Feint

When attacking the enemy, you can declare a Feint. You roll Finesse + Feint, but you must make a number of Raises equal to your enemy's Wits. If you manage this, he cannot avoid the attack using any Active Defense.

Lance (Polearm)

This replaces the Attack (Polearm) Knack when using a polearm from horseback. This is considered a Basic Knack.

Lunge

A Lunge is an aggressive attack that leaves you open for a moment. When you declare a Lunge, use this Knack to attack with. You roll two extra unkept dice for damage if your attack is successful. However, your TN to be hit drops to 5 for this Phase only, and you may not use any Active Defenses for the rest of this Phase.

Pommel Strike

A pommel strike involves smashing the hilt of your sword into your target's face. You declare that you are using this Knack instead of the Attack Knack. If your attack gets through, you inflict a 0k2 attack, and your opponent's TN to be hit is reduced to 5 until the end of the next Phase.

Riposte

A riposte is a parry followed up immediately with a counterattack. You first attempt an Active Defense against the incoming Attack, and then, if the Active Defense is successful, make an Attack of your own on the person who just attacked you. When performing a Riposte, you receive one-half the dice from your Parry Knack (rounded down) for your Active Defense and one-half the dice from your Attack Knack (rounded down) for your counterattack. For every Rank in Riposte, you may add one die to either the Active Defense attempt or the counterattack. These dice are added after you've halved the appropriate Knacks.

Side-Step

Whenever you use an Active Defense successfully, you may lower your next upcoming Action Die by your Rank in this Knack. You may not make the Action Die lower than the current Phase. This Knack is the same as the Side-Step Knack found in the Athlete Skill in the Players' Guide, but it is considered a Basic Knack for Students of the Torres School.

Stop-Thrust

A stop-thrust is a counterattack made with no thought to your own defense. It is a quick jabbing thrust made at an oncoming opponent at the moment when he is attempting to attack you, in the hopes that the point of your sword will stop him from continuing his attack. When an opponent attacks you, you may spend a Held or current Action (not an Interrupt Action) to perform a stop-thrust. To do so, roll Wits + Stop-Thrust as an Attack Roll against the attacking opponent. If you hit, you deal 3k2 Wounds to

them. If this causes a Dramatic Wound to your opponent, then the attack they were about to make is canceled without effect.

Tagging

Tagging is a particularly flashy piece of showing off with your weapon, designed to temporarily dishearten your enemy. This could be anything from cutting off a lock of his hair to carving your initials in his shirt. You must use this Knack instead of your Attack Knack for your Attack Roll. If you successfully hit, the attack causes no damage, but you can cause one of two things to happen. Either your opponent loses 1 Drama Die until the end of the battle (at which point it returns), or you can gain 1 Drama Die yourself until the end of the battle (at which point it disappears if still unspent). These Drama Dice never become Experience Points, even if the battle was the last thing to happen in the Story.

Wall of Steel (Fencing)

Your sword is an ever-moving blocking device, flitting from parry to parry. You use it like a tortoise uses its shell. If you have not attacked yet this Round, then each Rank of this Knack raises your TN to be hit by 2 if you use Parry (Fencing) to determine your Passive Defense.

Wall of Steel (Shield)

Your shield is an ever-present blocking device, parrying one blow after another. You use it like a tortoise uses its shell. If you have not attacked yet this Round, then each Rank of this Knack raises your TN to be hit by 2 if you use Parry (Shield) to determine your Passive Defense.

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.

Reputation Awards and Losses

Note: These are the definitive set of rules for Reputation Awards and Losses for dueling, and replace the rules found in such places as the Castille book. GMs who run campaigns limited solely to such nations as Castille or Vodacce may choose to adopt some of those rules instead, since they more closely reflect the local sense of honor.

Entering a duel entitles a participant to a gain of 1 Reputation Point. If the duel is against a more famous duelist (one with more Reputation Dice), this is an act of courage worthy of 2 Reputation Points.

Winning a duel is worth another Reputation Point. Defeating a someone whose greatest Mastery Level in a Guild-sanctioned Swordsman School is higher than your own is worth the difference in Mastery Levels (Initiates and non-members have Mastery Level 0 and Grand Masters have Mastery Level 4) in Reputation Points. Thus, an Apprentice of Valroux who defeats a Master of Aldana gets 1 Reputation Point for winning, plus another 2 for the difference in Mastery Levels, for a total Reputation Point gain of 3. The loser of a duel does not lose Reputation for doing so because he showed courage simply by entering.

If a duel has famous witnesses, then the duelist may attempt to gain Reputation by displaying his skills. Each Raise he makes (other than Raises made specifically for damage) gains 1 Reputation point.

Accepting a contract to issue a challenge, to fight as a champion, or to serve as a bodyguard and then breaking that contract is a failure to keep a promise, which causes the Hero to lose Reputation Points equal to the sum of his Reputation Rank and the Reputation Rank of the person to whom he made that promise.

Using a dishonorable weapon such as a ranged weapon or a hidden blade to fight a duel is an act of cowardice. Doing so will cause the Hero to lose Reputation equal to half his current Reputation Rank. Being caught using poison in a duel is an especially cowardly act, costing the Hero his Reputation Rank in Reputation Points.

Achieving Master status in a Swordsman School gives both the Hero and his teacher an amount of Reputation equal to half of the student's current Reputation Rank. Reaching Grand Master status is an even greater achievement, giving the Hero his Reputation Rank in Reputation Points.

Using magic in a duel causes no loss of Reputation Points if both parties agree on it beforehand. Otherwise a Reputation Loss can occur. The use of magical effects that give bonuses in combat (The Green Man, for example) causes a loss of half the Hero's current Reputation Rank in Reputation Points. Using magical effects that directly affects the opponent or his equipment (Villskap, for instance) causes the Hero to lose his current Reputation Rank in Reputation Points.

Losing a duel does not cause a loss of Reputation Points unless the Hero's conduct in the duel was cowardly or unchivalrous, in which case he loses an extra Reputation Point in addition to the loss for his behavior. There is no shame in being beaten in a duel, even if you are a Grand Master and an Initiate defeats you. The true test of your honorable and courageous nature is entering the duel in the first place.

Initiates

Not every student of a school progresses far enough to learn its techniques. Starting characters cannot be Initiates, but this option is available to people trying to learn a new Swordsman School by spending Experience Points.

When you spend 50 XP to learn a new Swordsman School, you become an Apprentice of that School. Now there is another option, a stepping stone to becoming an Apprentice. By spending 20 XP, you get Rank 1 in each of the Swordsman Knacks of that School, but you do not have any of the Techniques of this School. You may later spend another 30 XP to become an Apprentice. An Initiate of a School is considered to have a Mastery Level of 0 in that School.

Grand Masters

Ordinarily, people who have studied more than one Swordsman School must choose to fight in one style or another, and can only use the Techniques of that style.

During the fight, they may switch styles, but at any given time they have only one School's set of Techniques that they can use. A duelist is also subject only to the weakness of the style in which he is currently fighting, so his opponents may only use the Exploit Weakness Knack for the School in which he is currently fighting. The Grand Master's style reduces the effective Rank of his opponent's Exploit Weakness Knacks for the Schools in his combination style by 1.

Swordsmen who have become Masters of more than one style may become Grand Masters, those who have adapted their thinking to allow them to use the Techniques of two different Schools at the same time. The Grand Master's combination style of fighting also gives him the weaknesses of both styles, so his enemies gain the benefit of the Exploit Weakness Knack for either School. If his opponent knows the Exploit Weakness Knack for both of the Schools comprising the Grand Master's style, the one with the higher Rank is used. The Grand Master may choose to fight in one style or the other, or in his combined style. Another benefit of Grand Mastery is that you are considered to have Mastery Level 4 in the Schools that you have learned to combine.

Creating Grand Master Styles

A Grand Master can combine any two Swordsman Schools in which he is a Master, provided that they use compatible weapons (i.e., If one School uses a Fencing Weapon, so must the other, and if one School uses one object in its off-hand, the other school must use either the same kind of object or no object at all. Thus, one can combine Eisenfaust with Leegstra, Ambrogia with Valroux, or Aldana with Donovan, but not Eisenfaust with Aldana, Valroux with Donovan, or Ambrogia with Leegstra.)

When creating his new Grand Master style, the character must learn how to integrate each Technique of the two Schools he is combining. The more similar the two Schools are, the easier this is to do.

The XP cost to start the style is 60, plus 10 XP for each Swordsman Knack other than Exploit Weakness that the two Schools do not have in common, plus 20 if neither School says that its HP cost is reduced if you have the other School. For example,

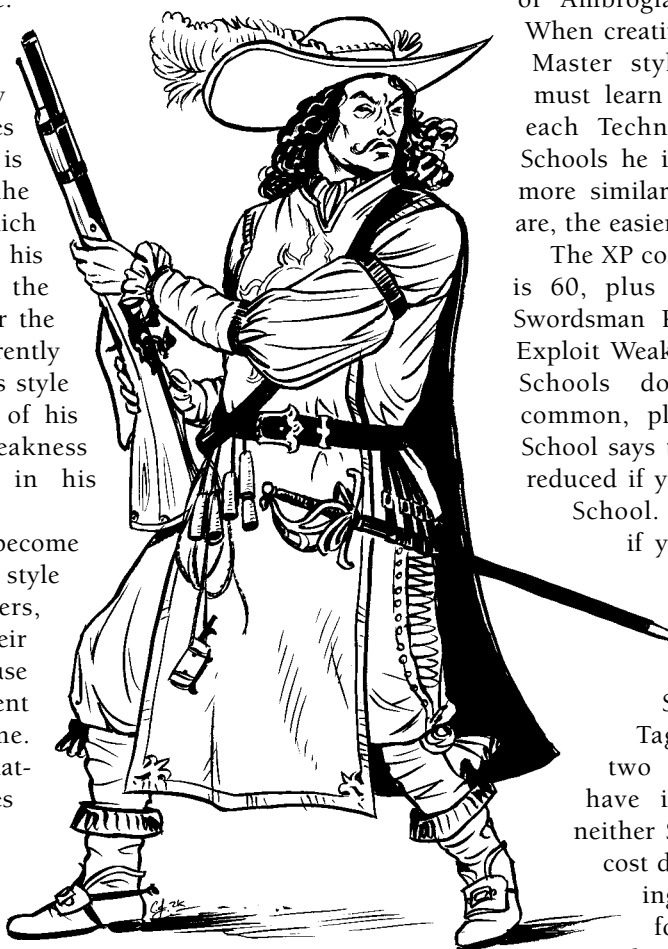
if you are combining Villanova and Valroux, there are 2 Swordsman Knacks, Stop-Thrust and Tag-ging, that the two Schools do not have in common, and neither School gives a HP cost discount for knowing the other. Therefore, beginning the

Grand Master style combining

them costs 60 (base cost) +20 (2 Knacks) +20 (neither School gives discount) = 100 XP.

Another Example of a Grand Master Style:

A Knight of the Rose and Cross who is a Master of both Valroux and Desaix wishes to create a Grand Master style combining those two



Schools. The Knacks (other than Exploit Weakness) for Desaix are Double-Parry (Fencing/Knife), Feint (Fencing), and Lunge (Fencing), while the Knacks for Valroux are Double-Parry (Fencing/Knife), Feint (Fencing), and Tagging (Fencing). Desaix costs less HP for students of the Valroux School. There are 2 Knacks, Lunge (Fencing) and Tagging (Fencing), that are not common to the two Schools. The cost to combine the two into the Grand Master style is $60 + 20 = 80$ XP.

In many cases, the Techniques of the two Schools may repeat each other. When using a combination style, any effects add to each other. Techniques that reduce or negate penalties combine with each other, but do not lower the penalty below the lowest minimum specified by one of the Techniques. For instance, two Techniques that negate the off-hand penalty for using a knife do not combine to provide any extra bonus when using one. Effects that add a Rank to a Knack or Trait do not add Ranks above the maximums expressed by either School.

Example of a Grand Master Style's Techniques: Valroux and Villanova

The Grand Master spends 100 XP and can use all six of the Techniques together. The Apprentice Techniques, when combined, negate the off-hand penalty for fighting with a dagger, main gauche, or any other knife and also provides a Free Raise to any use of Parry (Knife), with an extra Free Raise if the knife used is a main gauche or a dagger. The Grand Master integrates the Valroux Journeyman ability into his style, allowing him to "raise the stakes" of a fight. The Villanova Journeyman technique simply gives a Rank of Feint, so its effects always apply and the Grand Master does not receive any extra mechanical benefit for it, and the same is true for the Valroux Master Technique, but now the Grand Master may use the Villanova Master Technique and the Valroux Journeyman Technique together, which can be a very potent combination.



Adding More Schools to a Grand Master Style

Many Grand Masters try to create a style that combines more than two Schools. Doing so is incredibly difficult, and very few have ever truly succeeded. In order to do so, the Grand Master must have created a combination style for each possible pair of Schools involved. For example, if the Grand Master wishes to combine Valroux, Ambrogia, and Villanova (all of which use a Knife and a Fencing Weapon, so they do use compatible weapons), then he must first combine Valroux with Ambrogia, Valroux with Villanova, and Ambrogia with Villanova.

Once the requirements are met, the Grand Master may spend 75 XP per School involved after the second to bring each style into a super-combination. For instance, the super-combination of Valroux, Ambrogia, and Villanova will cost 75 XP, and a super-combination of Valroux, Ambrogia, Villanova, and Desaix will cost 150 XP. Adding a School to an existing super-combination costs 75 XP, as long as the requirements to do so are met. A Grand Master may use any of the Techniques of any of the Schools in his super-combination at the same time.

Creating a School/Fighting Style

- You can attempt to use a Swordsman Knack even if you do not have a Rank in that Knack, using the normal rules for having Rank 0 in a Knack. In other words, the TN is increased by +5 and your dice do not explode.
- Techniques that give a Free Raise to parry with a knife or other item also give that Free Raise to any attempt to Double-Parry if one of the items used to make the Double-Parry is an item of the type that gets the Free Raise.

Rules Classifications

The following is a list of guidelines for players interested in creating Swordsman Schools of their own. There are no hard and fast rules for School creation, and mechanics require a great deal of tinkering before they become balanced. The essay below covers *guidelines*, not an intractable system.

There are several items to consider when designing a Swordsman School, including the Knacks it gives and the techniques it grants, as well as a few other considerations. When assigning the School's Swordsman Knacks, you should meet three specific criteria. The first of these is "Am I putting any Knacks together that combo particularly well?" If you are, then you should make sure to count that as part of the School's power level, and try to balance the techniques of the School with this in mind. The next question you need to ask yourself is "Are any of the Knacks left 'dangling'?" In other words, are there any Knacks that have nothing to do with the rest of the School? Always try to avoid danglers. The last criterion for Knacks involves their quantity: "Are there four, and only four, Knacks?" If there aren't there is a game balance issue. Be sure to include an Exploit Weakness (School) Knack on Swordsman Schools, but you need not do this for Strategy Schools such as Steil and Unabwendbar.

Next, you need to consider the Apprentice Technique of the School. Is the Apprentice Ability useful? If it is not, then get rid of it and come up with one that is. Next, you need to ask yourself "Is it balanced?" A good Apprentice Technique is worth between 1 to 4 HP. If you have exceeded this, you may need to tone it down. Off-hand penalty negation is worth about 1 point, a Free Raise for a particular task is worth 2 or 3, and bigger stuff pushes the upper end of the scale.

The Journeyman Technique is where you should try to get in some serious "cool" features for the School. A Journeyman ability ought to increase your power level substantially.

The Eisenfaust ability and the Aldana ability are both fine examples of how powerful to aim for. Good Journeyman Techniques should be worth anywhere from seven to ten HP.

The Master Technique should ideally fundamentally change the way in which the combat mechanics apply to the Swordsman. Eisenfaust, Leegstra, and Valroux are all excellent examples of this principle. Eisenfaust, which allows holding Actions to become much more powerful, adds a potent side-effect to a basic mechanic of the game. Leegstra changes a basic mechanic, the number of Dramatic Wounds inflicted by a melee attack, and Valroux, which allows a character to reach a 6 or 7 Rank in Panache, lets a character ignore an existing restriction. Master Techniques like this are worth about 15-20 HP. Master abilities are often the heart and soul of a School, so they should be as closely tied into the theme and flavor of the School as possible. Villanova is a good example, as is the Aldana ability. Each has a mechanic tied into the feel of the School. Ideally, you should have a strong sense of your School's feel before you begin.

There are a few other concerns that should affect your thought process when you create a new School. Whenever possible, avoid re-using old Techniques from other Schools. Never re-use Master Techniques, you would just be stealing another School's thunder. Journeyman abilities can be re-used, but the mechanics need a strong tweak to make them different. Apprentice abilities are often re-used in part but they shouldn't be reused in entirety, with some exceptions for schools that have split off of each other. Also, a Swordsman School should ideally add no dice rolls to the game. If it must add one, keep it simple and don't make too many modifiers to it. Another thing to consider is Drama Dice spending as part of a Technique. Avoid having any Swordsman School Technique require the expenditure of a Drama Die... unless you get to do something really staggeringly powerful with it!

In some cases, you can try to allow a School to have a more powerful Apprentice Technique. For every point you give it here, subtract 3 from the total of the other techniques. If the Journeyman Technique is a bit underpowered, make the Master Technique stronger.

Weapon Types

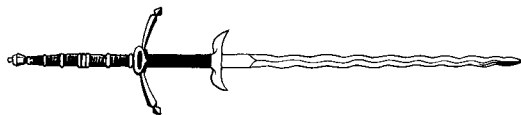
Broadsword

A broadsword is a Heavy Weapon, with a large wide blade, suited for cutting, slashing, and thrusting. It frequently has a large basket hilt. They do 3k2 damage. The average person needs to use both hands to wield one of these, even though the hilt only covers one of the hands. The off-hand helps to support the wrist of the sword arm.



Zweihander

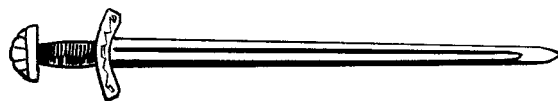
Zweihanders are enormous swords that often stand taller than their wielder. The sword is designed to allow eight points of attack along its length. A zweihander is a Heavy Weapon that does 3k3 damage. However, after every attack made with a zweihander, the Hero must either spend one Action to reset it before it can be used to attack or parry with again, or else drop the zweihander and switch to another weapon.



Longsword

A longsword is a weapon of Vestenmannavnjar origin. During the Dark Ages, its popularity spread throughout the continent, but the advent of firearms and the lighter rapier has caused the rest of Theah to abandon its use. A longsword is a Heavy Weapon that does 3k2 damage. It has a

bonus of +5 to TN to break, but its weight causes its wielder to suffer a penalty of +5 to the TN to perform Parry Active Defense rolls with it.



Boar Spear

A boar spear is a polearm approximately five to seven feet long, with a crossbar behind the tip that can force opponents back away from the wielder. Boar spears require one hand to wield and inflict 1k2 damage. However, an opponent successfully hit by a boar spear must increase his lowest Action die by 1 (to a maximum of 10) for every 10 Flesh Wounds inflicted to him.



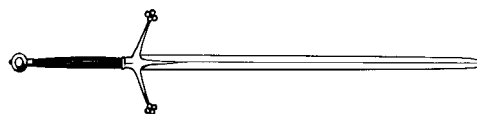
Rapier

The rapier is the most common form of Fencing Weapon in Theah. It consists of a long, thin, straight blade with a point. Its attacks are made mostly with its point because most of its blade does not have a very sharp edge. Rapiers do 2k2 damage.



Claymore

Claymores are Heavy Weapons, huge swords used by the Highland Marche. They are extremely large and heavy in order to put enormous impetus behind their blows. A Hero's Attack Roll is at a penalty of one unkept die (-1k0), while the damage the sword does is 4k2.



Falchion

Falchions are Fencing Weapons. They have blades designed to slash and chop, but are not well-suited to thrusting attacks. Their short, heavy blades do 3k2 damage, but they are awkward to parry with, giving a penalty to Parry Active Defense attempts of +5 to the TN to make the parry.



Cutlass

Cutlasses are Fencing Weapons often used by sailors and pirates. They are weighted like meat cleavers to cut easily into flesh and bone, but at the expense of accuracy. A Hero's Attack Roll is at a penalty of one unkept die (-1k0), while the weapon does 3k2 damage.



Saber

Sabers are Fencing Weapons with sharp, slightly curved blades. They are especially useful for cavalry soldiers, since they can be drawn easily while sitting in a saddle. They do 2k2 damage.



Smallsword

The national sword of Avalon is the smallsword, a Fencing Weapon with a blade that is shorter but sharper than a rapier. It is suited to cuts, thrusts, and slashes, and causes 2k2 damage.

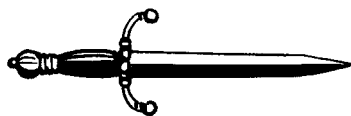


Swordcane

A swordcane is a light fencing blade hidden in a cane. The sword's grip is the cane's handle, and the remainder forms the sheath for the sword. There is usually some sort of locking mechanism to prevent the sword from coming out accidentally. It takes a Wits roll against a TN of 30 to notice that a swordcane is not an ordinary cane. When wielded, the swordcane is treated as a Fencing Weapon, with the exception that its lack of a guard gives a penalty to its user of +5 to all TNs for using Parry (Fencing) as an Active Defense.

Main-Gauche

The main-gauche is the main parrying knife in Theah. It is a Knife and does 1k2 damage.

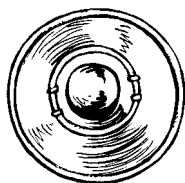


Triple-Dagger

A triple-dagger resembles a main gauche with two smaller prongs projecting up diagonally from its hilt, outward from the central blade. It gives a +2 bonus to the wielder's TN to be hit if he is using Parry (Knife) as his active defense. Its weight is too unbalanced to allow it to be thrown as far as other knives. Its maximum throwing range is equal to its wielder's Brawn Rank. It is a Knife and does 1k2 damage.

Buckler

A buckler is a small round shield. It has fallen into disfavor in every country except for Avalon. It uses the Buckler Skill and an attack using one does 1k1 damage.



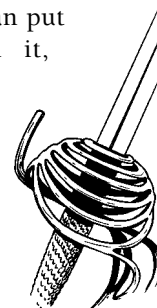
Shield

A shield is similar to a buckler, but much larger and heavier. The wielder relies on its size for protection, while a buckler can be moved quickly to deflect incoming blows. Due to the size of a shield, the TN to be hit by non-firearm ranged attacks (such as bows and crossbows) is increased by +10 when using one. If a character bashes another person with a shield, it inflicts 1k1 damage. These use the Shield Skill.

Custom Sword Creation

Fencing Ring Grips (3 G)

The grip is a ring above the quillions of a blade; the user can put his or her fingers through it, allowing for greater control of the weapon. A fencing ring grip gives a Free Raise to any Feint attempt the wielder makes. However, should the wielder be disarmed of his fencing weapon, he suffers 1k1 Wounds: any fingers in the ring grip become battered and possibly broken.



Blade-Heavy (4 G)

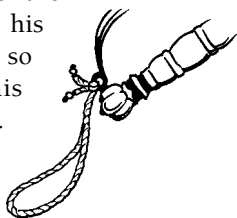
The weight in this weapon is shifted towards the blade, allowing it to do more damage at the cost of some speed. The damage of the weapon is increased by +1k0 but the wielder's Action Dice are all considered one higher than they really are.

Pommel-Heavy (3 G)

The weight in this weapon is shifted towards the pommel, reducing the damage the sword does but making it easier to parry. You receive a Free Raise to make Parry Active Defenses with it, but the damage is reduced by -1k0.

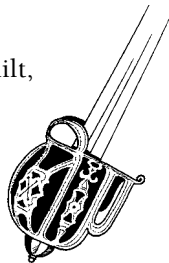
Martingale (1G)

A martingale is a loop of cord attached to the pommel of the sword. The wielder puts his hand through this loop so that hangs around his wrist while he fights. While he can be disarmed, the sword will not be taken away from him because it is attached to his wrist.



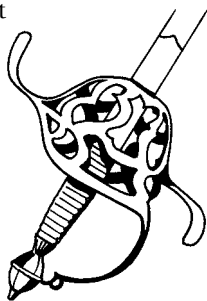
Basket Hilt (10 G)

The sword has a basket hilt, which completely protects his sword hand, making it immune to called shots. It also gives a bonus of +1k0 damage when the user makes a pommel strike.



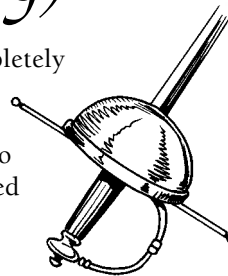
Half-Basket Hilt (5 G)

The sword has a hilt that covers the front and outer edge of his sword hand, making it more difficult to strike with a called shot. It requires one extra Raise to make a called shot to this hand, and the sword does +1 damage when the user makes a pommel strike.



Bell Guard (2 G)

The sword's guard completely covers the top of his sword hand, making it a more difficult target. The TN to strike this hand with a called shot is increased by 2.



Spring-Mounted Pommel Blade (25 G)

This sword's pommel contains a hidden dagger blade that can be pushed out and retracted again. Using this blade is highly dishonorable, but can come in handy during street fights or other dicey situations. It does 1k1 damage and makes its attack as a Pommel Strike.

Quality Weapon (double cost)

The sword is of extremely high quality, and is resistant to rust and losing its edge. It is also harder to break by those who have Techniques that break weapons.

Inferior Weapon (half normal cost)

The sword is of extremely low quality, making it vulnerable to rust and a blunted edge. The sword is also much easier to break by those who have Techniques that break weapons.

Other Weapons

The following information is taken from previous sourcebooks and reprinted here for your convenience.

Castillian Blade (Varies)

As every Castillian knows, the finest blades in the country come from his home province. Of course, it might be argued that the people of Soldano are the most “correct” in this belief, but there can be no doubt that Castille is the home of some truly fine bladesmiths. *A Hero may only buy one of the following Castillian Blades. Castillians receive a 1-point discount (min. cost 1) if they purchase a blade from their home province.*

Aldana Blade (3 Points)

The Aldana blades are light and flexible, excellent for quick strikes and rapid parries. When found in the hand of a skilled swordsman, an Aldana blade is almost as dangerous as a Soldano. *An Aldana Blade is a 2k2 Fencing Weapon and allows you to lower one of your Action dice by one at the start of each Round.*

Gallegos Blade (3 Points)

Gallegos blades are well-balanced and durable. They can be bent nearly double and will spring straight again. *A Gallegos Blade is a 2k2 Fencing Weapon and adds 2 to any Attack Rolls made with it. In addition, 5 is added to the TN of any attempt to break a Gallegos Blade.*

Soldano Blade (6 Points)

The fine Soldano steel is forged by the best Castillian blacksmiths into blades of truly exceptional worth. These swords hold an edge longer, are harder to break, and are better balanced than most others. *A Soldano Blade is a 2k2 Fencing Weapon that adds 2 to any rolls made with it. This includes Attack Rolls, Damage Rolls, Parry Active Defenses, and any Swordsman Knacks*

that involve Fencing. In addition, 5 is added to the TN of any attempt to break a Soldano Blade.

Torres Blade (3 Points)

The Torres blade is known for its extraordinarily keen edge. This allows the blade to cut deeper and do more damage in general. *A Torres Blade is a 2k2 Fencing Weapon that adds 3 to any Damage Rolls made with it.*

Zepeda Blade (2 Points)

Zepeda blades are generally considered to be the least valuable of the Castillian blades. Although they are lighter and sharper than a typical sword, they pale in comparison to the magnificent Soldano blades. *A Zepeda Blade is a 2k2 Fencing Weapon that adds 1 to any Attack or Damage Rolls made with it. (From page 102 of the Castille book.)*

Dietrich Sword (2 Points, Rose and Cross Only)

The Knight has obtained one of Dietrich's famous swords. When making Damage Rolls with the sword, its wielder re-rolls any 1s that occur. He may continue re-rolling until no 1s remain. (From page 68 of the *Rose and Cross* book.)

El Esoque Occulto

The chosen weapon of Don Andrés del Aldana's new swordsman school, this rapier has a spring-loaded dagger in the hilt. It looks completely normal but close inspection reveals a small button underneath the hilt that can be pressed to release an 8–10 inch blade from the pommel. The weapon is called el puñal del estoque, and has the same stats a standard knife. (From pages 82–83 of *Los Vagos* book.)

Fighting Lantern

A fighting lantern is a masked, bull's-eye lantern, most often used by the students of the Larsen School. Very little light escapes it when its mask is down, and when the mask is up, light can be directed in one direction only. The handle of the lantern is attached to its back, and a thumb-activated lever allows its user to raise and lower the mask. (From page 103 of the *Vendel/Vesten* book.)

The Serpent Swords of Solomon

The unique sword of the Church Guard is forged in a fashion originating in Cathay but improved upon by Solomon Antone's insights. When the metal is folded over and over again, a dark serpentine shape forms in the center of the blade. Crafted from the finest Castillian steel, the swords are as impressive as they are deadly. Today, the sword resembles a basket-hilt claymore with an open grip, but the blade still remains the same as in years past.

The blade is considered a 2k2 sword. 10 is added to the TN of any attempt to break it. (From page 94 of the *Church of the Prophets* book.)

Swordcane

A swordcane is a light fencing blade hidden in a cane. The sword's grip forms the cane's handle, and the remainder of the cane forms the sheath for the sword. There is usually some sort of locking mechanism to prevent the sword from coming out accidentally. It takes a Wits roll against a TN of 30 to notice that a sword cane is not an ordinary cane. Treat the swordcane as a fencing weapon when wielded, with one exception: its lack of a guard gives a penalty to its user of +5 to all TNs for using Parry (Fencing) as an Active Defense. (From page 103 of the *Vendel/Vesten* book.)





Chapter Four

Coup De Gras



The More Things Change

San Augustin – 1668

“Are you Lindsay Stiles?” someone asked from behind the fighter.

Lindsay turned to see the man who had called him. He was Castillian, in his early 20's: about Lindsay's age. Well dressed, but in more somber clothing than the others in the streets. What caught Lindsay's eye was the silver Guild pin on the man's lapel, a match to his own.

Lindsay looked the man over carefully. Business brought him to San Augustin despite the risks of the Montaigne blockade. Castillian merchants and sailors were common here. Perhaps the man held a grudge over the Armada's defeat. Still, he looked like a fighter, not a sailor. Not that the two were exclusive. However, as Lindsay found through hard experience, to become a Journeyman in one's School, one had little or no time left to devote any other professions.

His assessment finished, Lindsay nodded. “I am he. What can I do for you fellow?”

The man gave him a courteous enough bow. “I am Severino Acedo de Ramirez del Castillo, and we have an affair of honor to settle.”

Lindsay frowned. “I've never heard of you. Perhaps you have made a mistake...?”

“No mistake, *señor*. Your grandfather killed my great uncle, Arturo Acedo de Ramirez del Castillo. In 1623, it was. You are the grandson of Oswin Stiles, are you not?”

Lindsay nodded affirmatively. He wasn't going to lie about his family origins, now or ever. “He was my grandfather, yes. He passed away four years ago.”

“And your father as well, *sí*. That means that you are the only one left who can give me satisfaction for the death of my great-uncle. And so I have tracked you to Carleon and then back to my native country.”

Lindsay tapped the pin upon his own lapel. “The Guild frowns upon dueling among its members without cause...”

Severino flashed him a brief smile, then reached into a pocket and withdrew a scroll. He tossed it to Lindsay, who snatched it neatly out of the air. “You'll find, *señor*, that thea approval is in order. Our family's quarrel with you is a matter of record at the Altamira Guild embassy. I submitted the papers to their embassy here in San Augustin. The Guild has granted us permission to duel. Of course, neither I or they can force you to fight without your acquiescence...”

Scowling, Lindsay looked up from the Guild paper and barked, “Enough of that! If it's a matter of honor, then you shall have your duel. This pin's not for show, you know. You want to fight me, then let's be done with it.” Irritably he threw the scroll to the ground.

Again, Severino sketched a bow. “My apologies. According to the tales told by my great-uncle's seconds, your grandfather was a less than noble man. I am pleased to see that it does not run in the blood.”

"My grandfather Oswin never mentioned anything of a duel with a Castillian. But I'll not have his honor impugned, living or dead. If you suggest he fought ignobly, then we do have a quarrel."

"We have a quarrel regardless, *señor*. But in any case, my great-uncle had given offense and your grandfather killed him. Now it falls upon me to resolve the matter. I have no siblings or children: the war in Rancho Zapeda was... most cruel. My investigations show that your situation is the same. So whoever falls here, the feud ends. Shall we resolve this matter here and now?"

Lindsay glanced around. Their conversation had drawn a crowd of interested spectators. Lindsay would have preferred a more private setting, and he had no seconds. However, from all that he heard the Castillians were an honorable enough people. The Avalon shrugged off his cloak. "As you wish." He glanced around. "I'll not question your honor enough to examine your weapon."

"And I shall return your respect in kind," Severino replied, smiling. He drew his sword, a gleaming blade that burned bright in the noon sun. "At your convenience, *señor*."

Lindsay drew his smallsword and took his buckler from its place at his belt. He had not known his grandfather well: the man had been two-thirds drunk most of the time, and died of an ailment of the guts. But he was a swordsman, as Lindsay's father and Lindsay himself were. He would not have fought for Oswin's honor if the old man ever asked. But now he fought for his life and honor, in a blood feud he knew nothing about until this day. That was all the motivation he needed.

Lindsay took up the standard Donovan position of defense, and Severino took his own stance. The Castillian was an Aldana by the look of him: off-arm tucked behind his back, his right side turned toward Lindsay. That would make him a more difficult target to hit, but Lindsay had defeated Aldana swordsmen before.

Without warning, Severino danced forward. Lindsay parried the first cut with his sword and the second with his buckler, then riposting and thrusting for the chest. His opponent parried, then cut high without a full commitment. Unable to anticipate, Lindsay felt the sting of the cut across his cheek as he moved back.

"First blood to me, *señor*!" Severino exclaimed. The crowd, mostly Castillian, gave a small cheer. Lindsay couldn't raise an empty hand to his face

to feel the cut, but there was no need. His opponent struck to embarrass and humiliate, not to wound. That was a mistake: Severino's time would have been better spent trying to kill him than toy with him.

Lindsay moved forward, making a straight cut. Severino feinted high and aimed for the thigh: Lindsay blocked the cut with his buckler then twisted and *trapped* the Castillian's blade. A skilled swordsman could anticipate an Aldana fighter's dance, but they had another weakness as well. Deprive them of their blade, and they had nothing to fall back on.

Keeping the weapon trapped, Lindsay immediately cut at Severino. The Castillian could relinquish the blade and dodge, but that would have left him without a weapon. Severino tried to block with his shoulder and took a sizeable cut for his efforts. He yanked back with all of his might, and managed to pull his blade free from Lindsay's trap. He smashed the hilt of his rapier up into Lindsay's face, catching the Avalon by surprise. Blood dripping from his nose, Lindsay stepped back a pace, giving Severino time to recover.

That wasn't an Aldana tactic! Lindsay thought. He underestimated his opponent. Perhaps Severino had some Ambrogia training: few other Schools that taught that particular blow. Still, without a main gauche the Castillian's options were limited. Shaking his head to clear the blood from his eyes, Lindsay advanced, furiously slashing and thrusting. Severino parried once, twice, three times, then cut left to right, bottom to top, and missed. Lindsay intercepted the blade with his own and *twisted*. The rapier went flying out of Severino's hand and clattered on the smooth cobblestones. Lindsay brought the sword back up to his opponent's throat. For his part, Severino stood there, eyes closed. Silence filled the air. Finally, the Castillian opened his eyes.

"Finish it!" he snarled. "You have won! Take your vengeance! End it!" He was practically screaming, pressing his throat against the blade.

Lindsay studied him for a few seconds, then shrugged and withdrew his blade. He sheathed it then prepared to go. "Honor is satisfied, as far as I'm concerned. My grandfather was a drunkard who couldn't hold a sword the last 20 years of his life. Perhaps he killed your grand-uncle, perhaps he didn't. Maybe he fought nobly, maybe he didn't."

Severino could only stare at him in silence. Lindsay smiled, a feral grin that was in no way friendly. "The feud ends now. I'll report what happens to the Guild, and tell them that I spared your life rather than kill you. Come after me again, and they'll hunt you down."

"But they won't have to. I beat you today: I'll beat you tomorrow. I'll beat you any time you come for me, if that's the way you wish to finish things. Me, I'm done with it." With that, he tossed the Castillian a mocking salute to match the one Severino had given him a minute before, and strode off into the crowd.



The secret of the Swordsman's Guild is that ... there is no secret. No hidden sorcery, no alternate dimensions, no revelation that Cardinal Verdugo is the illegitimate child of Queen Elaine. The Guild is exactly what it claims to be: a society of fighters dedicated to perpetuating honorable fighting.

The real secret of the Guild is that it is a tool that others use, rather than a society that acts upon others. The Gaius and Cardinal Verdugo use the Guild to restrain their own fighters. Montaigne uses it for social prestige. The Vendel use it to extend their control of financial matters. The Vesten use it to tweak the Vendel. The Vodacce and the Castille ignore it unless it suits their purposes. And Ambrogia Veronica has several aspects of it within her grasp despite her unofficial position.

Individual members of the Swordsman's Guild also have their secrets. But the society as a whole does not have any one specific goal beyond maintaining the concept of honorable dueling. In some ways they have achieved their goal. Every nation in Théah follows Guild dueling law. From here on in, it's all downhill. Pistol dueling is back on the rise, and the two Guildmembers devoted to honorable dueling may soon pass away. Linnae

Knute and Miles Donovan are all that keep the Guild from remaining a neutral organization. When they go, who knows which way the Guild will turn?



Why Join the Guild?

The first thing you need to determine when considering a Hero in the Guild is: will your Gamemaster enforce dueling law? If he doesn't, or you don't want him to, then don't bother joining the Guild. Go with the flow and see how he allows dueling.

Measured in points, the Swordsman's Guild does not give you a huge benefit. You can buy Exploit Weaknesses from different Schools, the Guild might find a job for you, you can get free food and shelter, and you get to challenge people to duels. That's it. No Vows, no masks, no new sorcery or Schools of fighting.

The next question you have to ask yourself is: will you be having him duel? Dueling is the best way to assure that you use the *7th Sea* combat system as intended. It prohibits pistols and sorcery and theoretically takes place on neutral ground, so no swinging or dodging allowed. In short, only your Heroes' Traits, Skills, the Schools he knows, and the weapons he uses matter in a duel. Your opponent won't turn and flee, or whip out a pistol and shoot you, or summon a Brute Squad to his aid (at least not without losing reputation!). A duel is the one place where two Heroes can use their Swordsmen Knacks, play with combos, and find out exactly how swordfighting works.

If you like *7th Sea* swordfighting, then joining the Guild is the perfect facilitator. You don't have to find someone to insult you, or insult someone else. Just tell your GM you want your Hero to

duel, and have them come up with someone to commission your Swordsman. You can duel as much as you want, as long as you don't get too badly wounded. Not only do you gain Reputation from dueling, but you get paid to do it, too! What else could you ask for?

Remember, the Guild also serves as a job clearinghouse. Even if you don't want your Hero to fight a single duel his entire life, you can always get him work as a bodyguard or a teacher. Great stories start from such small beginnings. Guild membership, properly handled in the right campaign, should *never* be a waste.

Making a Battle Exciting

Schools are personalities. Each School has its own unique flavor which adds to any combat. Valroux is a mocking, insulting style. Donovan is old-fashioned. MacDonald employs a wild series of blows. Gallegos uses a cautious, almost mathematical approach, and so on. Choose a School that suits your concept for your Hero, (and what you feel comfortable with). Valroux isn't nearly as fun if you dislike thinking up quips and insults. Nor is MacDonald if you don't feel comfortable with an occasional primal bellow. School types exist for nearly every personality. But if a School doesn't have an obvious "personality," that's fine. Make up one of your own and stick with it. Alternately, if you can't find a School that fits your Hero's personality, take one and adjust it to fit your gaming style.

Finally, don't get repetitive. That doesn't mean you should avoid using the same tactic every time. But dress it up a bit; insert new flashes or variations on the style. At the same time, keep it short. The best way to turn a short battle into a six-hour slugfest is to go on and on, about executing that Tag or Ripost, or thinking up the proper line to say at that precise moment. Other people are playing too, and they probably don't want you to hog the spotlight. Make it quick, make your die rolls, and move on to the next action.

It might help to assemble a list of shticks and flourishes, suitable to your School before play begins. You can tailor them to fit specific opponents, and have them on hand when the action starts. That way, things keep moving. The longer the list, the more involved you'll feel in the combat, and the better chance you'll have to make the most of your Swordsman School.

Gamemaster

Why Use the Guild?

The Swordsman's Guild may seem like a limitation in many ways. Indeed, sometimes it is. But the Gm has the power to determine how much the Guild limits players' actions, and how much it facilitates exciting role-playing. It all hinges on a single question: how important is the legal system in your campaign?

Most swashbuckling characters don't worry much about the law. The heroes laugh in the face of danger, and more often than not thumb their noses at the local authorities (sometimes the local authorities *are* the bad guys). In such a campaign your Heroes may not bother with the concept of a legal duel, content to do justice as they see fit and let the cards fall where they may.

Alternately, perhaps you run a swashbuckling campaign where the law simply doesn't have much impact. Even the most heroic-minded players don't want to worry about law and order. They want to defeat the main Villain and his henchman without considering assault and battery charges. If that's the case, you may not *want* to use the Guild. In that sense, the Swordsman's Guild shouldn't be treated any differently than any other Society. If the Rilasciare or Los Vagos don't play any part in your campaign, then don't use them. If the Guild doesn't work in your kind of campaign, leave them out.

Now that you have permission to not use the Swordsman's Guild, let's cover why you *should* use them. First off, it is important to note that the Guild *only* regulates legal dueling. If a Swordsman doesn't make a challenge in a formal setting then it's not a legal duel. The Guild lets the local authorities deal with the matter. If two Swordsmen fight on the field of battle, it's not a duel. If a Swordsman breaks into another

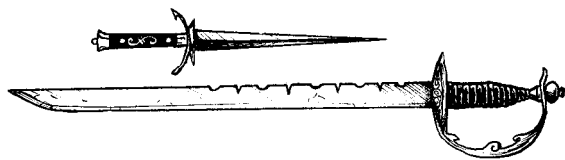
Swordsman's house and tries to kill him in his bed, it's not a duel. If the Swordsman Hero attacks the bad guy to stop him from throwing the lever on that Synerth artifact and blowing up Charouse, it's not a duel.

Duels are affairs of personal honor, one person challenging another on a point of reputation, satisfaction, or insult. If two Swordsmen aren't fighting for one or the other's sense of honor, or as a proxy for someone else's honor, then it's not a duel. It's none of the Guild's business, and they don't care. As a GM you can let the local law handle it.

Now that we know when *not* to use the Guild, when *should* you use them? As a plot device, plain and simple. The Guild can give a Hero a quick 10 guilders by having someone ask him or her to make a challenge and then get out of the way. If your Heroes are broke and need a little cash, it's a quick way to give them something to help — or a hook to lead them to a larger adventure.

Similarly, the Guild (and the established dueling rules), gives Heroes Reputation. Check out the Reputation awards in Chapter 3. A Hero no longer needs to woo a woman, or keep his word upon pain of death, or find a battle to participate in. Once your players get wind of the new ways they can improve Reputation by dueling, they may be clamoring for people to commission their Heroes to duel. In theory you can set an entire campaign around the Swordsman's Guild and its members. If you feel your group's Heroes are up for it, you can have them duel every day of the week... gaining the enmity of rivals and Villains, the romantic attentions of the opposite sex, and countless other campaign hooks.

In essence, the Guild is what you make of it. If it gets in your way, don't use it. Alternately, you can make it a centerpiece of your campaign. The Swordsman's Guild represents the largest single group in Théah., and at least a couple of your Heroes probably wear its pin. There is no better binding element to bring everyone together.



NPC Secrets

The following section contains game statistics and hidden secrets for the NPCs in Chapter Two. Because of the sensitive nature of the information, we have included them here where the players won't inadvertently stumble across them.



Linnae Knute: Hero

Brawn: 3

Finesse: 5

Wits: 5

Resolve: 4

Panache: 5

Reputation: 35

Background: Obligations
(to Emperor Reifenstahl,
Giovanni Villanova and
Matushka

Arcana: Focused

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Castille, Crescent, Eisen (R/W), High Eisen, Montaigne (R/W), Théan, Ussura, Vendel (R/W), Vodacce, Age & Wisdom (Old), Combat Reflexes, Grand Master (Gallegos & Bernoulli, Aldana & Gallegos, Eisenfaust & Leegstra), Linguist, Membership (Swordsman's Guild), Vendel League Seat
Acrobat: Balance 4, Footwork 6, Leaping 3, Rolling 3, Swinging 2
Courtier: Dancing 1, Diplomacy 4, Etiquette 3, Fashion 1, Oratory 4, Politics 2, Sincerity 3
Doctor: Diagnosis 3, First Aid 3, Surgery 3
Hunter: Stealth 3, Survival 2, Traps 2
Teacher: Cold Read 4, Incitation 2, Leadership 3, Oratory 4, Research 4, Training 5, Writing 3
Aldana (Master): Feint (Fencing) 6, Riposte (Fencing) 6, Tagging (Fencing) 5, Exploit Weakness (Aldana) 5
Athlete: Climbing 1, Footwork 6, Sprinting 2, Swimming 2, Swinging 3, Throwing 1

Bernoulli (Master): Beat (Fencing) 5, Corps-à-Corps 5, Lunge (Fencing) 6, Exploit Weakness (Bernoulli) 5

Bogatyr (Journeyman): Lunge (Heavy Weapon) 5, Pommel Strike (Heavy Weapon) 5, Throw (Axe) 3, Exploit Weakness (Bogatyr) 4

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

Cloak: Entangle (Cloak) 1, Parry (Cloak) 3

Donovan (Master): Bind (Buckler) 5, Disarm (Fencing) 5, Riposte (Fencing) 6, Exploit Weakness (Donovan) 5

Eisenfaust (Master): Beat (Heavy Weapon) 5, Bind (Panzerhand) 5, Disarm (Panzerhand) 5, Exploit Weakness (Eisenfaust) 5

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

Gallegos (Master): Feint (Fencing) 5, Riposte (Fencing) 6, Tagging (Fencing) 5, Exploit Weakness (Gallegos) 5

Heavy Weapon: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 5, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 4

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

Leegstra (Master): Beat (Heavy Weapon) 5, Corps-à-Corps 5, Lunge (Heavy Weapon) 5, Exploit Weakness (Leegstra) 5

Panzerhand: Attack (Panzerhand) 5, Parry (Panzerhand) 5

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

Torres (Journeyman): Double-Parry (Cloak/Fencing) 4, Side-Step 5, Tagging (Fencing) 5, Exploit Weakness (Torres) 5

Urostifter (Journeyman): Beat (Heavy Weapon) 4, Double-Parry (Heavy Weapon) 4, Feint (Heavy Weapon) 4, Exploit Weakness (Urostifter) 4

Valroux (Master): Double-Parry (Fencing/Knife) 5, Feint (Fencing) 5, Tagging 5, Exploit Weakness (Valroux) 5

Villanova (Apprentice): Double-Parry (Fencing/Knife) 3, Feint (Fencing) 6, Stop Thrust 3, Exploit Weakness (Villanova) 5

Wrestling: Escape 4, Grapple 2

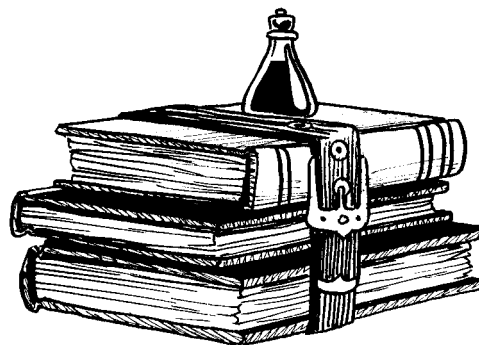
Linnae seeks to be the best... at everything. After 37 years, he may very well be close to achieving that goal. As a head of the Swordsman's Guild he can request training from some of the best instructor in Théah. Only the rigors of time stand in his way. That, and his one weakness: Knute will do almost anything to fulfill his quest. He has accumulated several obligations in his efforts to do so, all of which promise to come back and haunt him someday.

Linnae has persuaded many teachers of different Schools to yield their knowledge to him (a testimony to his diplomatic skills). In most cases, he vowed never to pass that knowledge on

to anyone else. He learned Bogatyr in this manner, from Silan himself. He does not know how he found Silan: only that he wandered through the wastes until he found the Bogatyr Master's hut in the middle of a snowstorm. Silan said nothing, but took him in and gave him the same Bogatyr training he provided to all his students. The two never discussed the matter, but Linnae somehow understood that he could pass on the techniques that Silan taught him. Knute does not know why Grandmother Matushka directed him to Silan and allowed him to learn Bogatyr. He suspects that she will call in the favor at some point, but does not know how she will do so, or what she will ask of him.

Knute gained knowledge of the Villanova style by appealing to Giovanni Villanova himself. Impressed and amused by the Vendel's temerity, the Prince let him train in return for a favor to be paid sometime in the future. Linnae knew the danger of an open-ended commitment to any Vodacce Prince, much less Villanova. However, because of his quest for fighting perfection he felt he had no choice. To date, Giovanni has not called in his favor.

Linnae made many enemies over the years, which complicates yet another matter that he must resolve. He swore to Imperator Reifenstahl that he would pass the Eisenfaust style on to his heirs if he himself did not live to see Eisen reunited. Knute does not believe that the reunification of Eisen will occur in his lifetime. To date he has not not ever married much less produced an heir. He has begun to seek out a suitable woman with which to marry, but his Vow to master as many styles of fighting as possible leaves him little time to pursue a social life. He also knows that he has many enemies, who would find it far safer to strike at a loved one than at arguably the greatest Swordsman alive today. Linnae fears for the life of any woman that he might show an interest in which, coupled with his rigorous quest, conspires to keep him childless.





Miles Donovan: Hero
 Brawn: 5
 Finesse: 4
 Wits: 3
 Resolve: 6
 Panache: 4
 Reputation: 43
 Background: Vow
 Arcana: Self-Controlled

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Eisen, Montaigne, Vendel, Academy, Age & Wisdom (Old), Citation, Firm Grip, Indomitable Will, Legendary Trait (Resolve), Membership (Swordsman's Guild), Tough

Bard: Diplomacy 2, Etiquette 3, History 4, Oratory 3, Singing 2

Doctor: Diagnosis 3, First Aid 4, Surgery 3

Hunter: Ambush 3, Animal Training 2, Skinning 2, Stealth 3, Survival 4, Tracking 3

Teacher: Cold Read 3, Incitation 3, Leadership 5, Oratory 4, Research 2, Training 5, Writing 2

Buckler: Attack (Buckler) 4, Parry (Buckler) 5

Cloak: Entangle (Cloak) 3, Parry (Cloak) 3

Donovan (Master): Bind (Buckler) 5, Disarm (Fencing) 5, Riposte (Fencing) 5, Exploit Weakness (Donovan) 5

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

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

Leegstra (Master): Beat (Heavy Weapon) 5, Corps-à-Corps 5, Lunge (Heavy Weapon) 5, Exploit Weakness (Leegstra) 5

MacDonald (Journeyman): Beat (Heavy Weapon) 5, Lunge (Heavy Weapon) 4, Pommel Strike 4, Exploit Weakness (MacDonald) 5

Pugilism: Attack (Pugilism) 4, Footwork 4, Jab 3, Uppercut 2

Rider: Animal Training 2, Mounting 2, Ride 2

Robertson (Apprentice): Double-Parry (Cloak/Fencing) 3, Entangle (Cloak) 3, Feint (Fencing) 3, Exploit Weakness (Robertson) 3

Miles is for the most part exactly what he seems: an honorable, blunt-spoken fighter who believes in combat as a form of chivalry. It is in the duel that honor can best be demonstrated, and he means to make sure the Swordsman's Guild stands for such values.

Miles is secretly in negotiations with High King James McDuff. The Guild wishes creating a secondary seat and placing a ranking Highlander in the position. They can think of no one better than the MacDuffs, who because of their special

status, might be the only ones who can bring all the Highland clans together within the Guild. MacDuff is mildly interested, but currently has more pressing issues on his mind. Miles' clandestine meetings with MacDuff to discuss Guild business are very short, turning into more freewheeling debates on Elaine's Royal Court: the two men share a common viewpoint on Avalon politics.

Miles' one regret is that he often feels pressured by his fellow Guild members. Frantz is too concerned with the social aspects of the Guild rather than its duties as an Office of Honor. Meanwhile, Linnae becomes involved too much in the politics of his native lands of Eisen and Vendel, and is far too often distracted by his quest to learn other styles of swordsmanship.

Miles is not an only son, but he is the eldest of his father's children. His father Oslac has been pressuring him into marrying, but Miles has deferred, claiming his Guild responsibilities leave him with no time or inclination to take a wife.



Frantz Desaix du Montaigne:
 Scoundrel
 Brawn: 3
 Finesse: 4
 Wits: 4
 Resolve: 4
 Panache: 6
 Reputation: 42
 Background: None
 Arcana: Hedonistic

Advantages: Avalon, Castille, Eisen, Montaigne (R/W), Appearance (Stunning), Close Family Member (Courtier), Grand Master (Ambrogia & Valroux), Left-handed, Membership (Swordsman's Guild), Montaigne Servant (Lackey, Extremely Loyal), Noble, Puzzle Sword (Keen Blade, Loyal Hilt), Scoundrel, Servants, Social Club (Mode du Lac) **Courtier:** Dancing 4, Etiquette 3, Fashion 5, Gaming 3, Gossip 4, Oratory 4, Politics 2, Seduction 4, Sincerity 3 **Criminal:** Gambling 3, Shadowing 1, Stealth 1

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

Athlete: Climbing 1, Footwork 3, Springing 1, Throwing 2

Cloak: Entangle 3, Parry 3

Dirty Fighting: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 2, Kick 2, Throw (Improvised Weapon) 2

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 5, Parry (Fencing) 5
Gaulle (Apprentice): Double-Parry (Fencing/Knife) 5, Bind (Knife) 2, Disarm (Knife) 3, Exploit Weakness (Gaulle) 3

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

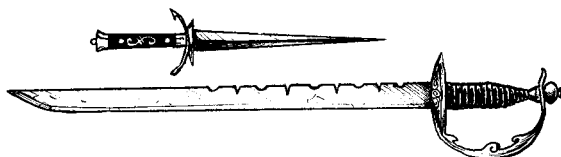
Robertson (Apprentice): Double-Parry (Fencing/Cloak) 3, Entangle (Cloak) 3, Feint (Fencing) 5, Exploit Weakness (Robertson) 3
Swanson (Apprentice): Conceal 2, Double-Parry (Swordcane/Sheath) 2, Pommel Strike (Fencing) 5, Exploit Weakness (Swanson) 2

Valroux (Master): Double-Parry (Fencing/Knife) 5, Feint (Fencing) 5, Tagging (Fencing) 5, Exploit Weakness (Valroux) 5

Veronica Ambrogia does not have any hold over Frantz through blackmail. Due to his free-wheeling attitude, he has done nothing that he would want kept secret. Rather, she has offered to help Frantz deal with Gregor Altherr, the lawyer who controls his trust fund. She suggested finding something to blackmail Altherr with, and then force him to release the full trust fund to Frantz. To date, she has not succeeded, claiming that she has not been able to find anything on the lawyer yet.

In truth, she has. However, she knows that if she used it she would no longer have a hold on Frantz. For now, she holds back. Frantz is happy enough with the situation, since it means that he gets to spend a great deal of time with her. And occasionally Veronica asks for a favor. Nothing major: twice she has asked Frantz to cast his vote in favor a School seeking sanctioning where he might otherwise refuse. When she wanted to place Renato Marchello at the head of the Razors, she asked Frantz to spearhead her request. Frantz, not particularly interested in the particulars of the Guild, happily accepted her "suggestions."

Basically, the position of Guild leader is a burden to Frantz, one that he would prefer to be rid of. Ideally, he hopes that Veronica will gain him his full inheritance, allowing him to quit the Guild, and retire to live with her. For now, Veronica is content to let him think that.



Renato Marchello: Villain

Brawn: 4

Finesse: 5

Wits: 4

Resolve: 4

Panache: 6

Reputation: -12

Background: Lorenzo

Arcana: Deceitful

Advantages: Avalon, Castille, Eisen, Montaigne, Vodacce (R/W), Grand Master (Ambrogia & Valroux), Left-handed, Linguist, Membership (Razors), Membership (Swordsman's Guild), Membership (NOM), Patron (8 points), Scarovese (1 HP), Twisted Blade (4 Destiny Dice), Unbound

Courtier: Dancing 2, Diplomacy 2, Etiquette 2, Fashion 2, Oratory 1, Seduction 3, Sincerity 4

Spy: Bribery 3, Conceal 3, Cryptography 2, Disguise 2, Forgery 3, Hand Signs 3,

Interrogation 5, Shadowing 4, Sincerity 5, Stealth 4

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

Athlete: Climbing 2, Footwork 4, Side-step 3, Springing 2, Swinging 1, Throwing 1

Bernoulli (Journeyman): Beat (Fencing) 4, Corps-à-Corps 5, Lunge (Fencing) 5, Exploit Weakness (Bernoulli) 4

Dirty Fighting: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 4, Eye-gouge 2, Kick 4, Throat Strike 3

Exploit Weakness: Aldana 5, Donovan 3, Drexel 2, Eisenfaust 3, Gallegos 3, Leegstra 4, Villanova 3

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

Pugilism: Attack (Pugilism) 3, Ear Clap 3, Footwork 4, Jab 2

Rider: Mounting 3, Ride 4, Trick Ride 2

Soldano (Journeyman): Double-Parry

(Fencing/Fencing) 4, Tagging (Fencing) 5, Whirl (Fencing/Fencing) 4, Exploit Weakness (Soldano) 4

Valroux (Master): Double-Parry (Fencing/Knife) 5, Feint (Fencing) 5, Tagging (Fencing) 5, Exploit Weakness (Valroux) 5

Renato's Patron is Veronica Ambrogia.

Renato has many secrets. The first is that he descends from the Lorenzo bloodline through the Bianco family. His peasant family had no knowledge of the dark secret in their past. Veronica informed Renato of his lineage shortly after he entered his service. Glad to be free of his stinking peasant life, Renato had no trouble

serving her since she revealed his "royal" blood to. Shortly after that, at Ambrogia's suggestion, he arranged for his family to die in a fire that destroyed the entire farmstead.

Marchello's second secret is that he is one of those few rare Unbound Vodacce males. He has kept his true nature a secret in Vodacce by the simple expedient of killing any Fate Witch he encounters. To date he has only killed four; he tries to avoid entering Vodacce whenever possible, lest some vengeful sister or mother pay too much attention. The Guild is unaware of his status, and doesn't see anything amiss with sending other Razors in his stead to Vodacce. Veronica is aware of Renato's Unbound nature, and plans to use it to her advantage when the time is right.

What Veronica doesn't know is that Renato is a closet sadist. Simply put, he likes killing people. As slowly and painfully as possible. He has gathered a handpicked squad of Razors who share his grotesque habit. He disguises most of his killings as "Guild enforcement," usually by arranging for a Swordsman wanted by the Guild to die "resisting arrest," or picking a fight with a Vodacce.

When a Swordsman is not available, Marchello finds a jenny that no one will miss, has his way with her, and then makes her disappear. Madame Lorraine Weller, head of the Jenny's Guild, suspects that a single killer strikes at members of her organization, but she stands alone. Renato is cautious enough to spread out his kills over time and location so that Lorraine has been unable to find the connection between where he travels and where the reported disappearances occur.

His patron Veronica also does not know that Renato is a member of NOM. Though not one of the thirteen ranking members, he has advanced high enough to have some small idea of who they are. He does not know who his master is, as the latter takes great pains to conceal his identity. Renato's duties for NOM are relatively light. Occasionally he must kill a particular Swordsman. Sometimes another party frames that Swordsman for a crime against the Guild. Sometimes Renato plants the evidence himself. Either way, he personally goes to bring the Swordsman in, and the man dies while resisting arrest. Later, his employer sends him payment via an inconspicuous man on the street. Renato's squad suspects nothing, since Renato kills a number of Swordsmen in this manner. Renato believes that his employer is saving him for some big

assignment. Whether he will strike against Veronica Ambrogia or the Guild itself, he does not know. For now he is content to wait, and accept large amounts of money for what he would probably do for free.

(Note: if in your campaign Veronica Ambrogia is a ranking member of NOM, assume that Renato works for one of the other members, who uses him as a mole in her operation.)



Hrodgier: Hero

Brawn: 6
Finesse: 3
Wits: 4
Resolve: 5
Panache: 4
Reputation: 33
Background: Bloodsworn
Arcana: Commanding

Advantages: Avalon, Ussura, Vendel (R/W), Bearsark, Combat Reflexes, Cold Climate Conditioning, Firm Grip, Grand Master (Leegstra & Kjemper, Leegstra & Urostifter), Indomitable Will, Large, Legendary Trait (Brawn), Membership (Swordsmen's Guild), Old Name, Pain Tolerance, Tough
Doctor: Diagnosis 3, First Aid 5, Surgery 4, Veterinarian 3
Hunter: Ambush 5, Animal Training 4, Skinning 4, Stealth 5, Survival 5, Tracking 5, Trail Signs 4, Traps 4
Skald: History 5, Incitation 4, Oratory 4, Riddles 5, Singing 3, Storytelling 5, Writing 2
Teacher: Cold Read 3, Incitation 4, Leadership 4, Training 5, Oratory 4, Research 2, Storytelling 5, Writing 2
Athlete: Break Fall 4, Climbing 4, Footwork 3, Long Distance Running 5, Lifting 4, Swimming 3, Sprinting 4, Throwing 3
Dirty Fighting: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 4, Eye-gouge 3, Kick 3, Parry (Improvised Weapon) 3, Throat Strike 3
Hand Axe: Attack (Hand Axe) 5, Parry (Hand Axe) 5, Throw (Hand Axe) 4
Heavy Weapon: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 6, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 5
Kjemper (Master): Attack (Shield) 5, Corps-à-Corps 5, Wall of Steel (Shield) 5, Exploit Weakness (Kjemper) 5
Leegstra (Master): Beat (Heavy Weapon) 5, Corps-à-Corps 5, Lunge (Heavy Weapon) 5, Exploit

Weakness (Leegstra) 5

Shield: Attack (Shield) 5, Parry (Shield) 5

Siggursdottir (Master): Double Attack (Hand Axe) 5, Throw (Hand Axe) 5, Whirl (Hand Axe) 5, Exploit Weakness (Siggursdottir) 5

Urostifter (Master): Beat (Heavy Weapon) 5, Double-Parry (Heavy Weapon) 5, Feint (Heavy Weapon) 5, Exploit Weakness (Urostifter) 5

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

Hrodgeir is not a Living Rune, but he does share a position, albeit a lesser one, similar to that of Gunrud Stigandsdottir. Grumfather blessed (or perhaps cursed) Hrodgeir with the ability to understand the teachings of Kyndighet, the Living Rune of Skill. Over a thousand years ago, Grumfather directed the wandering Kyndighet to Hrodgeir and gave him the ability to learn Leegstra from the Living Rune. Hrodgeir never received an explanation from Grumfather why he was chosen. All he knew was that somehow he could understand the fighting skills that Kyndighet taught him, and that he was fated to pass this knowledge on until such time as Grumfather decided otherwise.

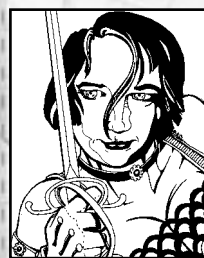
Grumfather has never done so. Hrodgeir soon discovered that he stopped aging. Apparently Grumfather meant for him to teach Leegstra for a long, long time. He never swayed from that duty, believing it a sacred task. He has never taken a wife, and avoids any circumstances where he might father a child. Hrodgeir is not sure if he can have children or not. However, if he can avoid it he'd rather not watch a son or daughter age and die while he goes on and on. Besides, he soon found that teaching Leegstra was a full-time job. He never lacks a student, and often times it appears that Grumfather himself directs many prospective students to him.

Hrodgeir has essentially been making it up as he goes along. Grumfather and Kyndighet didn't tell him what to do with the Leegstra style. For the first few hundred years, he only taught it to Vesten, and made sure that they only taught it to Vesten. However, Hrodgeir soon came to take the long view on things, and began teaching it to non-Vesten as well. He was a bit nervous the first few times, but when Grumfather didn't strike him down with lightning or bury him in an avalanche, Hrodgeir assumed that his god either approved of what he was doing, or simply didn't care.

Hrodgeir goes on pretty much as he always has. He isn't happy about the split between the Vendel and Vesten, and believes that by teaching

Leegstra he may be able to bridge the divide between the two cultures. He sees the Guild as yet another tool in that goal. Hrodgeir also teaches other Vesten Schools: in his thousand years of life he has mastered them all except Halfdansson: Hrodgeir has an aversion to the sea, and never goes near it.

Note: Hrodgeir's immortality only prevents his aging: he can still be wounded and (presumably) killed like any man. Hrodgeir is too good a fighter to be in imminent danger of being killed. He also takes steps to avoid most combat, believing that he was chosen to teach other Vesten how to fight, rather than fight himself.



Lydia Larsen: Scoundrel

Brawn: 3

Finesse: 4

Wits: 4

Resolve: 4

Panache: 3

Reputation: 16

Background: Hunting (Rasmussen duelists)

Arcana: Misled

Advantages: Avalon, Montaigne, Vendel (R/W), Area Knowledge (Kirk), Local Hero, Membership (Swordsman's Guild), Night Trained, Scoundrel, Small

Acrobat: Balance 4, Footwork 4, Leaping 3

Courtier: Dancing 1, Etiquette 2, Fashion 1, Oratory 1, Politics 1

Doctor: Diagnosis 2, First Aid 2

Streetwise: Shadowing 1, Stealth 3

Teacher: Cold Read 4, Incitation 2, Leadership 3, Oratory 3, Research 3, Training 4, Writing 1

Athlete: Break Fall 2, Climbing 2, Footwork 4, Side-step 2, Sprinting 2, Throwing 1

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

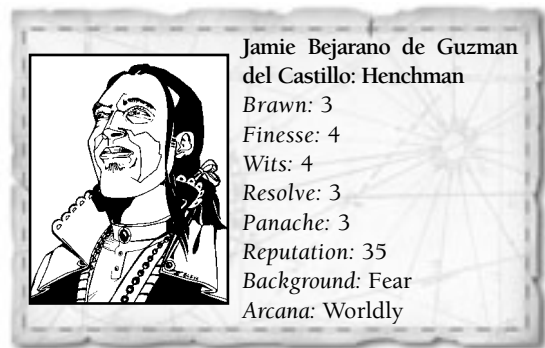
Larsen (Master): Ambush 5, Feint (Fencing) 5, Parry (Lamp) 5, Exploit Weakness (Larsen) 5

Snedig (Apprentice): Beat (Fencing) 2, Feint (Fencing) 5, Lunge (Fencing) 1, Exploit Weakness (Snedig) 1

Lydia has two secrets. First, she does not feel worthy of her father's legacy. She is not particularly comfortable teaching, but feels it is her duty to pass on her father's knowledge.

Lydia's second secret is far more serious. She has taken to donning a mask, wearing boots that give her another inch or two of height, and hunting down Rasmussen duelists in the streets of Kirk after nightfall. She conceals her

appearance because she does not wish to discredit the Larsen name. She also fears reprisals from the nobles that support Rasmussen dueling and so hides her identity. During these "hunting expeditions" she avoids using a lantern so as to avoid giving any clue to her identity. Her night vision and knowledge of Kirk make her a formidable opponent, and she has currently killed four Rasmussen duelists. She rationalizes murder in the name of "justice," and the conflict is tearing her apart.

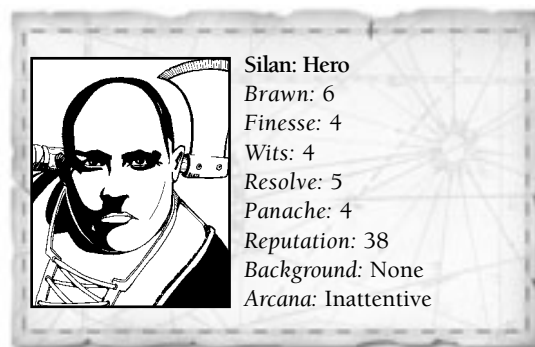


Advantages: Avalon, Castille (R/W), Eisen, Montaigne, Castillian Blade (Torres), Extended Family, Membership (Los Vagos, Swordsman's Guild), Roving Don, Servants, University
Courtier: Dancing 4, Diplomacy 5, Etiquette 5, Fashion 3, Gossip 2, Lip Reading 3, Oratory 4, Politics 4, Seduction 4
Scholar: History 3, Law 4, Mathematics 2, Philosophy 3, Research 3
Spy: Bribery 3, Conceal 3, Lip Reading 3
Teacher: Cold Read 3, Incitation 3, Leadership 2, Oratory 4, Research 3, Storytelling 2, Training 4, Writing 3
Cloak: Entangle 3, Parry 5
Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 5, Parry (Fencing) 4
Torres (Master): Double-Parry (Cloak/Fencing) 5, Side-step 5, Tagging (Fencing) 5, Exploit Weakness (Torres) 5

Jamie has an aversion to combat, one that he takes great pains to conceal. In a controlled situation, such as a duel, he is competent. However, he deplores any other combat, fearing a gunshot or a knife to the back. He played up his value to his family as an emissary, duelist, and teacher so that they wouldn't call upon him to fight in the resistance. His uncle Javier suspected something of the situation. However, for now he is willing to let Jamie do what he does best: travel overseas and try to gather resources for the rancho. The end of the war brought a small measure of relief to the young Castillian, but his fear remains.

Jamie is a patrón of Los Vagos, a fact that his uncle Javier is unaware of. He is not directly affiliated with the primary Rancho Torres chapter controlled by Don Cristián (*Los Vagos*, page 39). Rather, Jamie supports a Torres family chapter outside of Rancho Torres. He has recruited several overseas members, including Jack Webster (see below). In fact, the two men have become close friends. Much to Jamie's surprise, he saved Jack when they confronted an underground Montaigne group in Carleon who were blackmailing nobles to support Montaigne over Castille. Since then, Jack has owed him a life-favor. Jamie considers Jack too good a friend to ever call upon it.

Jamie tries to conceal any hint of his activities from Queen Elaine's court. Jack Webster often helps him at this, performing many undercover duties in Carleon where a Castillian would be too conspicuous. It's unlikely the Queen would entirely disapprove of Jamie's efforts: Avalon is no friend of El Vago's foes. Still, diplomatic relations between Castille and Avalon are at a delicate stage, and Jamie would prefer not to endanger them.



Advantages: Firm Grip, Legendary Trait (Brawn), Membership (Swordsman's Guild), Tough
Doctor: Diagnosis 3, First Aid 4, Surgery 3, Veterinarian 3
Hunter: Ambush 3, Fishing 3, Skinning 4, Stealth 3, Survival 5, Tracking 4, Trail Signs 3, Traps 3
Teacher: Cold Read 3, Incitation 3, Leadership 3, Training 5, Oratory 3, Research 2, Storytelling 4, Writing 1
Athlete: Climbing 2, Footwork 2, Lifting 5, Long Distance Running 4, Sprinting 4, Throwing 1
Bogatyrr (Master): Lunge (Heavy Weapon) 5, Pommel Strike (Heavy Weapon) 5, Throw (Axe) 5, Exploit Weakness (Bogatyrr) 4
Dirty Fighting: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 3, Attack (Improvised Weapon) 3, Kick 3, Parry (Improvised Weapon) 2, Throw (Improvised Weapon) 3

Dobrynya (Master): Bear Hug 5, Disarm (Wrestling) 5, Fortitude 5, Exploit Weakness (Dobrynya) 5

Heavy Weapon: Attack (Heavy Weapon) 5, Parry (Heavy Weapon) 5

Knife: Attack (Knife) 3, Parry (Knife) 3


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

All the legends are true: Silan is one of the greatest Bogatyr in the history of Ussura. Matushka decided that he could serve a better purpose. On her command, Silan now lives in a hut in southeastern Molhyna, near Lake Vigil. Matushka sends him those who she thinks are most in need of his training. He only leaves the hut once a year when he meets with his old comrades who teach the Bogatyr School. As the stories say, they find a quiet tavern somewhere, buy a great deal of alcohol, and reminisce over old times and new students.

Since his “retirement” ten years ago, Silas has trained approximately thirty-five Bogatyrs. The only time he even considered questioning Matushka’s wisdom was when she sent Linnae Knute to him. Silan was wise enough not to voice his skepticism, and to his surprise, Knute took to Bogatyr training as readily as any Ussuran, mastering the basic skills in record time. Linnae also discussed the incorporation of Bogatyr into the Guild. Silan was indifferent to the whole thing, and told him that despite the fact he was the ranking Master of Bogatyr, he had no say over the other teachers. Knute was disappointed, and departed shortly thereafter.

Now Silan waits for the next student that Matushka may send him. He spends his day hunting and fishing, knowing that Matushka will always have someone else for him to train until the day he dies. He is not immortal, although he appears far younger than he actually is.





Pietro Vercelis: Villain

Brawn: 3

Finesse: 4

Wits: 4

Resolve: 4

Panache: 3

Reputation: -42

Background: None

Arcana: Prudent

Advantages: Crescent, Montaigne (R/W), Vodacce (R/W), Academy, Connections (2 Informants, 1 Confidant, all with Obligations), Left-handed, Membership (Lord’s Hand, Swordsman’s Guild), Scarovese (3 pts.), Twisted Blade (three Destiny Dice), Vodacce Valet

Courtier: Dancing 1, Etiquette 2, Fashion 1, Oratory 2, Politics 3, Seduction 4, Sincerity 4

Doctor: Diagnosis 3, First Aid 3

Forger: Calligrapher 2, Conceal 2, Cryptography 4, Forgery 5, Paper Maker 1, Research 2

Teacher: Cold Read 4, Incitation 3, Leadership 3, Oratory 4, Research 5, Training 4, Writing 3

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

Bernoulli (Master): Beat (Fencing) 5, Corps-à-Corps 5, Lunge (Fencing) 5, Exploit Weakness (Bernoulli) 5

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

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 4, Parry (Fencing) 5

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 3, Reload 2

Pugilism: Attack (Pugilism) 4, Ear Clap 3, Footwork 4

Pietro is one of the most dangerous men in Vodacce, and his cunning would win the respect of Giovanni Villanova. For over fifteen years, he has carefully engineered matters so that he becomes the ruler of the Bernoulli principalities, beginning when he arranged the death by “natural causes” of Prince Gespucci’s father in 1655. Pietro realized even then that Gespucci’s sons were useless, and that the Prince might very well look to his chief advisor when deciding the succession.

Since then, Pietro ensured that Gespucci does not give birth to a fourth child. He employed a chemist of the Invisible College to produce a potion that reduces fertility, and bribes a court servant to slip the concoction to Gespucci on a regular basis. Pietro further deals with both the servant and the chemist through intermediaries so they are unaware of his involvement.

At the same time, Pietro has secretly courted several of the Bernoulli women. He insists to each one that they keep their romance secret, which they all find dreadfully romantic. When the time is right, he will select the one closest to the line of succession and announce his betrothal. He does not believe that Prince Bernoulli will deny him in this, and in fact will believe the wedding will further cement the Bernoulli and Vercelis lines.

Pietro knows that Gespucci's most recent will designates his father as the Prince's successor. He plans to either wait until Gespucci dies through natural causes, or arrange an "accident" if it looks like he might father an heir. That will leave Angelo as the acting ruler of the Bernoulli principalities. Then Pietro only needs to step in and arrange his father's death. As a member of the Bernoulli family by marriage, and with his father as the Regent before his death, he believes he will sit upon the throne. He does not believe that Gespucci's three sons have the wherewithal to oppose him (and he's probably right).

Pietro's only other concern is that Gespucci might turn his lands over to the Church. Many currently believe the Prince will do so, but for now the will specifies Angelo as Gespucci's heir. Pietro is ready if his Prince changes his mind, however: he plans to frame Cardinal Ciosa for the murder of Gespucci, Angelo, or both. His Confidant Connection is a highly placed Church member in a position to plant evidence so convincing that it will crumble Ciosa's air of incorruptibility.

Pietro is a remarkably patient man, and has been planning this coup for over 15 years. He is in no hurry. Currently he proceeds slowly so as to keep his plans secret. He does not believe that Gespucci will live more than another few years, and will not accelerate his secret wedding plans until he believes Gespucci is close to dying.

None of the other Princes suspect Pietro at this time. Alvara Arciniega (Castille, Invisible College) knows that someone high up in the Vodacce hierarchy is purchasing the impotency drug, but he does not know who is making the purchase or which Prince is the target. Given that Arciniega is a member of NOM, it is also not entirely clear what he would do with Pietro Vercelis if he found out about the Swordsman's involvement. Alvara might try to form some kind of alliance with Pietro, or even bring him into NOM. Alternately, he might consider the man a threat to some other hidden plan, and kill him.



Jack Webster: Hero

Brawn: 4
Finesse: 4
Wits: 3
Resolve: 4
Panache: 4
Reputation: 36
Background: Obligation
Arcana: Altruistic

Advantages: Avalon (R/W), Castille, Montaigne, Membership (Los Vagos), Membership (Swordsman's Guild)

Courtier: Dancing 1, Diplomacy 4, Etiquette 4, Fashion 2, Oratory 3, Politics 2, Sincerity 2

Doctor: Diagnosis 3, First Aid 4, Surgery 2

Spy: Conceal 1, Shadowing 1, Sincerity 2, Stealth 2

Teacher: Cold Read 3, Leadership 5, Oratory 3, Research 1, Storytelling 3, Training 4, Writing 2

Waylay: Ambush 2, Lie-in-Wait 1, Set Trap 1, Shadowing 1, Snatch and Grab 1

Athlete: Climbing 3, Footwork 4, Long Distance Running 2, Side step 2, Sprinting 2, Swimming 2, Throwing 1

Cloak: Entangle (Cloak) 5, Parry (Cloak) 5

Fencing: Attack (Fencing) 5, Parry (Fencing) 4

Pugilism: Attack (Pugilism) 3, Footwork 4, Jab 4

Rider: Ride 3

Robertson (Master): Double-Parry

(Cloak/Fencing) 5, Entangle (Cloak) 5, Feint (Fencing) 5, Exploit Weakness (Robertson) 5

Torres (Apprentice): Double-Parry (Cloak/Fencing) 5, Tagging 2, Side step 2, Exploit Weakness (Torres) 1

Unknown to all but a very few, Jack Webster is the ranking Los Vagos member in Avalon. He approached Jamie Bejarano del Guzman in early 1668 when the latter was visiting the court of Queen Elaine. Jack volunteered his services, and has since proven his valor in several operations against Inquisition members working on Avalon soil, rising to the rank of Affiliated member. He and Jamie have become firm friends.

Jack has two obligations: the first is to his teacher David Robertson. Jack swore to him on his oath that he would continue to teach the School. His second is to Jamie: during an investigation into a Montaigne underground group, the Castillian saved Jack when things turned violent, and Jack now owes the Castillian a life-debt. More than ever, Webster plans to help the Torres cause in any way that he can.

He maintains several secret safehouses in Avalon for Castillian refugees and when the opportunity arises he has spoken to Queen Elaine on behalf of the Castillian people. When need be, he and his small band of followers will investigate matters so that suspicion for any such activities does not fall on the Castillians. If it became known that Jamie was serving Castillian interests on Avalon soil, it might hurt the young Castillian's influence at court. At the very least it would draw more attention to Jamie than he wants at this point.

The rumors are false: Bors MacAllister is not training in the Robertson style. The Black Knight has spoken to Jack about the basics of the School's teachings, but his duties to the throne keep him far too occupied to undertake more sword training.



Otavio Gallegos de Consone:
Villian
Brawn: 3
Finesse: 5
Wits: 4
Resolve: 4
Panache: 5
Reputation: -33
Background: Vendetta
Arcana: Victorious

Advantages: Castille (R/W), Montaigne, Vodacce (R/W), Academy, Appearance (Above Average), Castillian Blade (Gallegos), Combat Reflexes Dangerous Beauty, Grand Master (Gallegos & Villanova), Membership (Swordsman's Guild), Noble, Scarovese (1 HP)

Courtier: Dancing 5, Etiquette 4, Fashion 4, Lip Reading 2, Oratory 2, Politics 2, Seduction 5, Sincerity 4

Forger: Calligrapher 2, Conceal 3, Forgery 4, Paper Maker 1, Research 2

Performer: Acting 3, Cold Read 4, Dancing 5, Oratory 2, Singing 1

Spy: Bribery 3, Conceal 3, Forgery 4, Interrogation 3, Shadowing 3, Sincerity 5, Stealth 4

Athlete: Climbing 1, Footwork 5, Side-step 4, Sprinting 1, Swinging 3, Throwing 2

Cloak: Entangle (Cloak) 4, Parry (Cloak) 3

Dirty Fighting: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 4, Eye-gouge 4, Kick 3

Exploit Weakness: Aldana 5, Ambrogia 3, Valroux 4

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

Gallegos (Master): Feint (Fencing) 6, Riposte

(Fencing) 6, Tagging (Fencing) 5, Exploit Weakness (Gallegos) 5

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

Rider: Ride 4, Trick Ride 3

Torres (Journeyman): Double-Parry

(Cloak/Fencing) 4, Side-Step 4, Tagging

(Fencing) 4, Exploit Weakness (Torres) 4

Villanova (Master): Double-Parry (Fencing/Knife)

5, Feint (Fencing) 6, Stop-Thrust (Fencing) 5,

Exploit Weakness (Villanova) 5

Otavio is exactly what he appears to be: a cold-hearted bastard who delights in using his superior fighting abilities to torment those weaker than himself. Otavio's father Xayvion was a black market merchant who blackmailed a woman of the Gallegos clan into marrying him. Xayvion taught his eldest son Otavio well in the illicit ways.

Otavio cares little for the women he seduces, seeing them only as gratification for his massive ego. He often seeks out women involved with a Swordsman and seduces them away from their beloved. If they prove reluctant to accept his advances, he puts financial pressure on their families to give their blessing. Alternately, Otavio finds information that he can blackmail them with. Once Otavio takes the woman, he antagonizes her Swordsman lover so that they duel him without Guild sanctioning. He then cuts down the irate Swordsman and leaves his newest acquisition to wallow in sorrow at one of his estates, while he goes off to repeat the pattern anew. So far Otavio has five women in such straits.

Otavio pretends to be a loyal Castillian, but he occasionally raises money by selling his services as a spy to the Montaigne. Among those who he has sold his services to is Giovanni Villanova. In lieu of payment on one of his assignments, Otavio took training in the "secret" Villanova style, and astoundingly, has become a Grand Master without the Guild's assistance. He only combines the two styles in a private duel to the death, confident that no one will survive against him. So far, he's right.





Albion Riché du Paroisse:
Henchman
 Brawn: 4
 Finesse: 4
 Wits: 4
 Resolve: 4
 Panache: 5
 Reputation: 14
 Background: Ridiculed
 Arcana: Friendly

Advantages: Eisen, Montaigne (R/W), Vendel, Able Drinker, Close Family Member (Sorcerer), Home Neighborhood (Section E1-H6, Freiburg), Membership (Swordsman's Guild), Noble, University

Artist: Writing 4

Courtier: Dancing 1, Etiquette 3, Fashion 1, Oratory 2, Sincerity 1

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

Cloak: Parry (Cloak) 3

Dirty Fighting: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 4, Attack (Improvised Weapon) 4, Eye-gouge 4, Parry (Improvised Weapon) 4, Throw (Improvised Weapon) 3

Durchsetzungsbung (Journeyman): Riposte (Fencing) 4, Tagging (Fencing) 5, Wall of Steel (Fencing) 4, Exploit Weakness (Durchsetzungsbung) 4

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

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 2

Gaulle (Journeyman): Double-Parry (Fencing/Knife) 5, Bind (Knife) 4, Disarm (Knife) 4, Exploit Weakness (Gaulle) 4

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

Tout Pres (Journeyman): Corps-à-Corps 3, Double-Parry (Fencing/Improvised Weapon) 2, Tagging (Improvised Weapon) 3, Exploit Weakness (Tout Pres) 3

Valroux (Master): Double-Parry (Fencing/Knife) 5, Feint (Fencing) 5, Tagging (Fencing) 5, Exploit Weakness (Valroux) 5

Albion's Close Family Member is his younger brother Yan Riché du Paroisse (*The Sights of Freiburg*, page 15).

Albion is essentially what he appears to be. He is on good terms with his brother, and basically satisfied with his lot in life. His one secret is that he has sworn revenge on his second cousin Herbert. He still remembers the times when Herbert teased him as a child. In fact, Herbert still reminds him of those times on the few occasions when they meet. Albion also

remembers Yan teasing him, but knows that his younger brother is too important to the Paroisse family to do anything about. He has spent years planning his revenge against Herbert, a wastrel who lives back in Paroisse province. Albion's journals are full of dark tales of revenge, each more elaborate than the last. It is unlikely he would carry them out, since he doubts his ability to cover his tracks once the deed is done. However, he might be interested in hiring someone else to act as his proxy.



Sébastien Valroux de Martise:
Hero
 Brawn: 4
 Finesse: 5
 Wits: 5
 Resolve: 3
 Panache: 6
 Reputation: 53
 Background: Assassin
 Arcana: Passionate

Advantages: Castille, Montaigne (R/W), Vodacce, Appearance (Above Average), Combat Reflexes, Grand Master (Valroux & Gaulle), Home Neighborhood (Echine), Local Hero (Echine), Keen Senses, Lightning Reflexes, Membership (Swordsman's Guild), Noble, Puzzle Sword (Solid Grip, Razor Edge, The Thirsty Blade)
Courtier: Dancing 4, Etiquette 3, Fashion 4, Gaming 3, Gossip 3, Mooch 2, Oratory 4, Politics 3, Seduction 5, Sincerity 2
Criminal: Ambush 3, Shadowing 3, Stealth 3
Sailor: Balance 3, Climbing 2, Knotwork 1, Leaping 2, Rigging 3, Swimming 2
Streetwise: Socializing 3, Street Navigation 3, Underworld Lore 3

Aldana (Master): Feint (Fencing) 5, Riposte (Fencing) 5, Tagging (Fencing) 5, Exploit Weakness (Aldana) 5

Athlete: Climbing 2, Footwork 4, Side-step 3, Sprinting 2, Swimming 2, Swinging 2, Throwing 2
Dirty Fighting: Attack (Dirty Fighting) 3, Eye-gouge 2, Kick 3

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

Gaulle (Master): Double-Parry (Fencing/Knife) 5, Bind (Knife) 5, Disarm (Knife) 5, Exploit Weakness (Gaulle) 5

Knife: Attack (Knife) 5, Parry (Knife) 6, Throwing (Knife) 3

Rider: Ride 3, Mounting 3

Snedig (Journeyman): Beat (Fencing) 4, Feint (Fencing) 5, Lunge (Fencing) 4, Exploit

Weakness (Snedig/Leegstra) 4

Swanson (Journeyman): Conceal 4, Double-Parry (Swordcane/Sheath) 4, Pommel Strike (Fencing) 4, Exploit Weakness (Swanson) 4

Valroux (Master): Double-Parry (Fencing/Knife) 5, Feint (Fencing) 5, Tagging (Fencing) 5, Exploit Weakness (Valroux) 5

Sébastien did indeed leave home because of his father's activities. He inadvertently witnessed his father Victor cutting a deal with a local crimelord. The young boy realized that the crimelord was actually reporting to his father and that all the rumors were true. Sébastien believed he should act as a true noble in all things, and was appealed to Madeleine for her to let him stay with her. His grandam was aware of Victor's activities, but thought it would bring scandal to the family if she dealt with him. Madeleine and Victor had already come to an arrangement of sorts: she wouldn't act against her son if he didn't let his criminal activities become public knowledge. She didn't tell Sébastien of that arrangement, and took him into her house. In that manner she hoped to defuse the situation.

Since then, Sébastien spent much of his time trying to secretly undermine his father's activities. The criminals in Echine that he challenges were all connected to Victor in some manner. When he puts to sea as a sellsword for merchants, he hopes to fight the pirates of Port-Élancé, who are also connected with his father's criminal empire.

Victor is aware of his son's activities, but is loathe to act against his own kin. Neither does Sébastien wish to strike directly against his father. Madeleine knows of her grandson's activities, but loves them both and is reluctant to aid either one. For now, Victor is content to hire the occasional assassin to attack his son. But as Sébastien inflicts further and further damage upon his criminal empire, Victor may have to rethink his strategy. Then again, he may not have to: the pirates and criminals that Sébastien attacks have put out a bounty on him of their own.





Ignatius von Kleist:
Scoundrel
 Brawn: 3
 Finesse: 5
 Wits: 5
 Resolve: 4
 Panache: 4
 Reputation: -25
 Background: None
 Arcana: None

Advantages: Eisen (R/W), Montaigne (R/W), Membership (Swordsman's Guild)

Scholar: Astronomy 2, History 5, Law 4, Mathematics 5, Natural Philosophy 4, Philosophy 5, Research 5, Theology 3

Athlete: Climbing 1, Footwork 4, Long Distance Running 2, Side-step 4, Sprinting 1, Throwing 1

Durchsetzungsborg (Master): Riposte (Fencing) 5, Tagging (Fencing) 6, Wall of Steel (Fencing) 5, Exploit Weakness (Durchsetzungsborg) 5

Exploit Weakness: Aldana 2, Ambrogia 3, Drexel 1, Eisenfaust 4, Gallegos 2, Valroux 4

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

Ignatius is a sociopath and a cold-hearted killer. The rumors concerning his expulsion from Durchsetzungsborg University are all true. He killed several opponents during training "accidents" and showed not one whit of remorse. Albert Sydow himself went before the university's board and argued for Ignatius' expulsion. Once Sydow explained the facts, they unanimously agreed to expel von Kleist and seal all records so as not to discredit the university.

A scholar and intellectual, Ignatius finds that dueling provides a satisfactory outlet for his peculiar tastes. He has no interest in the individuals from whom he accepts commissions, or their causes. His only requirement is that the duels be to the death. Ignatius only desires to perfect his fighting skills. That he has to kill others to do so is of no consequence to him.

Although a Master in Durchsetzungsborg, Ignatius has no interest in competing among his peers. Given the incidents at Durchsetzungsborg, that university would never allow him to return. Ignatius has no interest in passing on his knowledge. He obtains information for his own benefit, no one else's.



Advantages: Castille, Montaigne, Vodacce (R/W), Able Drinker, Appearance (Above Average), Combat Reflexes, Dangerous Beauty, Left-handed, Lightning Reflexes, Membership (Swordsman's Guild), Scoundrel, Trained Spider (Tracking)

Courtesan: Acting 2, Cold Read 3, Dancing 3, Etiquette 2, Fashion 1, Jenny 1, Masseur 1, Seduction 3, Unobtrusive 1

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

Streetwise: Scrounging 2, Socializing 4, Street Navigation 3

Spy: Bribery 2, Shadowing 3, Stealth 3

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

Cappuntina (Master): Pin (Knife) 5, Throw (Knife) 5, Trick Shooting (Knife) 5, Exploit Weakness (Cappuntina) 5

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

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

Firearms: Attack (Firearms) 3

Knife: Attack (Knife) 3, Parry (Knife) 5, Throw (Knife) 5

Rider: Ride 3, Mounting 3, Trick Ride 3

Donisa was born into the Falisci family (Chippari is an assumed name), but lacked the Second Sight. As a Senzavista, she was doomed to be married off as a second wife, while being denied any kind of education. She was considered quite the prize by her family due to her early maturation and good looks. Her father hoped to enhance the value of his first daughter's dowry considerably by adding Donisa to the package.

Donisa would have none of it. Normally she would have had no choice, but she had one card to play. By the age of 8 she displayed a formidable skill at combat. She had already beaten all of her male playmates in the "manly" sports, and engendered some discussion as to whether she

was truly suitable to be married off. Fortunately, Ambrogia Veronica attending one of the Falisci parties and noticed the young girl playing with the boys. Intrigued, she approached Donisa. They talked, and Veronica decided to help the girl.

Secretly the courtesan made plans to have Donisa disappear. Veronica thought that no one would investigate the fate of a Senzavista too closely, and she was right. She spirited Donisa off to one of her Ambrogia schools, and trained her in the ways of the Swordsman. Donisa proved a quick study, and soon rose through the ranks. Veronica also had tutors give the young girl some education, although Donisa preferred the fighting circle to the classroom. She even learned the art of Cappuntina from Veronica's courtesans.

When Donisa came of age and finished her training, Veronica told her that she was free to go out into the world. Donisa could make her living as a duelist, or a courtesan, or a teacher, or whatever she wanted. But the courtesan warned that once Donisa left her house, her parents would likely get word of her and try to track her down. The young girl scoffed at the warnings and departed.

Donisa soon found that her family was indeed determined to pursue her once they caught wind of her existence. The Faliscis are incredibly loyal to each other, and viewed her departure as the worst form of betrayal. They weren't so foolish as to send her a request to come home: she was still Senzavista, and had nothing to gain by coming back. They simply hired bounty hunters to recover her. Donisa defeated them, and her family began to take her seriously. They sent Swordsmen, and she defeated them too. They still send men to bring her in, and it will be a long time before they realize the futility of their efforts.

Donisa inherited her hedonism from her family, and indulges it at every opportunity. She drinks like a man, makes love like a man, and kills like a man. Despite that, the opposite sex cannot deny their fascination with her. If anything, her actions give her an even greater allure. Donisa has no plans to settle down anytime soon. For now, she plans to enjoy life and kill as many Vodacce nobles as she can. She prefers to duel Falisci Swordsmen, but they know her reputation and are very careful not to insult anyone if they suspect she is around. Lacking that, Donisa will accept commissions on any Vodacce nobility.

New NPCs

Razors

Henchmen

TN: 30 (possibly higher depending on Swordsman School)

Brawn: 4

Finesse: 4

Resolve: 4

Wits: 3

Panache: 4

Attack Roll: 9k4 (possibly higher depending on Swordsman School)

Damage: 6k2 Rapier (possibly higher depending on Swordsman School, and varies by weapon)

Skills: Diplomacy 1, Etiquette 1, Fencing (Appropriate Weapon) 5, Law 3, Parry (Appropriate Weapon) 5, Footwork 4, Rider 3, Sprinting 3, Street Navigation 2

Special Abilities: All Razors are a Master of at least one School: typically Valroux, Eisenfaust, or Drexel. A Razor will usually have a School from his nation of origin. If the GM wishes, he may give a Razor additional Schools: they need not all be at Master level. A Razor will have 5s in all of the appropriate Swordsman Knacks if a Master, 4s if a Journeyman, and 3s if an Apprentice. In addition, a Razor will have the Exploit Weakness in 1-5 additional Schools. The GM should choose Schools for the Razor to exploit based on who they anticipate going up against. Typically a Razor has 3 in any separate Exploit Weakness they know.

The Razors hail primarily from Montaigne and Eisen, but occasionally come from Avalon, Vendel, and Castille. A few Vodacce Swordsmen work as Razors, thanks to Veronica's influence. Ussuran and Vesten Guild members very rarely bother to join. While the Razors have no specific uniform, many of them wear black to emulate their leader, Renato Marchello. They also wear gold jewelry to match their gold Guild pins.

Razors constitute the enforcement branch of the Guild. They know that the Guild is not well respected by many local authorities. While they receive some training in diplomacy and law, they prefer to depend on fear and their reputation as Master Swordsmen. They usually travel in groups of four, although greater or lesser numbers go out when appropriate. If a single Razor is sent out by the Guild, he or she will usually be a Scoundrel rather than a Henchman.



Castille Professional Swordsman



Traits

Brawn	2
Finesse	3
Wits	2
Resolve	2
Panache	2

Advantages

Eisen (R/W)	(1)
Vendel (R/W)	(2)
Academy	(2)
Combat Reflexes	(3)
Lightning Reflexes	(4)
Membership (Swordsman Guild)	(0)
Swordsman School	(25)

Arcana: None

Background: Rivalry (2 points)

Civil Skills

Doctor

Diagnosis 2, First Aid 2

Scholar

History 2, Mathematics 1, Philosophy 1, Research 1

Martial Skills

Athlete

Climbing 1, Footwork 3, Sprinting 1, Throwing 1

Fencing

Attack (Fencing) 3, Parry (Fencing) 3

Pugilism

Attack (Pugilism) 2, Footwork 3, Jab 1

Rider

Ride 2

Durchsetzungburg

Riposte (Fencing) 2, Tagging (Fencing) 2, Wall of Steel (Fencing) 1, Exploit Weakness (Durchsetzungburg) 1

Income: 36G starting / 12G per month

Montaigne Hired Killer

Traits		Advantages	
Brawn	2	Castille	(1)
Finesse	2	Montaigne	(0)
Wits	2	Vodacce	(1)
Resolve	2	Area Knowledge	
Panache	3	(Charouse)	(3)
		Combat Reflexes	(3)
		Firm Grip	(2)
		Membership	
		(Swordsman Guild)	(25)
		Night Trained	(4)
		Scoundrel	(3)
		Swordsman School	(25)

Arcana: Greedy

Background: Fear

Civil Skills

Criminal

Gambling 1, Shadowing 2, Stealth 3

Streetwise

Socializing 2, Street Knowledge 2

Martial Skills

Athlete

Climbing 3, Footwork 3, Sprinting 1,
Throwing 1

Dirty Fighting

Attack (Dirty Fighting) 2

Fencing

Attack (Fencing) 3, Parry (Fencing) 1

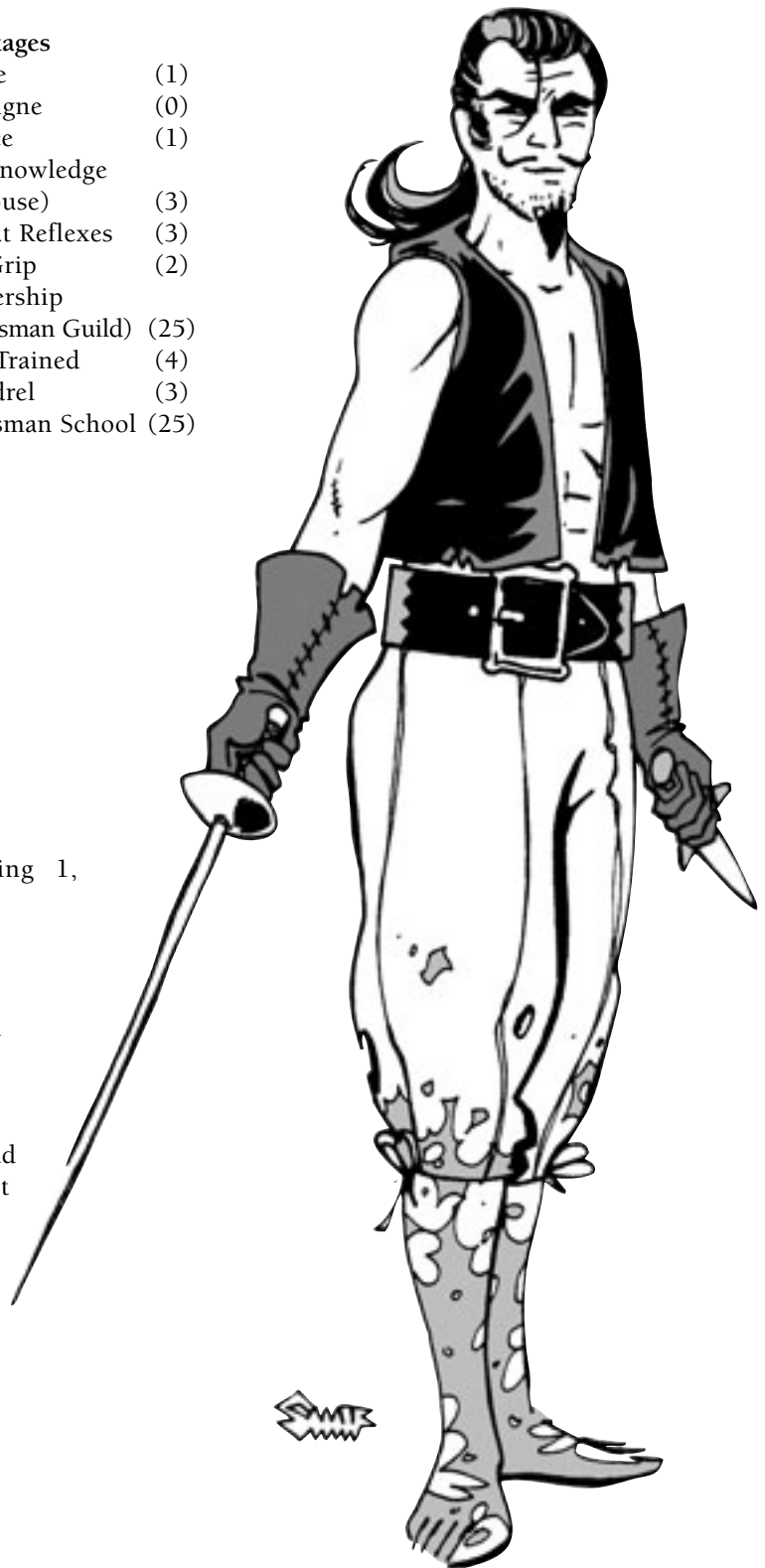
Knife

Attack (Knife) 1, Parry (Knife) 3

Gaule

Double-Parry (Fencing/Knife) 1, Bind
(Knife) 1, Disarm (Knife) 3, Exploit
Weakness (Gaule) 1

Income: 27G starting / 9G per month



Vendel Dilettante

Traits		Advantages	
Brawn	2	Avalon	(1)
Finesse	3	Eisen	(1)
Wits	2	Vendel (R/W)	(1)
Resolve	2	Membership	
Panache	2	(Swordsman Guild) (0)	
		Merchant Patron	
		(20G / 2 a month)	(3)
		Noble	(10)
		Servants	(3)
		Swordsman School	(25)

Arcana: Arrogant

Background: Romance

Civil Skills

Courtier

Dancing 1, Etiquette 3, Fashion 2, Oratory 2

Merchant

Jeweler 2

Martial Skills

Athlete

Climbing 1, Footwork 3, Springing 1, Throwing 1

Dirty Fighting

Attack (Dirty Fighting) 3

Fencing

Attack (Fencing) 3, Parry (Fencing) 3

Firearms

Attack (Firearms) 2

Swanson

Conceal 3, Double-Parry (Swordcane/Sheath) 1, Pommel Strike (Fencing) 2, Exploit Weakness (Swanson) 1

Income: 1500G starting / 500G per month



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