

Chapter One

Introduction

Welcome to *Antagonists*. This supplement for *Ars Magica Fifth Edition* contains ten characters who can take the role of antagonist in your saga.

The antagonist characters provoke conflict to which the magi of your saga must respond. Antagonists draw the magi of your saga into stories. Some of the antagonists might directly attack your covenant. Other antagonists create political turmoil that threaten your magi, your covenant, or even the entire Order of Hermes.

Each antagonist character is a recurring opponent whose influence will take several stories to resolve. Some antagonists will be active for a number of years or decades, so you might like to intersperse the antagonist's stories with other stories (or even the stories of another antagonist). However, you probably will not want to use all the antagonist characters from this book in a single saga. You could consider each antagonist to be a comprehensive example of a Covenant Hook, although the stories of some antagonists could involve many covenants. Of course, it is not a problem if your troupe does manage to satisfactorily resolve an antagonist's conflict with a single story.

Most of the details of the antagonist characters are intended to be initially obscure to the player characters. Thus, it is recommended — once you have chosen to introduce an antagonist character to your saga — that the troupe allocates a single player to be the story-guide for that antagonist's stories, with the other players refraining from reading the details. This strategy will also help to keep the motivations and actions of the antagonist consistent among stories. On the other hand, the antagonists are still usable even if the players are well-versed in the details. For example, if the player characters are over-

whelmed by an antagonist, the saga could continue with a new set of player characters responding to the devastation of the original covenant. You might also like to re-use an antagonist in an unconnected second saga; how might another group of characters respond?

The antagonists themselves have a variety of motivations. Some are supernatural creatures, other are mundane nobles and churchmen. Some antagonists are not really aware of the Order of Hermes, and their actions only incidentally impact upon the magi. Other antagonists are all too aware of the Order, and deliberately provoke the magi. The following summaries describe the basic idea of each antagonist and can be safely read by the whole troupe when discussing how the antagonists might be used in your saga.

Baron Geoffroi D'Arques

Baron Geoffroi D'Arques is a wealthy noble, initially concerned with little more than the success of his lands and providing for his family. But his interest in the supernatural is suddenly piqued, and he starts upon a journey that makes him by turns ally and enemy to the covenant. He starts to attract conjurers, charlatans, and all manner of hedge wizards to his court, eager to learn about magic and turn it to the betterment of his lands. Geoffroi's activities are rarely directed toward the covenant, but as he opens his court to others practiced in magic, the complications make themselves felt upon the covenant

and its resources. The gathering of hedge wizards and the baron's continued quest for more magic will make it impossible for the covenant to ignore him forever.

Baron Giraud Le Cornu

Baron Giraud Le Cornu holds a manor adjacent to the covenant's land. He looks on the magi with deep suspicion: they have men-at-arms and perhaps a castle, but they refuse to swear fealty to any noble. Their strange powers make them an object of fear. He sees their self-proclaimed autonomy as a rebellion against proper authority and a threat to the social order of Mythic Europe.

As an antagonist, the baron shows how the Order of Hermes doesn't really fit well into medieval society. He can steer the covenant toward a more stable relationship with mundane nobles, but at the cost of upsetting the Order's entrenched attitudes about mundane relations. He also shows how much trouble mundane intrigue can cause for a covenant.

Father Joseph of Napoli

Father Joseph is a papal legate sent on a mission to the Order of Hermes. He proposes that the Order of Hermes reinvent

itself as a true religious order: headed by a Grand Master, endorsed by the pope, and established as an appendage of the church. Obviously, there are potential problems aligning this proposal with the traditional Oath of Hermes. On the other hand, the legate's proposal might be met with approval by many Christian magi. Your characters can either support or oppose Father Joseph.

As an antagonist, Father Joseph represents the church meddling with the Order of Hermes. He does not directly attack magi or covenants. He provokes political stories that may spiral into violence or even a new Schism War. The father is a threat because he creates conflict within the Order.

Bishop Orris

Bishop Orris is a man convinced that magic is evil. He has heard the theological and philosophical arguments against this viewpoint, but the fact remains he can smell the filthy stench of pure wickedness whenever he is close to magic. To make matters worse, his diocese contains the characters' covenant, and eventually he will be exposed to them and their "evil" ways.

As an antagonist, Bishop Orris poses a dilemma. He has the potential to make life particularly difficult for player characters, and yet all his actions are for the sake of the best interests of those he has a duty to protect. His intentions are pure, even if his actions are misguided.

Galerius of House Guernicus

Galerius is a Quaesitor who sees it as his personal crusade to punish magi who do anything that potentially endangers the Order of Hermes. His idea of what endangers the Order is extraordinarily broad, and he gets so personally invested in his cases that his judgment sometimes

becomes clouded. He believes it is better to risk punishing the innocent than to allow the guilty escape.

Galerius' zealous pursuit of Hermetic justice means that he may be a threat to even very legally conservative covenants. The smallest hint of indiscretion will be enough to provoke a thorough intrusion into the covenant's affairs. Of course, if there is actually anything for him to find...

The Infatuated Diabolist

Lust can take many forms, and lust for power and lust for a player character combine to drive this antagonist to seek power for the darkest of all sources. In madness, the cost of one's soul can seem a small price to pay.

This antagonist demonstrates the perils of diabolic antagonists, but also their weaknesses. They can be exceptionally strong with sufficient preparation, but have none of the immediate firepower of a Hermetic magus. The diabolist must therefore carefully plot the ensnaring of the reluctant lover, and plan the character's eventual downfall when the attentions of a devil-worshiper are, inevitably, spurned.

A Demonically Inspired Cult

A single powerful demon is a terrible foe, but when two begin similar schemes, and one draws the other into his service, the seeds of an epidemic are sown. When more demons are drawn to the misery the first two have caused, corrupting the people who attempt to mitigate the plague, all of Mythic Europe may be shaken. Can the player characters defend themselves, as the schemes of several demons intertwine, pouring death, madness, and diabolism along the roads of Mythic Europe?

The Divine Abbot

After an act of great courage, the abbot of a local monastery has been replaced by a creature of the Divine. It desires to strengthen the Divine aura of the land by bettering the living conditions of the general population, increasing their faith, and giving greater glory to the power of God. A more potent Divine aura means weaker Magic and Faerie auras, diminishing vis sources and conflicts as other mythic creatures suffer the loss of habitat. The magi are certainly threatened, but can a Divine abbot really be an enemy?

The Queen of Gold and Glass

The Queen of Gold and Glass is a potent faerie who challenges magi with a series of tests. She does not care if they fail or succeed, and may aid them to survive the attacks of other enemies. The Queen is playing a deeper game, and one which, if she is left undefeated, will have alarming consequences for the player characters.

The Waimie

The Waimie is a magical serpent who craves vis. She sends out her numerous brood to gather it for her, and has recently learned that magi can be a potent source. Not only do they hoard it, but they make regular forays to collect it from jealously guarded sites. All she needs to do is have her children follow them whenever they leave home.

The Waimie is a relatively direct antagonist; it is less suited to a major saga theme, and more to a set of interlinked stories occurring close together. The Waimie's brood start small, but they get bigger and more challenging.

