30.4.3 Others

30.4.3.1 Praeses of house Merinita

Praeses considers himself the champion of the gnomes in the region near Gloria Senecta. He is not from the covenant, but was travelling through the area about 5 years ago. Some of Zwerg's gnomes played a joke on him as he was passing through, so he went to meet their king. He learned of the fairies' plight and decided to champion their cause. It was he who suggested that the fairies steal something that the magi value from their covenant to barter with.

Praeses feels that the covenant land belongs to the gnomes, and should be given back to them. If the players find him and make him talk to them, he will try his best to convert them to his cause. Assuming that they will not be converted, he will act as intercessor between them and Zwerg. He will try at all times to derail any plans the players might have that would be disadvantageous to the gnomes. Basically, he is annoying.

30.4.3.2 Zwerg, King of the Gnomes

Zwerg is the king of the gnomes of the lands near Gloria Senecta. In fact he actually lives in a regio in the same location as the covenant. He is playful at heart, but he has become wary of magi and other humans due to the treatment of his people by the magi of Gloria Senecta. He too wants to see the covenant gone, since he and his people were there first. His attempts to communicate were in his opinion repeatedly ignored by the magi of Gloria Senecta, and usually resulted in vis extractions for the Flambeau. Over the last decade, he has developed an intense hatred for Vigor Invictus especially.

Zwerg will be extremely distrustful of the players, since he has no idea who they are, and also because Praeses has told him that they are not to be trusted. Praeses is the only magus who he trusts. He will not want to return "his fountain" to the covenant. After all, they stole it from him, he has a right to steal it back. Zwerg, however, is a lover of contests. It might be possible to "win back" the fountain.

30.5 The Plot

30.5.1 Act I, Discovering the Problem

30.5.1.1 Scene One: A funny thing happened on the way to the covenant.

It is assumed that the characters have been assigned the task of providing help to the covenant of Gloria Senecta by their leader. The characters will not have been informed as to the nature of the problem, only that a request for aid was delivered by Gloria Senecta's hunter, Venator.

Venator will lead the party from the players' covenant to Gloria Senecta. The voyage is to take about 5 days. On the evening before their arrival at the covenant, they will have to camp in the fairy forest surrounding the covenant (the aura here, at night is a fairy aura of 6). That night, the camp will be overrun with gnomes. About two dozen of them will attempt to sneak up on the campsite, an alertness (ambushes) roll of 12+ will detect them while they are still about 20 paces off. If they are detected, they will immediately swarm the place, attempting to create as much confusion as possible. If they manage to sneak up on the campsite, they will steal things from the camp until they are detected. Once they are detected, they will swarm about, again creating as much confusion as possible.

The gnomes will continue to swarm over the camp for about five rounds, and then they will attempt to melt back into the woods. Anything they stole, they will try to take with them. This swarming tactic is merely a diversion. The gnomes actual goal is to kidnap Venator and replace him with a shapechanged gnome, who will travel with them in his place. Unless the characters state that they are actually keeping close watch on Venator during this attack, the fairies will succeed. Once Venator has been captured (put to sleep using elfshot and carried off), the remainder of the gnomes will leave (this is the five rounds of swarming). The bodies of any gnomes killed in this altercation will be worth 2 pawns of Corporem vis (extracted into their big, round noses).

[Everybody was too busy chasing the fairies getting away with their packs to notice that Venator was kidnapped.]

30.5.1.2 Scene Two: A grand welcome.

The characters will arrive at Gloria Senecta about midmorning on the day following the gnome incursion (assuming that they continue to travel). Describe the covenant as they see it from a short distance. It is a large structure covering a hilltop, walled and surrounded with watchtowers. It is also partially ruined. Sections of the wall are crumbled, and several of the towers are in ruins. The central keep is in better repair, but there are sections that are obviously uninhabitable. When the players are led through the main gateway, they will see and hear nobody.

If Venator has not been replaced by a fairy, he will turn to the apparent leader and say "Well, I brought you here, I suggest you find somebody and ask them which problem they need your help with." He will then turn and start to leave. If they stop him and ask him who sent him, he will reply "I don't know. One of the magi. Dux told me to go and bring you here. I did. I'm sure you'll be wanting dinner this evening. I've got to go catch it now. Why don't you go look for Dux." With that he'll leave. If they wander about the covenant grounds, they are likely to meet several of the grogs working on repairing the smithy. These grogs will know nothing of the characters' invitation, and will be surprised to see them. If they are not threatening, they will not do anything to hinder them, though. They are resigned enough to believe just about anything they are told. They will suggest that the characters go and find Dux. They have no idea where he is. Continuing to wander, the characters will meet a man who will introduce himself as Dux. He is, of course, not Dux, and looks nothing at all like Dux, but they haven't met him yet, and so they don't know what he looks like. Anyway, this "Dux" who is actually a fairy will tell the players that a magus named Dominus Mundus sent for them. He will tell them that he will go find him, but first he will see them settled into "guest rooms." He will lead them to the second floor of the covenant, to the third door on the right, and tell them "Your rooms are right through this door. If you need anything, let me know, and I'll try to help. I'll go now and try to find Dominus for you. I'll bring him back here once I've located him." There is, of course a glamour on this door, see below. This is really the door to Dominus Mundus' sanctum, and he did not really send for them.

If Venator has been replaced, the fairy will enter the covenant with the magi and say "I'm not sure which of the magi sent for you, but Dux knows, because he told me to go to your covenant and lead you back here. He told me to tell you that he would meet you in the records room. It's on the second floor. Just go in the main keep and up the stairs to the left. It's the third door on the right. You can't miss it, just go right in and wait for him there. I've got to go catch dinner now. Good luck." With this, he will apparently leave. In actuality, his image has left the covenant and disappeared behind a tree. The gnome is actually still with the magi, but invisible. If they follow his directions, they will end up outside the sanctum of Dominus Mundus. The gnome will have gone ahead and put a glamour on the door so that Dominus' mark cannot be seen. Of course, Dominus is in the room studying from Rego vis, and will not be at all pleased when the characters intrude. If one of the magi is first to open the door, an Perception+ Alertness roll of 15+ will allow him to notice that something is wrong before entering the room. Tell the character "something's wrong" and give the player about two seconds to act. If the player does nothing, the character enters the room. A grog or companion will have to roll an 18+ to notice.

If your players are extremely cautious and knock on every door they come to, you can let them off the hook, or, if you want to be particularly cruel, the fairy's illusion is such that Dominus Mundus cannot hear them knocking...

[In my run of this, Venator was captured, and the players were sent off to Dominus' sanctum. They were most astounded, upon entering the covenant, that there was not even a watch on the gate. My group was extremely careful (to the point of absurdity) with the door they had to go through, so I let them have it anyway 8^).]

30.5.1.3 Scene Three: Certamen or Die!

If a companion or magus enters the room first, Dominus will be extremely angry and multicast Thief of the Stolen Breath five times on the offending character (actually quite a tame response). Hopefully he will make his concentration roll for his magic addiction. If the offending character is a grog, it will be four Pila of Flame. At this point, perceptive characters might notice laughter, and fleeing footsteps heading down the stairs. These are from the gnome that was Venator, making his invisible escape. Assuming that Dominus eventually comes to his senses he will continue by chewing out one or both magi. He will be sure to point out the mark of his sanctum, now clearly visible on the door. If it was a magus who opened the door, he will challenge that magus to Certamen, choosing Rego as the technique, with the conditions that the magus never open a door without knocking first again.

He will also try to make sure to make it clear that he expects the magus to be grateful for the gift of his life (Dominus didn't just kill him). This can be repaid with a favor later. If it was a companion or grog who opened the door, Dominus will pick whichever magus appears to be in charge and challenge him to Certamen, again with Rego as the technique, with the condition that the magus never again knowingly allow any of his companions to open a door without having him knock first.

After the Certamens are over, Dominus will inquire "Just who the hell are you anyway?" If they want to know who sent for them he'll reply "How should I know? I was trying to study this Rego vis. Find somebody else to bother," and he'll slam his door in their faces. Later on, they might meet Dominus again. Assuming that it is on better terms, he will be much more pleasant to them, although he will remember the conditions of the Certamen, so the players had better as well. He will also be sure later on to make sure that the other magi know of the conditions, especially Vigor Invictus.

30.5.1.4 Scene Four: Vigor Invictus, covenant busybody.

When the shouting started outside Dominus Mundus's sanctum, Vigor Invictus heard and came out from his rooms (two doors down) to investigate. He will not become involved in the argument, but once Dominus slams his door, if he hasn't yet been noticed, he will clear his throat and ask them "Can I help you?"

Vigor Invictus is willing to help the characters figure out what is going on, and when he hears why they have come he will nod and suggest that perhaps it was Vigilax Arbiter who sent for them. He will tell them how to find him, and then follow after them, eager to see if they will get themselves into any more trouble. He will be quite happy to talk to them, and will try to learn as much about them as is possible. Of course he will tell any magi they meet while he is with them (and later) of the Certamen and what the magi think about it. If the players tell him that Dux sent them there, he will have them describe Dux, and then tell them that the person they talked to wasn't Dux.

30.5.1.5 Scene Five: Vox Mentis, the voice of reason.

On the way to the covenant gardens where Vigilax Arbiter can be found sitting under his tree, the players will meet Vox Mentis, who is standing near the ring of one of the ruined towers. In front of him he has erected an easel and canvas. He is working on a half completed painting of the ruins of the tower. Something about the painting does not quite sit right. It appears to be an accurate rendering of the scene, but somehow it captures an extremely eerie atmosphere. There is a blank spot in the left center of the painting. If he is asked about it, he will reply, "That is for the demon. I'm going to paint it last."

Vigor Invictus will be sure to introduce the visiting magi to Vox Mentis, and explain that they have come at Vigilax's request. Vox will reply "Come to help Vigilax, eh? If you were smart, you'd turn right now, leave this forsaken place and never come back, but I doubt you will. Your mission is already doomed. Trust me, I know." He will refuse to comment on this further.

30.5.1.6 Scene Six: Vigilax Arbiter and Astan, learning the nature of the problem.

Vigor Invictus will lead the characters to the gardens. At the center of the gardens stands a large apple tree (with apples even out of season), under which an old man is sleeping. A snowy owl can be seen in the branches of the tree, also asleep. A few paces away from the tree there is a cylindrical hole in the ground, about two paces in diameter and six feet deep. The hole has walls of earth. Around the hole is a dry pool bed ringed with stones with an opening where a stream must have once flowed. The old man is Vigilax Arbiter, and the owl is his familiar, Prudentus. If someone reaches for any fruit, Vigilax will grab his arm as is stated in his description. If they wake him, he will sit up and then exclaim "See Astan, I told you they would come. You didn't believe me, but I knew they would." There will be a brief pause, and then he will say "Astan greets you and apologizes for doubting that you would come." If anyone looks, they will notice that the owl is awake and has moved to a lower branch. If anyone says anything to the bird at this point, it will speak, saying "My name's not Astan, I'm Prudentus. Astan is his friend (pointing a wing in the general direction of Vigilax) but he doesn't really exist." At this, Vigilax will turn to his familiar and say "Don't tell me he doesn't exist you sorry excuse for a feather duster. He's right there (pointing at empty space), as clear as day." Turning to the magi he'll ask, "Surely you can see him, can't you?" If they reply no, he'll say "Well who asked you, anyway? I can see it now, you're all in this together. Well I'll tell you it won't work. I'm not crazy, and you won't convince me that I am by lying about

Astan." If they say yes, he'll turn to Vigor Invictus and say "Hah! I knew it. He's been there all along. How much are they paying you to tell me that he isn't?"

After this flurry of activity he will turn to the characters once again and ask them "So why exactly are you here now, anyway?" If they say nothing right away, Vigor will speak up "You sent for them, perhaps?" If they suggest that maybe he sent for them, he will respond, "Of course. You're with that Jerbiton. You've come to help. I can't thank you enough. You see, we've got a bit of a problem..."

[Vigilax turned out great. He annoyed the Verditius to no end, as he wanted to examine the tree. The others weren't sure whetner the Quaesitor was senile or posessed.]

30.5.1.7 Interlude: The problem at Gloria Senecta

Vigilax will explain what he knows of the situation to the characters. The presentation should be a bit disjointed, in the way that the conversation above is. Occasionally, he will pause in mid-sentence and say something like "Yes, yes Astan, I was coming to that part next," or something like that. The players should definitely be wondering if this Quaesitor is playing with a full deck. The details of the situation as far as Vigilax knows them are as follows.

There is a major demon bound within the tree. Vigilax is guarding the tree to make sure that nothing happens to it. Once a year, a ritual must be performed to renew the enchantment on the tree, or the demon will be able to escape. This ritual requires 20 pawns of Vim vis. The hole in the ground used to be the fountain that was the covenant's water source. It was also the covenant's source of 20 pawns of protected Vim vis a year (maybe that's why these people are all so warped, or it could just be the fairy aura of 8). A couple of weeks ago, Saevitia convinced Vigilax to go get something to eat in the covenant. Astan told him it would be OK to go, he would keep an eye on the tree (Astan has told him this in the past, and everything was OK). When he returned to the tree, the fountain was gone. Astan told him that some fairies came and took it away. It's not really Astan's fault, because I (Vigilax) didn't tell him that the fountain was important as well. Vigilax doesn't have 20 pawns of vim vis, or enough time before the ritual needs to be performed to extract it.

If the players ask Vigilax if the other magi at the covenant might have the

Vim vis, Vigilax will reply "Could you ask them? Maybe they do. It would mean a lot to me if they did. Why don't you go and talk to them. If they ask him why he doesn't go himself, he'll say "I have to stay here and guard the tree. Look what happened last time I left it for a few minutes. (pause) No Astan, it's not that I don't trust you, but what if the fairies came back. I wouldn't want them to hurt you."

If they ask about going after the fairies, Vigilax will tell them that in anyone could track them, Venator could. He's sure to be back after sunset with whatever he managed to bring down today. If they mention that Venator sent them to Dominus' sanctum, Vigilax will say "Oh dear. That's not like him at all. I'll have to have a word with him about that whenever I see him next." If the players haven't figured it out yet, Vigor Invictus will ask them if they are sure that it was Venator who gave them the directions. If they describe him, etc. Vigor will say "Yes, that sounds like him. Did anything unusual happen on the way to the covenant?" This should spur them to figure out that Venator got captured by the fairies. Thus, he will not be able to lead them, and they will have to find another way. If, of course, they stopped the fairies from getting Venator, and it was the Dux impostor that told them to go to Dominus' sanctum, then they will already know the fairies have it in for them, and Venator will be back at nightfall to lead them out into the wilderness whenever they care to go.

Act II, Dealing with Matters.

30.5.2 IIA. Getting a Council Together:

30.5.2.1 Scene One: Approaching the Magi.

One of the things that the magi might consider doing is trying to convince the other magi of Gloria Senecta to contribute enough Vim vis for the ritual to be performed. The magi will not individually want to do this. If, however, there were a council decision, they would abide by it, and contribute the vis. Therefore, in order to pursue this path, the players will have to manage to get a council meeting called.

Vigilax Arbiter will think that a council meeting would be a good idea. Unfortunately, he will be unable to gather the magi together for the meeting, as he must guard the tree. He will suggest that the players approach the other magi and explain the situation to them.

Vigor Invictus, who will probably be present when they come up with the idea will seem reluctant for a moment, but then concede that a council meeting would probably be a good idea. He will attend, but he has a few things he needs to take care of in his lab first (he will then scurry off in the direction of his lab).

Vox Mentis will eventually agree to attend the council meeting, although he will state that he is sure that nothing good will come of it.

Saevitia, Incendium Spissus, and Obitus per Ignis will all give in begrudgingly. Before they agree, however, they will want to know how many of the other magi have agreed to go. They don't, after all, want to waste their valuable time if none of the other magi have agreed to go.

Dominus Mundus will not agree to attend the council meeting, and he will definitely make the point that they cannot have a valid council meeting without him. In order to get him to come to the meeting, they will have to challenge him to Certamen. It doesn't matter whether the players win or lose this contest, Dominus will agree to go to the meeting once the players have shown the courage of challenging him.

When Ictus Igneus is first asked to join the council meeting, he will ask in return if Vox Mentis will be attending. If the players say yes, then Ictus will refuse to attend. They won't be able to get him to go without challenging him to Certamen. They can get Saevitia to challenge him for them, but they might not think of this.

[For some reason our Flambeau Fulmem Pulsare decided to enter Futurus Caecus' sanctum even before the meeting. Nothing really bad happened to him, and he managed to rescue about 25 years worth of covenant silverware (although he was kind of puzzled as to where all the food went).]

30.5.2.2 Scene Two: An Abortive Start.

The council meeting is about to begin, and there are two empty seats (assuming that the players have by some means gotten all of the magi of the covenant to agree to come). Vigilax Arbiter is not bodily present. Standing on the table in front of the chair, is his familiar. Prudentus will indicate (distastefully) that his master felt that he could not leave the tree in light of the recent theft of the fountain, and so he is here in his place. Of course, Prudentus will be in communication with his master, so there should be no problem. There will be some grumbling about this, but nobody really cares enough to want to go and drag the Quaesitor here.

The other magi will be settling down, and then Vigor Invictus will pound the table and call the meeting to order. At this point, Dominus Mundus will clear his throat and say "Aren't we forgetting someone?" After a somewhat long pause, Vigor will blink twice and then say, "of course, the Criamon. I guess it wouldn't be polite to start without him." He will then turn to the players and say "Why don't you go look for him. His name is Futurus Caecus. We'll wait here."

Saevitia will then speak up "Don't take too long about it though. If you can't find him, I wouldn't worry about it too much. I haven't seen him in over 25 years."

30.5.2.3 Scene Three: After the Search.

The search for Futurus Caecus will be in vain. His sanctum is closed and locked. If any of the magi decide to enter, see the end of the adventure for possible things to find. One thing is for sure though, they will not find Futurus Caecus.

As they are returning to the council chambers, they will hear the sounds of shouting and heated argument coming from that direction. Entering the council chamber, they will see Ictus and Vox shouting insults at each other, Vox calling the Flambeau a mindless killer, and Ictus looking like he's about ready to start acting the part. The Flambeau twins and Saevitia are just beginning to get warmed up. Vigor Invictus is trying to calm everyone down, and his efforts are failing miserably. Prudentus is hiding in the rafters. Dominus Mundus is still sitting quietly in his chair, smiling.

If the players stay out of the arguing, the shouting and insults will work their way into a frenzy, and then the three Flambeau will storm out of the council chambers, followed by the two Jerbiton. Vigor Invictus will follow them, still pleasing with them to calm down and come back to the meeting. Prudentus will fly like an arrow for the nearest window, and escape to return to the tree. Dominus Mundus will turn to the players with a bemused expression on his face (still seated) and say "I guess this means that there will not be a council meeting after all." If nothing further comes of this statement, he will get up and walk calmly out of the room, leaving the characters there alone.

The players can try again, but it will take at least a week before the Flambeau and the Jerbiton can bear the sight of each other. If they collect them again into the same room and leave them alone with Dominus Mundus, the same thing will happen all over again.

[In my run of this, Dominus Mundus got the arguments started, because he managed to get some of them to go look for the Criamon (again). However, Fulmen managed to calm things down when he rather suddenly cast the Incantation of Lighning into the Criamon's empty chair. I guess he had just about had enough. The council meeting that followed turned out to be pretty useless for them anyway.]

30.5.3 IIB. Going After the Gnomes.

30.5.3.1 Scene One: A Hunting We Will Go.

As the players are preparing to leave the covenant to go after the fairies, Vigor Invictus will ask them if they want to take any of the covenant grogs with them. These will be a sorry bunch. Physically, they are all fine, but years of living at this covenant deep within the fairy forest and drinking from the Vis fountain have made them a bit unstable. Common among the grogs are visions, delusions, and strange behavior. Still, some of them might be handy to have along, in case of a fight.

If they still have Venator with them, he will frown when the prospect of taking the covenant grogs is brought up. If asked to explain, he will whisper to the person who asked "It's not that I'd say they couldn't be useful, it's just that some of them are a bit, well... strange." If they have to rescue Venator, then they're on their own in making this judgement.

Just before they leave, Vigor Invictus will ask them if they want any covenant vis to take with them. If they say yes, he will ask them what kinds they think they will need. He will be able to give them up to 4 pawns of any technique or form, but will only give them a maximum of 16 pawns of vis. In addition to this, they can take as much Herbam vis as they want. This vis comes from the tree (the one that Vigilax Arbiter guards), and it is in the form of small, dried apples. Unfortunately, this vis is demon-tainted (double the number of botch dice), but he will not tell the players this unless they think to ask. They are expected to return the vis that they do not use when they return. If they took any Herbam vis, when they return, they will be told that they can keep whatever remains of that.

30.5.3.2 Scene Two: Be Very, Very Quiet, We are Hunting Fairies.

Whether or not the characters have Venator with them, it is definitely true that the Fairies know their way around the fairy forest much better than the characters. When the characters are out of sight of the covenant, the fairies will be all around, keeping an eye on the characters, and trying to figure out what they are doing. If this does not become obvious from their conversation after a while, a small band of gnomes will let themselves be seen by the characters to see what the reaction will be. If the characters show interest, the gnomes will run away through the woods, trying to get the characters to chase them. If the chase is on, they will tantalize the characters with the possibility of catching them, while leading them deeper and deeper into the forest. Once the gnomes are certain that the characters will be completely lost, they will try and fade into the forest. Perhaps, if you are feeling kind, they can catch up to the gnomes and question a few, who will be most unhelpful (they have been ordered not to tell the characters anything useful). By now, night should be falling, and the characters should be completely lost. The hunters have become the hunted.

30.5.3.3 Scene Three: A Knight of Terror.

During the evening, the unseelie fairies come out to play. The characters will be attacked by a group of fairy silver wolves. The size of the group will depend on how many grogs there are with the magi. Basically, it should be a bit challenging, but not too much trouble. Once about half of the wolves have been wounded or killed, they will all try to get away. About ten minutes after the wolves have left, the watch will be alerted by the sounds of an approaching being. Into the camp will stumble a bleeding gnome, who will beg the party for help. If he is heard out, he will say that he was spying on the characters and got stuck out after dusk, and now he is being hunted. If the players mention the wolves, the gnome will recoil in fear and look about as if surrounded. He will state that the wolves are after him, and if the magi have a heart at all, they will protect him from them. If they agree to this, and he survives the night, they will have a helpful ally in the days to come. It will also turn out to be very useful when the finally meet Zwerg and Praeses. If they send the gnome away, or kill him for his vis, it's their loss. If they try to get him to promise anything in return, he will try to make the wording such that they have as little hold over him as possible, but in exchange for protecting him, he will eventually promise to anything reasonable that the characters ask. If asked, the gnome will tell the characters that they can call him Lakai. While they are talking to the gnome (or collecting his vis), they will hear the baying of the wolves in the background.

About an hour later that evening, the wolves will silently return. They will encircle the camp, and the watch might notice the reflections of the firelight in their eyes as they turn to regard the campsite. If they are attacked, they will fade back into the woods, and tear anyone who ventures out of the firelight to bits. After a few minutes (allowing the watch to wake up the magi, if they want to), a dark form will enter the circle of the firelight. It is a dark knight in dark full chain armor, wielding a huge greatsword made of silver and bone. He is wearing a huge helm with a stag's horns protruding from the top. It is unclear as to whether the horns are part of the helmet, or part of the creature wearing it. In a deep voice, the dark knight will say: "I am looking for a creature of the day. What have you done with it. I and my servants have tracked it to your campsite. Know that it is a crime to harbor a fugitive in the lands of my lord. Speak up. Where is that creature." If they say that it is dead, the knight will want the body. If they provide the body (i.e., they have killed the poor little bugger), he will take it and say "My thanks. I give you leave to spend the remainder of the knight in my lord's lands unmolested, but come tomorrow eve, you had best be gone, for my lord is not fond of visitors." If they say that the gnome left, the knight will say that that is impossible. The wolves would have seen the trail. If they say that they have no idea what he is talking about, then the knight will begin to search their campsite, rather messily.

They can defend the gnome if they challenge the knight to a fight in a one on one test of arms, with no magical assistance. The winner gets to keep the gnome. The challenge ends when one of the contestants yields or is unable to fight further. If the characters manage to win fairly, the knight will bow and leave them. They will not be disturbed for the remainder of the night.

If they cheat, and the knight finds out, he will storm off into the woods, exclaiming "You have cheated in a contest of honor. My lord shall not suffer you mortals long to stay in his woods." When he leave the circle of the firelight, he will blow a great horn. Several other answering horns will be heard in the distance. The players had better make tracks as fast as they can, because they are to be hunted until dawn. When the last echoes of the horn blast has ended, the wolves will charge.

[The magi (being the nice guys that they are) decided to protect the poor, helpless Lakai. For the first encounter with the wolves, I used about 8 or so. One of the grogs on watch was killed, some minimal wounds were inflicted on some of the others, and then the wolves fled. The Ex Misc. magus with giant blood accepted the challenge of the black knight. He lost (as magic was not to be used). At this point Fulmen Pulsare invested a rook of creo vis and a rook of auram vis into an Incantation of Lightning and incinerated the black knight (maximim overkill anyone?). The battle which followed involved about 2 dozen wolves. Three or Four grogs died rather suddenly, and then the Flambeau got around to toasting all of the wolves. The Verditius cast Leap of Homecoming the moment the lightning bolts started to fly. It was rather amusing. Some kind of reputation is in order I believe.]

30.5.3.4 Scene Four: Praeses.

The next day, they will be followed as before, although nobody will show themselves until midday. If they talked to the gnome last night, they will know that the gnomes took the fountain. If they managed to extract a promise to do so, the gnome will begin leading the characters to Zwerg, the gnome king. While they are moving, the gnome might mention the fact that everything they are doing is being watched by the servants of Zwerg. If they try to see the watchers, the characters will be unable to do so without magical assistance, even if they convince Lakai to point them out.

At about midday, Praeses will step forth from the underbrush with a half-dozen gnomes. He will inquire as to the characters' business. If they do not have Lakai with them, Praeses will tell them that he is helping these gnomes find a friend of theirs who was caught out after dark last night. He will ask them if they have seen him. If Praeses finds out that they killed him, he will become enraged. "You're just like those clods at Gloria Senecta. You have no appreciation for the fair folk. Begone from this place before I forget that you are Hermetic Wizards and do something rash. Go back to your friends at Gloria Senecta and tell them that they will never see their fountain again. This land belongs to the gnomes, not to any bunch of murderous invaders. We will not rest until they are all gone from this land."

If they have Lakai with them, the six gnomes will rush up to him and begin chiding him for getting caught out after dark. Praeses will thank them for protecting Lakai, and will agree to take them to see Zwerg if that is what they want. He will inquire on the way why they are helping Gloria Senecta. He will say this name as if it is an insult. In conversation with Praeses they will learn of the fact that many fairies have vanished near the covenant, and that the fairies speak of tortures that go on there. They pleaded that they only wanted to play a few innocent jokes at first, but after their treatment, it was necessary to do something to get them back. Praeses will tell the characters that he has agreed to help Zwerg chase off the magi of Gloria Senecta, as he cannot tolerate their treatment. He will try to convince the characters that they should help him. He will lead the characters to Zwerg, but will insist that they leave their iron behind.

30.5.3.5 Interlude: What to do if the Characters have Seriously Offended Praeses

If the characters have killed Lakai or otherwise seriously offended Praeses, he will not lead them to see Zwerg immediately and the fairies will not help them. The players will be left to wander around in the fairy regio that they are now in. After a while, the gnomes will try to capture them (by using enchanted arrows of sleep). Should this work, they will be taken in front of Zwerg to explain themselves and pay for the sins of Gloria Senecta (after all, they are magi, and they came from Gloria Senecta, so they must be responsible). This will be their last chance to try to come to some peaceful agreement between the fairies and the covenant.

30.5.3.6 Scene Five: Zwerg.

One way or the other, the characters will end up in front of Zwerg, king of the gnomes. He is a short, ugly chap, who wears a crown of gold that is several sizes too big for him. He will be at first extremely distrustful of them, since they came from Gloria Senecta. If Praeses vouches for them, it will help, but they still must mollify him if they are to get anything accomplished. Zwerg will accuse them of helping the magi at Gloria Senecta commit heinous acts of torture on his people. He will ask them why he shouldn't do the same to them. Basically, they need to seem sincere and to say that they will try to find out what has been happening to the fairies at the covenant and put a stop to it. If they seem to honestly not know anything about the torture of the fairies, Zwerg will be surprised. One of his advisers will try to convince him that the magi are lying "Surely these creatures are lying, lord. Your spies clearly saw them coming from the house of torture. How could they have entered there and not know." If they killed any fairies on the way here, this adviser will make note of it, calling it damning evidence that cannot be overlooked. If they managed to rescue Lakai, he will meekly step forward and tell the king that they saved him. This will help the characters immensely.

If they promise to return to the covenant ant put a stop to the "tortures", the king will let them go, as long as Praeses agrees with it. If they have offended him, they will have to do a lot of groveling before he will agree. No matter which way the characters get to see Zwerg, the matter of the covenant and the tortures will have to be cleared up before Zwerg will even think about returning the fountain. He will not agree to return the fountain in exchange for the tortures to stop. He will mention that according to the magi's own code, they should stop it, so he doesn't owe them anything for it (Praeses told him about this). Zwerg will agree to return Venator to them if they manage to obtain a promise to stop the torture.

30.5.3.7 Scene Six: Torture of the Fairies.

Returning to the covenant, the players will have to talk to the magi about torturing the fairies. Most of the magi there have been guilty at one time or another of toasting some fairies that came too close to the covenant, but the tortures that the king is referring to are those conducted by Vigor Invictus as part of his "research." They will have to convince him to find an alternate path of research for his longevity studies. Probably nothing short of a threat to call in the Quaesitors will be able to convince him. If they call Vigilax Arbiter, he will have a little talk with Vigor about his research. Once he is convinced, he will complain repeatedly about what a shame this all is, and how it is so terrible that the other magi would hinder his great research, which will mean so much to the order when it is complete. He will probably make an appeal at the next tribunal (the first time he has gone to one in many decades).

After extracting a promise from the other magi not to molest the fairies, they can return to see Zwerg. Praeses will be waiting in the woods when the characters decide to go back again. He will take them back to Zwerg, where they can now begin negotiations for the fountain.

30.5.4 The Plot: Act III, The Fountain.

30.5.4.1 Scene One: Arguing over Possession.

Zwerg will be an a much happier mood once he has learned that the magi of Gloria Senecta have agreed to stop the tortures. On the other hand, he would really still like to get his hands on the one responsible. If the characters begin to ask for the fountain back, Zwerg will refuse, saying that he stole it fair and square. If they are willing to buy it back, however, he is willing to listen to their offers. Basically he will refuse any offer they make for the fountain. If they finally get fed up and ask him what he wants for it, he'll say "Bring me the one you call Vigor Invictus. I will take him in exchange for the fountain." This will obviously be intolerable and/or impractical for the magi, but Zwerg will not accept anything less.

Zwerg will wait patiently while the characters think it over. If they ask Praeses, he'll respond, "Well, it's only fair." If they saved Lakai, he will be there while all of this is going on. While they are thinking about it, Zwerg will begin the day's entertainment, challenges among the fairies.

If they ask Lakai about what they should do, Lakai will respond that his king is rather fond of challenges and contests. Maybe they could win the fountain back. If Lakai is dead, and the players are obviously not getting anywhere, then perhaps Praeses could volunteer this information. If the characters advocate a contest, then Zwerg will smile and laugh. "A contest. Indeed, a contest would be most grand."

30.5.4.2 Scene Two: The Contests.

Zwerg begins, "Yes, a contest would be most grand, but I know what would be even grander, three contests. We shall have three contests, and whoever shall win the majority shall take their prize. The loser of each contest shall select the next contest. As the challengers, I shall magnanimously allow you the choice of the first contest. What do you claim as the prize should you win?" If they claim the fountain, then he will respond, "Aye, and I choose Vigor Invictus. If we win the contests, you shall bring him here to me." The other fairies will gather around to witness the spectacle that is sure to follow.

The characters are allowed to choose the first contest. Hopefully they will win. If they lose, Zwerg will ask them if they want to up the stakes and increase the number of challenges to five. He will tell them of his magical caverns and offer them some of the treasures from within. He will ask them what they will wager in return. They can agree or disagree as they like. The treasures he is offering are some gemstones worth 10 pawns of Terram vis, and a curiously shaped emerald worth four pawns of Creo vis. He will expect the magi to wager something he considers of equal value. Regardless, they will be allowed to choose the second contest, having lost the first. Should they lose this one too, they have lost, unless they have agrees to extend the number of challenges to five.

Zwerg's first challenge will be a drinking contest. He will have a table brought forth, and one of the players must drink Zwerg's finest brew against one of the fairies chosen by Zwerg. Zwerg will choose a small gnome, with a large red nose, who will eagerly take his seat at the table. If the characters have lost the first challenge, and not extended the number of challenges to five, then they might be allowed to choose Lakai as a champion if they think of it. Otherwise they will not. The brew they are drinking is extremely strong. After each glass the character drinking must make a stamina roll of 15+ or fall asleep. Each glass drunk gives the character a -2 to his roll. The fairy who is challenging merely needs to avoid botching to stay awake. The fairies are probably going to win this one unless Lakai is drinking for the magi (he too must only avoid botching to stay awake).

If Zwerg gets to choose again, he will suggest a hunt. The characters will be allowed to select a hunting party from amongst themselves of whatever size they wish. Zwerg will choose a party of equal size from his people. Both parties are to go forth, and the first to return with a boar wins. The two boars will serve as the evening meal (assuming that the characters are competent enough to get one). If they have Venator with them, it will help them get a boar faster. Basically, the fairy party will originally leave in a different direction from the characters. When the characters finally get a boar, and are returning to the king, the first fairy party will try to steal the boar from them. They had better not kill any of the fairies. If the fairies manage to steal the boar and return to the king, they will be declared the winners.

If Zwerg must choose a third time, he will suggest a contest of dicing. The rules are simple, each player gets to throw five dice against one of the fairies. Highest total wins. Whichever side has the most number of winners wins the contest. If there is a tie, Zwerg will dice against the champion of the players.

If the players choose sensible contests, they should win, since they were given choice of the first contest. If they lose, they will have to attempt to abide by the contest. If they somehow manage to bring them Vigor Invictus, Zwerg will give them the fountain anyway (he's a good sport, and he doesn't really need the fountain for anything). Chances are, they'll have to convince the other magi at the covenant to extract vis for a while. Vigor Invictus will not go to the fairies willingly. If they somehow manage to Certamen him, he will go, and use his spells to leave, once he is there (thus fulfilling the terms of the Certamen). Zwerg will not be happy if he is cheated out of his prize.

The players should be able to win in a contest of arms (as long as it is not archery). Also, if they think of it, they can choose Certamen as a contest. In this case, Praeses will act as the king's champion. If they must choose a third contest, they are on their own to think of it. If the players mention upping the stakes at any time, Zwerg will offer them the same deal that he would offer them if they lose their first contest. Try to arrange things so that the challenge lasts until the last contest. If the players win, Zwerg will thank them for a good contest, and tell them that the fountain is theirs. Of course, they are now going to have to figure out a way to return it to the covenant.

Zwerg might be willing to return it to the covenant if they are willing to pay him something reasonable in return. He will not return it for free unless it was made explicitly a term of the contest.

[The magi chose a brawling contest at their first challenge. One of their large grogs squared off against a really fat gnome and won. They obvously lost the drinking contest. The second contest that they chose was a contest of certamen with Praeses. Fulmen Pulsare fought the certamen with Praeses in Muto Auram. He was winning nicely, and then Praeses triple botched (gotta love those faerie auras). Praeses went into immediate twilight. Fortuately fulmen managed to avoid the same fate, and was declared the winner. They had to bargain a visit from their troubadour and a poem from the leader of their covenant in return for actually transporting the fountain back to Gloria Senecta. Vigor Invictus was not at all happy when they told him he had to find another avenue for his research. I think he'll probably appeal at the next tribunal (should be interesting).]

30.5.5 Appendix: The Sanctum of Futurus Caecus

If the characters decide to enter the sanctum of Futurus Caecus in their search for him, they will not find him there. They will find a large pile of the covenant silverware, which the grogs would appreciate being returned (but they're not about to enter the sanctum to get it). There is no trap on the door, and no waiting spells present to torch the characters. However, in Futurus' lab there is a large, standing mirror. The mirror does not reflect the surroundings as it ought. Instead, it reflects a dark cave in which a stream flows. Light comes from somewhere out of view and is reflected from the water onto the walls of the caves. The effects are mesmerizing, and characters who study the scene should make Int + Concentration rolls of 9+ to turn away. If a character touches the surface of the mirror, his hand will pass right through it, into the scene. Any character entering the mirror, will enter the cavern, where the full effects of the mesmerizing light will come into play. A magus will definitely experience a twilight. The character should roll for control. Once the experience is over, the character may return through the mirror, given that he can make a concentration + Int roll of 15+. He may try this once every minute, but should he botch, he must roll for twilight again. Non-magus characters can enter the mirror to fetch the magus without the trouble of twilight, but they must roll too or be mesmerized.

30.6 Appendix: Character Statistics

30.6.1 The Gnomes of king Zwerg

Gnome Raiding Party Members

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Faerie Might: 20
Size -1   Int +1

Playful +2 vs. Angry +2 (problems with Gloria Senecta not yet solved)
Sword:    First +5, Attack +8, Damage +12
Fatigue +5, Defense +8, Soak +6 (+50% damage from iron/steel)
Body Levels: Ok, 0, -3, -5, Incapacitated

Powers:
          Invisibility (3 points)
          Elfshot (cause enchanted sleep, Stm roll of 12+ to
            resist, 2 points)
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These are the fairies that the characters will encounter on their way to the covenant. There are two dozen of these, who will try to confuse the characters while they capture Venator. Then they will attempt to slip away. Their bodies are worth two pawns of Corporem vis each, extracted into their noses. One of these fairies will take the place of Venator (or Dux if necessary).