

THE APOTHECA

THE APOTHECA SUPPLEMENT FOR THE ELDRITCH LIVE ACTION ROLEPLAYING GAME

The ELDRITCH Live Action Roleplaying game is a lovingly crafted work of fiction created by John Kozar, Faye Ferguson, and Spencer McGhin, with additional input from, and content created by Megan Durham, Jessica Sills, Thomas Marshbanks, Galen Hall, and Joe Meyer. Special thanks to Lehanna Allen, Carl Holzbog, and anyone else who ever listened to us prattle on about the project. Thanks to everyone who helped to make this strange dream a reality.

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All art and direction by William Weird, Mel De Carvalho, Spencer McGhin and John Kozar.

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WELCOME TO ARNESSE...

Eight great houses vie for control amidst a world in ruin after centuries of conflict and war. Ancient institutions scheme amongst the rulership of the land for their own small piece of the empire. This is the world of Eldritch. With this guide, you hold the key the gates of a world rife with bitter conflict, political turmoil, and mysteries both arcane and unseen. Ancient alliances are broken as quickly as they are forged. Lines are blurred between ally and enemy. Heroes are found in the most unlikely of places. The world is awakening anew. Where will you find your place in this forgotten dream?

USING THIS GUIDE

The player supplements for Eldritch are intended to provide detail information beyond that which is known to the general player population. All information in this guide is to be taken as in-play information, known by you and others in your corresponding faction. You may over the course of Eldritch events discover new information that corresponds to your faction, however you will be able to share this information as you wish.

SUMMARY

LOCALES

THE APOTHEON

Second only to the mighty towers of High Keep, the Apotheon, current headquarters of the Apotheca, looms over Highcourt. The Apotheon is said to have the largest repository of scrolls and tomes in all Arnesse. It also contains the finest scholarium in the land, the Argent Academy. Here, magisters train, study, and live night and day, strangely secluded from the city just beyond the front door of their sanctuary. The floors of the Apotheon are restricted by Magister rank with the higher ranks only being permitted on the highest levels. There, overlooking the capital, the Grand Magister and the Inner Council of the Apotheca administer the many apothecariums throughout Arnesse. Those not of the order are not often welcome in the tower and that even being allowed to set foot within its gates is a high honor and one not even high ranking nobles can easily obtain. The Apotheon is also known as Candlespire due to the large number of candles seen burning day and night.

THE ASHEN TOWER

The Ashen Tower is an ancient tower said to be over two thousand years old that sits in the heart of Tor Oman in Tarkath. The Apotheon may be the headquarters of the Apotheca but it's heart and soul lie in Tarkath. The Ashen Tower is completely off limits to outsiders and magisters must be specially chosen to visit. There is often a long list but rank and influence help accelerate the process. The Apotheon may boast of having Arnesse's largest library, but the truly rare and valuable items and tomes are kept in the heart of the Ashen Tower. Stories say the Ashen Tower was once a place where blood magic was studied and practiced. It is said that hundreds, perhaps thousands died horrible and gruesome deaths in the name of advancing the art. Beneath the Ashen Keep is said to be a place known as the Cranarium, a vault where the walls themselves are made of thousands of skulls. What is stored there is a mystery but it is said to be of incredible value. To this day, the people of Tarkath revere the Apotheca order, but also give their towers and properties a wide berth.

GALDORLEOTH

Deep within the Thornwood in the lands of House Gleanna, stands the largest Magister tower in Innis domain, Galdorleoth, also known as the Garden Tower. It is built atop a natural hill that has been made even taller by earthworks so

that it has a commanding view of the forest and lands around it. Given its height a contingent of Woodswards is often stationed there to keep watch for fires and other threats. The libraries within Galdorleoth are not as extensive as in other places but it is said that they contain records of what the Apotheca has gleaned from the oral traditions of the Draiochta and what they could protect from harm during the religious purges of the past. It is said that there is closely guarded lore books here from before the Eldritch Cataclysm which only the most senior magisters can gain access to. The Innis have not forgotten that one of the reasons their traditions have survived at all is because of the Apotheca's willingness to take in those faithful who would have been murdered under regimes of the past. Many children who are "Given to the Forest" are promised to the magisters at Galdorleoth instead.

MAJOR MEMBERS AND FIGURES

Master Oberan

Grand Magister of the Apotheca

Age: 60

Grand Magister Oberan has been head of the Apotheca order for the better part of two decades now. He has seen the rule of Giles I and his son Giles II. Oberan is a stately man in his sixtieth year who is well known for being one of the foremost masters of philosophy in the Kingdom. The Grand Magister is known to enjoy reading poetry from before the Great War, is almost entirely blind. His particular focus is moral philosophy and this has placed him in a unique position given the rapid changes in moral expectations in the realm under Giles II. King Giles II released the morality laws three years ago but it's said that the Grand Magister had a heavy hand in crafting them. Those on the King's Council say that the Grand Magister is in many ways the conscience of the Kingdom's rulership, regularly challenging and asking questions about the morality or correctness of a decision. It is this alone that has kept him in favor with the King as Oberan has not converted to the faith of the Aurormy, but Giles II sees him as a good and just man. The Grand Magister has worked to keep the Apotheca as a neutral party during difficult political times. He has felt the pressure to conform to the ways of the Aurormy but knows that the teachings of Magnus Blayne and his order are often at odds. Having the Apotheca to join a religion could be a decision that ends the ancient order.

THE INNER COUNCIL

Master Emmon

Archmagister of the Apotheca

Age: 58

Appointed two years ago when Archmagister Robar died of mysterious illness, Archmagister Emmon is the newest member of the Council. It is said he was not the Grand Magister's first choice, but Giles II pressured the Oberan into the decision. Archmagister Emmon has been a long-time student of religion, with a particular focus on the Aurormy. Those who have worked with Emmon say that he prefers to study and research in cloister and that he is often guided by unseen voices. Master Emmon is also the leader of the College of Theologians, a group of who study religion and faith in Arnesse. Master Emmon joined the Aurormy faith shortly after his appointment to the Council, leading many to believe that his appointment was due to his conversion. Since then, Emmon has been an advocate for the Apotheca order converting to the Aurormy. To date, he has been opposed by the two other members of the Inner Council and the Grand Magister. Based on his apparent ambitions and quick rise in rank, rumors are that Emmon has an eye on the Grand Magister seat.

Master Osric

Archmagister of the Apotheca

Age: 65

Archmagister Osric has been on the Inner Council for almost as long as Grand Magister Oberan has been in power and it is said the two are good friends and allies. Master Osric's area of study is anthropology and the people of Arnesse. He has particular interest in the culture of both the ancient peoples of the Everfrost and Thornwood. The Archmagister is said to have never lost a game of Tavl and that he loudly proclaims that he has made a grand discovery, which later proved to be false. He is often not seen at the Apotheon or in Highcourt as he spends most of his time in the North at Galdorleoth. From there, Archmagister Osric oversees Apotheca operations within the Northern Reaches, Everfrost, and the Dusklands. While he is effective at this job, there are concerns that having one of the Grand Magister's allies so far afield during a time of turmoil is a substantial risk.

Master Maynard

Archmagister of the Apotheca

Age: 75

Most can't remember a time that Archmagister Maynard was not in the Apotheca. He regularly tells stories about his youth during the reign of Queen Eleanor and Astor Aragon, reminiscing of a time before the malcontent and strife of more

modern rulers. Maynard is attempting to find a cure for old age and that self-experimentation has caused him to develop multiple ugly tumors. Maynard is a botanist and has a specialty for flora and fauna of the Sovereignlands and Midlands. These days he spends less time in the Grand Court and more with tending the garden he has made on the grounds of the Apotheon. There he grows all manner of plants and herbs, some quite exotic and rare. While some might see the old Magister as a doddering fool, Maynard is known to be quite clever and has been around the Grand Court for over fifty years. It's also been said that he also knows everything there is to know about the city of Highcourt.

OTHER NOTABLE MAGISTERS

Master Honorius

Archmagister of the Apotheca

Age: 42

Honorius was born Stephen Bannon, the cousin of Lord Arthur Bannon of Coventry. From an early age, with few options to ever inherit land, he joined the Apotheca and has been a Magister in service to the order for the better part of twenty years. From all that anyone can tell, Honorius is an honest and forthright individual whose knowledge of the history of the world, specifically the lore of the current noble houses, is almost unparalleled. Honorius has a somewhat serious tick that gets worse when he's under stress. He also relentlessly seeks to correct people when they are wrong. He serves as the personal historian, librarian, and physician to the royal family. Honorius has also converted to the Aurorum faith and was recently promoted to the rank of Archmagister. It is said that with the King's favor, Honorius' star is on the rise and that he is destined to join the Apotheca's Inner Council as soon as a seat becomes available.

Master Nebucoronus

Archmagister of the Apotheca

Age: 64

Master Nebucoronus is the Magister to House Aragon of Dragonspire and has been for almost forty-five years. He has been a trusted family friend of the Aragons for decades. Nebucoronus' area of focus and study is the art of linguistics and a story is told that his odd name comes from a desire to have a truly magical and unique moniker. Nebucoronus admonishes those with 'boring' names and is quick to offer his skills at improving them. He is also known to be a bit of a lech and is often seen making advances on people of both sexes. Though the Magister is aging, few know more about the goings on within Dragonspire and the South. The Archmagister is known to be a crotchety and often sour man

who is often unfairly hard on those around him. Little more is known about him other than he is rumored to be more political than most magisters. This may be why, despite his years of loyal service to the Apotheca and House Aragon, he's never been chosen for the Inner Council.

Master Rufus

Preceptor of the Apotheca

Age: 38

Rufus serves under Lord Paragon Desmond Corveaux in Vairsing Castle. His primary duty is that of being the house physician, but he also specializes in the study of noble house history, with a focus on Houses Corveaux and Castellan, and a particular interest in architecture. Rufus is obsessive about his possessions and requires them to be handled and organized in very specific ways.

Master Reinhold

Magister of the Apotheca

Age: 29

The Apotheca are well respected in Hale and many are housed within the Wailing Keep. Reinhold is the most respected magister in the keep, due in part to the fact that he is from Bannon originally, and came with Lady Emma as part of her entourage. Despite his young age, he is often called in to advise Lady Emma on matters both big and small. There are persistent rumors that his relationship with the Lady might be much closer than is appropriate. Reinhold was said to have been married before he became a Magister and that he claims to still hear her voice and converse with her very dark nights.

Master Bronwyn

Magister of the Apotheca

Age: 25

Having recently joined House Richter of the Noctuary, Magister Bronwyn replaces longtime house magister, Alden who was found dead four moons back. Since he has joined the house, Bronwyn has become increasingly paranoid that he will be found dead like Magister Alden. To try to prevent this, he has been taking small amounts of various poisons in the hopes that he can build up an immunity. He's also demanded that a man-at-arms be with him at all times. While some might attribute this to unnecessary paranoia, whispers are that whatever the new Magister has found out in his short time in Richter's service has led him to believe his life is in real danger.

A Study of the Peculiarities of Magisters in Arnesse

21st Day of the 10th Moon, 763 AS

Many have commented on the odd quirks that seem to develop in many magisters over their years of service and so I have set myself to the task of documenting oddities as I see them in my peers.

Archmagister Dien – Aged 46 years, Obsessively researches root causes of urban legends, Mushroom Collector, Reports Sightings of Unknown Beings.

Preceptor Linstrom – Aged 35 years House Magister of the Apotheca for House Blayne for the last 13 years. Bathes incessantly to stay clean. Believes cats are conspiring against him.

Preceptor Sven, the Diplomat – Aged 45 years Expert on Mollusks and Crustaceans, claims to know several Vampires, Suffers from Leprosy.

Preceptor Liam – Aged 41 years. Accused of selling guild property, Has Serious Memory Problems, Awoke Covered in Blood Last Week.

Keeper Earling – Aged 35 years Acquires Dangerous Creatures for Study, Wants to Change Careers, Keeps Trophies in Pickle Jars.

Magister Jeremiah - Aged 23 years Brilliant Surgeon, Accused of Performing Live Autopsies, Committed himself to the Bancroft Sanatorium

RANKING AND SENIORITY

Novitiate

Magister

Keeper

Preceptor

Arch Magister

HISTORY

The following section details that common historical information known to the members of the faction. While there is certainly more history to the faction, it will need to be discovered via the proper in-game channels.

The Apotheca is one of the oldest organizations in Arnesse, said to predate even the great houses. While its origins are shrouded in mystery, tales and myths speak of an order of scholars and blood magic from Tarkath. Indeed the legacy of the magisters is one soaked in both ink and blood. Long have they stood by the great nobles of Arnesse as advisors and tutors, faithfully keeping records of the passing of events. In a world with no real medicine, their skills as chirurgeons has saved the lives of many. Their decoctions, elixirs, and tonics are a staple of the kingdom, even if they are expensive beyond what most folk could ever hope to afford.

The driving essence of the Apotheca's mission is the pursuit of knowledge, no matter the cost. Those who do well as magisters have a relentless desire to acquire a greater understanding of the world. The Apotheca also believes that, based on history, this understanding is not for everyone and thus jealousy guard their lore from outsiders. A magister knows much but he shares it when he thinks it will have the most benefit to himself, his order, or the world. Their vast knowledge and ability to keep secrets has placed magisters in a trusted place near the powerful and wealthy. The magisters have used this position to further their ends and in the modern days, few noble courts in any fief lack at least one magister to oversee their affairs and household.

But the Apotheca is at a crossroads. The winds of change are blowing through Arnesse. The Aurorum faith is rising in power to challenge institutions both old and new. Their neutrality and usefulness has allowed the Apotheca to weather every storm. But this is not a conflict of kings, over crowns, lands, glory, or gold. It is an ideological war and one in which an ancient order of mystics who are known to have an insatiable desire for ancient lore are at a distinct disadvantage. This has forced the Apotheca into an uncomfortable reckoning about their future. Will they submit to the rising tide or will the historians stand firm and try to change history?

BEFORE THE GREAT WAR

An account of events leading to the Great War

Preceptor Sven, 4th Day of the 7th Moon, 761
AS

During the early part of the 4th Century of the Eldritch Age, numerous calamities befell Arnesse and the people lost faith in the Old Gods. The greatest of these was an event known as the Eldritch Plague, which began in 415 and did not end until after 420. The exact nature of the disease is now lost to time, but its symptoms of reddish bruises, a deep, wet cough, and fevered delirium make me believe that it was potentially an extremely virulent strain of Grave Scourge. I will admit that this conclusion has me vexed as those who contract this Grave Scourge only do so by consuming water or food that has been tainted by contact with rotting human flesh. How so many came in contact with rotting remains is certainly a case for future studies.

It fell to us to point out the newly infected and to see that they could not spread the contagion. We boarded up many houses, bricked up many streets, and let great fires purge the country. Masks and herbs helped to keep us from sickness, mostly. Accounts that I found in the Ashen Tower indicated that the disease seemed driven by some unnatural force that resisted cures. If this was a magical plague, that means that someone caused it.

Some claimed it was the work of the Gods, and sought to reap a bloody toll on the faithful as revenge. In response to this, a vassal of the Castellan family named House Ulster staged a rebellion in 421. The reader may already know this but House Ulster were the nobles that became the Great House of Blayne. This uprising was mercilessly put down, and the affair made matters worse for the faithful. Cyclical violence and oppression against the faithful followed their natural course, escalating for two bloody decades.

In 440, following the annihilation of the Magistrat Council by religious separatists, Prime Consul Edric

Bannon passed the Faith Separation Act which outlawed religion in the Kingdom. Two days later, a great attack was perpetrated that came to be known as The Darkest Night. Note that several scrolls I found referenced this as the Blackest Night. Places of worship were looted, leaders of faiths were made to recant or die. There are also records of prison camps where thousands were detained and killed. I came across the name Karnige during my research and upon further discovery I found that this was the site of a particularly vile and disturbing camp. My inquiries as to Karnige's location place it somewhere within the Dusklands which means that House Richter is likely responsible. I found few willing to talk about the camp but I did find out that its ruins still exist and are apparently very haunted.

While the Apotheca was largely immune to this purge, our order did our best to help those who were oppressed during this time. While I wish I could say that many of my brothers did so out of a desire to help others, my studies revealed that volumes of rare lore were traded in exchange for aiding refugees.

Notes in the margin...

While I was researching events of the late Eldritch Age that might have perpetrated the uprising against faith, I came across a record from a Magister who had served with House Rourke. Their account spoke of an event known only as the Great Drowning. This may be a reference to the cataclysm that befell the island domain of Argos. Much of the account is filled with fantastic tales of attacks by the creatures of the deep and the sea itself rising to swallow the earth. It also makes a reference to the Doom of Shalhea. Is this event related to the others that happened in the same time period? This event bears further investigation.

The Time of Ashes

Preceptor Holmgren

27th Day of the 3rd Moon, 763 A.S.

In the years following the Great War, chaos and disorder gripped the Kingdom. The Godfall and the Eldritch Cataclysm caused the people to rebel against the idea of organized religion, magic, and learning. They took to the streets to protest, rooting out the last of the adherents of the Old Faiths and putting them to death. More than a few magisters lost their lives in these purges, caught up and mistaken for holy men or witches. Those that survived took refuge in their towers and hid while the world burned, jealously guarding what tomes and scrolls they could save behind locks and vaults.

This behavior was encouraged by the nobles and monarchy, particularly Queen Catherine. It was said that she hated the Gods more than anything in the world and wanted to stamp out any trace of their existence. In 455 she ordered the Great Library of Pharos, perhaps the single largest repository of knowledge in Arnesse, to be put to the torch. Those who witnessed the event said that "the first 10,000 years of history were wiped out with a single fire."

To this day, the feelings stoked during the Time of Ashes still resonate with many people in the Kingdom. Libraries and places of learning are extremely rare in Arnesse. Education beyond the noble class is nearly non-existent. The distrust and even fear of religion and magic are almost as strong among many as they were three hundred years ago. While some are tempted that magic could restore the land to health and prosperity again, the majority are terrified of the vast and unknown power of sorcery. These days of Arnesse are distinguished by an extreme level of self-determinism. The idea that man controls his own destiny and that no deity, sorcery, or other unnatural force should interfere.

THE GREAT WAR - 441 A.S. - 451 A.S.

The Great War

Magister Reinhold

16th Day of the 5th Moon, 761 A.S.

In 441 A.S. Prime Consul Edric Bannon rallied five great houses, Bannon, Castellan, Hale, Rourke, and Richter to join him in destroying the Eldra Gods. The reader may agree with this author at as sheer folly and audacity of such an effort, but the mages of Eldritch Age were so powerful that they could bind the very Gods themselves to physical form and allowing them to be harmed with enchanted weapons. My colleagues and have debated the nature of these weapons and insist they were crafted of Dragonsteel or Mythril, but I suspect it was in fact Godsteel, an exceedingly rare metal which causes grievous wounds to creatures and beings that are from beyond the Vale.

House Athan, the ancestors of House Innis, join with House Aragon, and rose in defiance to stop Bannon's army. Given the odds, it almost seemed unsurprising that House Athan was defeated by the forces of House Richter and Hale in the Battle of Thornwood. It is this event which earns the Richters the name Godkillers for the glee with which they go about the task of destroying the Athan's Goddess, Mediena. In a similar turn of events, House Aragon is forced to retreat by a Bannon and Castellan army armed with Richter-built siege weapons that decimate their dragons at Redwick. To this day, House Aragon has not forgiven the North for slaying their dragons in battle. The region known as Dragon's Rest in the South Midlands is named for this monumental achievement.

Within a year the victorious army led by Lord Edric Bannon had destroyed the Old Gods of the Eldra. To this day the full ramifications of this still have not been determined by scholars. But the political ramifications of this act were perhaps even deeper than the metaphysical ones. In reward for his leadership, Edric Bannon found the support among the Houses that had joined his crusade to be crowned King of Arnesse. During his coronation, Edric's reign was cut short as he was killed by assassins. The noble houses are hotly contested as to who exactly was responsible for Edric's death, but all evidence points to Houses Aragon and Athan, seeking revenge for their losses in war. Lord Edric's daughter, his heir Lady Catherine, is coronated Queen Catherine Bannon I.

On the Poisoning of King Edric I

**Preceptor Rowengren
2nd Day of the 3rd Moon, 612 AS**

While scholars debate the culprit for the assassination of Prime Consul Edric Bannon in 442, few argue that it was a Tarkathi spear which delivered the fatal blow. But it was not the weapon which caused his agonizing and bloody death but the beautiful and deadly Waste Lily.

The name Waste Lily is a bit of a misnomer as it is not a lily at all but a species of Limnocharitaceae. It is easily confused as both have leaves which float near the water's surface and have similarly colored flowers. Waste Lily is found only in the gardens of House Vorel in Tarkath. It is also cultivated in small amounts which makes this deadly poison even more difficult to acquire.

While the poison can be obtained from merely crushing the flowers with a mortar and pestle, it is worth noting that the potency and duration of the poison is greatly reduced when exposed to air for significant amounts of time. The best effect is obtained when the one bulb of the plant is crushed along with two parts distilled water, and two parts scrith. This creates a greenish paste that, when applied to a weapon, will retain most of its potency for at least a day.

The effects of Waste Lily are spectacularly gruesome. While I have never seen a victim of the poison myself, the reports I have studied indicate that the toxins within the lily accelerate the victim's metabolism, the result of which is a fever and increased blood flow to the body. For an hour or two after exposure the victim may feel almost completely euphoric, then feverish as their body temperature rises. As death nears, the fever can turn into bouts of paranoia as the poison spreads to the victim's limbic system. Total course of the poison can last from one to two hours, depending on the amount of substance and manner of exposure. In the later stages of exposure the victim will experience complete physical collapse as the poison causes irreparable damage to their blood vessels, resulting in massive hemorrhaging from the eyes, mouth, and other orifices. Depending on the size and health of the victim, this last stage can last for up to half an hour during which the victim is said to be in excruciating pain as if their entire body was on fire.

Queen Catherine would embark upon a campaign of vengeance and total war that would the land into civil unrest for the next eight years and change the face of Arnesse. The forces of Bannon, Castellan, and Richter assault the Thornwood, and during the Second Battle of Thornwood, decimate the armies of House Athan. Houses Rourke and Aragon attack the Midlands and destroy House Castellan, putting their entire line to the sword. House Bannon, Richter, and Hale meet the Aragons and the Rourkes at Belburn in the Midlands, defeating them. The Aragons and Rourkes retreat to their homelands, but Thornwood is occupied by the forces of House Bannon in a period known as the Bitter Harvest.

What caused the Eldritch Cataclysm is a debate that rages between scholars, nobles, and commoners to this day. In but a single moment, magic disappeared from Arnesse like water from a drying well. I've spoken to my colleagues who have studied this event and most agree that the mighty magics unleashed during these tumultuous times combined with the destruction of the Gods caused something in the metaphysical fabric of the world to go fundamentally awry. Unfortunately to find out more, we must understand the workings of magic itself. Any Scholar who seeks this knowledge finds the investigative trail run cold when the only lore on the subject it locked in secret Apotheca vaults.

Magisters of the Great War

Keeper Wendel

uth Day of the 10th Moon, 76 AS

An entire generation of magisters were pressed into service as battlefield medics. Choosing who to save, who to treat, and who to let suffer is difficult when it happens on an individual case basis. On these great battlefields, it was a process conducted once every few minutes over the course of days. Is the crippled knight next? Or the Lord who may scarce survive their burns? Or the camp follower with an arrow through her hand, who could be made to hold a spear with just minutes of effort? You'd think with populations dwindling, mankind would find a better way to spend its time than with ceaseless bloodshed.

Noble houses, their blood whipped into a frenzy and their might already gathered threw themselves against each other. Wars ultimately have losers, and in this case it was the faithful. Anyone who did not renounce their faith was ultimately put to the sword. Then it became time to slay the Gods themselves. Through subterfuge, invention, and force of arms did mankind depose their patrons. Maybe in the farthest flung corners of the world exists a quiet, untouched glen in which the divine still rests.

House Practor

Archmagister Caspus (deceased)

23rd Day of the 12th Moon, 702 AS

One mystery of the Great War is the Disappearance of House Practor. House Practor was a Great House who rivaled our own order in knowledge and engineering expertise. They had a fine army, the newest siege equipment, and many magisters on their payroll. While the Practors were not a major force in the Great War, they did engage in some smaller battles. In the closing years of the Great War, they seized the castle of An Rath from House Brevis of the Tunis and held there while expecting word on where to go next at any time.

Days turned to weeks and a party of seven messengers armed escorts were sent to the Manor of Faustus Practor, the Lord Paragon of House Practor. What happened to that party was only recounted by the sole survivor of that group, who died shortly after telling his tale. Apparently, the messengers arrived to find empty corridors, vacant thrones, and not a single living soul. The doors and windows were flung open, even the pets and livestock were missing. The house itself seemed like it was simply abandoned mid-way through the day. Having nowhere better to make camp, the party decided to sleep inside the mansion

before making their way back to their army in the morning.

Some weeks later, a second party of messengers, this time accompanied by Novice Clemes of the Apotheca arrived at the manor to find the remains of six of the messengers and the lone survivor. The bodies were flayed alive and scattered across the banisters and tapestries, like in preparation for some masab festival. Before dying, Novice Clemes claimed that the survivor refused to tell of what did this because he feared his very animus was in jeopardy.

Having seen enough, the second group messengers put the manor to the torch. When word of their findings reached the main army it caused them to disband. Many of the individual soldiers turned to banditry, leaving the surrounding countryside quite dangerous for some time.

How this came to be is a matter of some consternation between scholars. Many of my colleagues have claimed that there was no party of butchered couriers and that Lord Faustus and his family, fearing for their safety in the war, fled the country in secret. Given the number of unanswered questions on the matter and the fact that people are said to still go missing near the ruins of the Practor manse,

this case clearly warrants additional investigation.

THE AGE OF KINGS – 451 A.S. – PRESENT

The Age of Kings

Archmagister Honorius

5th Day of the 6th Moon, 752 AS

The earliest days of the Age of Kings were a horrendously chaotic time. Magic formed a basis of society in Arnesse and in the wake of the Eldritch Cataclysm without it, the people were lost. Many nobles took this disorder as a chance to betray their oaths and attempt to seize power over the land. Due to a lack of an accurate census, the number of deaths during this time period remain uncounted, but it is assumed to be in the tens if not hundreds of thousands. The newly risen monarchy, led by Queen Catherine Bannon was charged with bringing order to the land and restoring peace. At least three major and an unrecorded number of minor conflicts take place during her reign. Historians are quick to judge Queen Catherine harshly for her particularly cruel methods, but those scholars often forget the desperate circumstances of the time. Where it not for the heroic deeds of House Bannon during these formative years of the monarchy, the Kingdom may have very well

collapsed into many individual, warring states.

Notes in the margin...

The official record of Lord Edmund Brash a vassal of House Bannon in 463 indicates him as a traitor who was put to death for inciting rebellion. I uncovered another unofficial record of the incident which recounted that Lord Brash had greatly offended the Queen by refusing her order to put the villages unable to pay taxes to the torch and sword. According to the account, Queen Catherine dispatched a second force, led by Lord Oran Cornwall, to do what Brash would not. This force took the time to stop at Lord Brash's land and, despite being welcomed as family, hung him, his wife, and his five children from the great oak tree in Castle Weatherstone's courtyard. Weatherstone was given to the Cornwalls for their unwavering loyalty to the Crown. I suspect this tale is not an anomaly and begs the question of how many good men died in the name of the Bannon's peace and prosperity?

Nebucoronius

By the time Queen Catherine's son Edric II takes power in 497, the lands from the Thornwood to the Midlands have been brought to heel. Edric II proves a capable ruler that continues much of what his mother began while his reign is marked by continued conquest, his greatest accomplishment was bringing the Everfrost back under the control of the Crown with his marriage to Thyra Hale. King Edric reigns for eighteen years until 515. It's worth noting that while King Edric II had a long and successful reign, he

is largely forgotten due to the greatness of both his mother and son.

King Richard I proved at least as capable as his grandmother as a warrior but also a master at diplomacy and administration. In addition to many substantial reforms to the law and the treatment of Commonfolk, He formed the King's Council to advise the monarch and created Kingdom's treasury, the Royal Exchequer. He empowered both the Grand Bank and the Cirque to have more control over trade and banking. If there was a monarch who was made the Kingdom into what it is today, it was Richard Bannon I. It's also worth noting that Richard Bannon was instrumental in creating the holiday of King's Day. Originally it was a celebration to honor his grandmother but in time grew to celebrate all monarchs past and present.

King Richard's Reformation

Archmagister Dien

15th Day of the 7th Moon, 757 AS

In 533, the Apotheca saw a great increase of prestige during the reign of King Richard Bannon I as he made his sweeping changes to the tax structure, divided the land into the protectorates, and established numerous administrative roles throughout the kingdom. He wisely sought out the services of our members as some of his trusted inner circle of advisors.

Following the King's lead we were sought out to join many of the noble courts of the land to act as personal advisors. Our membership nearly doubled. The pay from these jobs was the perfect to fund additional research projects for our members.

Notes in the margin...

While the accomplishments of Richard I are many and celebrated, my colleague fails to mention the King's disastrous invasion of Tarkath in 582. Richard leads an army of over fifty thousand troops into the wastes in an attempt to conquer Tarkath but is beaten in the North by the God King Hector Aragon, who was only thirteen years at the time. Richard is forced to retreat North in defeat, leaving the remains of at least twenty thousand dead soldiers on Aragon soil. With all respect to the author, the omission of such a pivotal event in Richard I's reign implies either a poor level of research on the topic or blatant bias toward his employers.

Nebucoroniis

The reign of Richard I's son, Richard II, was marked by a time of civil war and unrest. House Aragon, silent since their defeat in the Great War, finally emerge from the South. My studies of the Aragons in the early 6th Century indicate they were a much-changed people both in demeanor and culture. A century and a half saw them spiral into despair over the death of their beloved dragons and embrace their noble lords as divine God Kings. How desperate a state they must have been in to make so many radical changes in such a short time.

The Chapterhouse 7 Murders

Magister Bronwyn

7th Day of the 9th Moon, 760 AS

It might have started earlier, but we believe it began in 571. We noticed the connection in 577. We attribute this delay to the fact that magisters have been known to disappear for years at a time during their research or expire because of research gone wrong. It seemed that someone or some organization had been hunting magisters and stealing their notes. The connection was that all of these magisters had at some point been in contact with or were a member of Chapterhouse 7. Alarmed that some unknown group was targeting us, it was determined by the Apotheca's Inner Circle to hire the services of the Veil. It ended up costing us a fortune but the murders finally ceased in 581 with the death of Preceptor Quintus. This example only serves to support my theories around the inherent dangers of our work.

The year 606 begins one of the most interesting times in modern house history. Richard II is heavily beset by forces on all sides that are seeking to unseat him. This is heavily driven by the rise of a religion within

the lands of House Corveaux who seeks to oppose the long-time ban on faith. They worship a man named Magnus Blayne who is said to be the Son of the Dawn. While I defer to my colleagues in the College of Theologians on the matter of if any divinity was involved, the social impact on Arnesse was profound. Viewing Blayne as inciting open rebellion and being in clear violation of the ban on religion, Richard II orders his execution in 609. Blayne's remains were sent to the four corners of the realm as an example to those who would stand against the King but the gruesome display ends up inciting rebellion within many communities throughout Arnesse.

Notes in the margin...

At great expense, I found the report of the attending chirurgeon who performed the dismemberment of Magnus Blayne, Keeper Godric. His notes indicate that the body that he dismembered may not have been Blayne's and this may be dangerous to him. The Apotheon's records show Keeper Godric died that very same year of an accidental drug overdose

Nebucoronius

On the Topic of the Anomaly Known as Magnus Blayne

Archmagister Emmon

1st Day of the 2nd Moon, 743

I find myself strangely fascinated by the tale of Magnus Blayne. So little is known of the man that it is difficult for me to track down any fact of where he came from or his origins. This obscurity alone would lead me to believe that Blayne was hardly a real figure but rather some amalgamation of ideas and other historical figures that has morphed into a single figure over the years. But the first-hand accounts we have from magisters alive during his time testify that he was real and that he wielded true power of some kind. While I am reluctant to attribute this power to magic, with the Gods slain nearly two centuries before, I find it rather incredulous that this man's power was derived from a divine source. The priests of the Aurorum, the Aurons, and the Hexen seem to manifest some lower level of the abilities possessed by Blayne. If I cannot have the man himself, perhaps his disciplines will yield clues that will allow me to solve this riddle.

Author's Note...

My sources tell me that a report by the chirurgeon at Magnus Blayne's

dismembering in 609 has been discovered in the archives. I must have this document.

Further...

There is supposedly a report from a Magister Eustace, a resident at the Ember Apothecarium in the Dusklands. He claims to have done a dissection on the corpse of an Aurormy Auron within the last six months. Perhaps this will shed some more light on the nature of their abilities.

Richard II is assassinated that same year and while speculation is rampant as to the identity of the killer, all signs point toward a religious zealot angry over the death of Magnus Blayne. With the death of the King, the realm is thrown into chaos. His wife, Queen Catesine Corveaux attempts to retain power and keep her daughter Anne as heir to the throne, but Richard II's brother James has other designs. Backed by a sizeable number of Bannon vassals he seizes the Crown. Fearing they will be killed or imprisoned, Queen Catesine and Anne are forced into exile in the Midlands.

Less than a year later, in 610, Hector Aragon, the self-proclaimed God King of Tarkath, begins his invasion of the North. From all reports, the Aragon army marched on the Midlands and demanded the surrender of House Corveaux. Under a flag of truce,

negotiations between both parties end in a marriage arrangement by which Anne Corveaux will marry Hector Aragon's son, Roland. Hector Aragon and his Corveaux allies then marched on Highcourt. King James I called for his allies to support him in war and many did not respond. James and his troops fight valiantly, but he is defeated at Caddock Tor.

Hector's son Roland is crowned the first non-Bannon monarch in the history of the Kingdom, King Roland I. He makes several sweeping reformations to Arnesse including reversing the ban on worship that was put in place by Queen Catherine. King Roland also restores the remnants of House Athan to good standing and gave them land. They rename themselves House Innis, rulers of the Protectorate of the Northern Reaches. He raises Ulster, a rebellious vassal of Corveaux loyal to the teachings of Magnus Blayne and the Aurormy, to the status of great house under the name House Blayne.

The rule of House Aragon is short in 642 as Roland's son Doran Aragon is murdered at his wedding to Lady Katelyn Valewood shortly after his coronation. Several Rourke brigands are taken into custody a few months later, admit to the act, and are put to death for the crime.

Notes in the margin...

I find the dispersion cast upon House Rourke to be suspect. He fails to mention the account of a bar keep from Two Rivers in 643 that speaks of him overhearing a drunk Knight of the Five Towers named Sir Lothar boasting in his bar of 'murdering the king of snakes and that traitorous bitch'. The account goes on at some length about what was done to them. I will spare the reader the gruesome details. I can assure you it was not pleasant and, I believe, only lends the barkeep's story credibility.

Nebucoroniūs

With no obvious heirs to take the throne, the son of King James I, Richard, is crowned King Richard III. He takes Lady Helena Richter as his Queen. Though rumors circulate that the Queen was unfaithful to the King, no proof was ever offered. When the Queen becomes with child, the Kingdom is overjoyed but when young Edwin is born, Richard III chooses instead to adopts John Bannon of Caer Dorston as his heir. When King Richard III dies to illness in 663 his heir John and his son Edwin spend the next decade in a conflict known as the Brother's War to determine who will rule the Kingdom.

The Battle of Feren's Crossing

Archmagister Dien

30th Day of the 4th Moon, 756 AS

Considered to be one of the pivotal moments in the Brother's War, the Battle of Feren's Crossing occurred between the 14th and the 15th days of the 6th moon in 671. Lord Edwin Bannon's army was riding high off a series of victories that had brought the land North of the Olander River under his control. Lord John Bannon, then proclaimed to be King of Arnesse, knew to stop his brother, he must prevent him from crossing the great Olander River and entering the South. In Summer of 671, Lord Edwin begins his campaign into Southern Arnesse. King John is encamped at the city of Scrore, using it a base to keep Edwin contained in the North.

Knowing that an attack head on against John's superior force would be defeat for his troops, he plans to break his army into the South where he can better leverage his faster raiders to bring more of the Kingdom under his control. He decides to do this at Feren's Crossing, just to the Southeast of Beggar's Keep, where the Olander River was narrowest. He orders his corps of engineers to align over one hundred Rourke ships from bank to bank and build a bridge across the hulls and cover the nearly half a mile of distance between both shores.

Edwin dispatches a force of raiders nearly five thousand strong toward Scrow. King John's scouts send word that they have found Edwin's army and the King dispatches a force of almost thirty thousand to engage his brother while he holds his remaining thirty thousand in reserve. It takes almost a week for John's scouts to discover that they are engaged with a diversionary force. His scouts also find that the Richter engineers have almost finished the bridge over the

Olander. King John refusing to be out maneuvered, unwisely issues the orders for his reserves to march four days from Scrow to stop Edwin.

The two armies meet on the 14th day of the 6th moon in 671. Edwin's diversion worked, drawing off most of the King's army. His force is now even strength with John's army and the King's force consists of reserves and less veteran troops. John's main force is three days behind his reserves and he plans to hold Edwin for enough time that his main force could actually reinforce his reserves. What John does not count on is the firepower of the Rourkes and the Richters. When the armies first meet, the guns of Richter's Dragoons and Iron Guard mixed with the cannonades from Rourke send the reserves into total rout. Thousands of the King's troops are killed or maimed on the first day alone. The commanders are able to rally some of the remains of John's troops to stage a delaying tactic for a second day, but Edwin is able to push through

those defenses with little effort. When King John arrives at Feren's Crossing two days later, he finds nearly fifteen thousand of his reserves as casualties. This remains to this day one of the most lethal battles ever waged in the history of the Kingdom. This engagement is also known as the Battle of Black Powder, due to the heavy use of guns and cannons or the Battle of Blackwater, since the Olander was said to have run black with soot and powder for days afterward.

With the aid of House Richter and Rourke, Edwin bests his brother and is crowned King Edwin I in 673. King Edwin takes a Bannon bride, Queen Margaery and focuses much of his almost two-decade reign on improving infrastructure. He constructed edifices such as the Rose Bridge across the River Ard, the Pontus Aqueducts, and the Arelate Amphitheater in Highcourt.

The Arelate Amphitheater

Archmagister Gyver
17th Day of the 5th Moon, 758 AS

King Edwin's love of the games and luxury was well known throughout the Kingdom. Indeed, the late 6th Century in Arnesse was a time of legendary excess among much of the nobility. It was during this period that social culture in the Kingdom truly expanded and recreational pleasures became a past-time among the wealthy. Tales persist to this day of lavish parties, wild sexual orgies, and excessive drug use. In many ways, this abandon of morality was much to blame for today's rebellion among the populace in favor of moral decency.

The Arelate Amphitheater was a perfect example of the kind of construction projects that Edwin I undertook – excessive, massive, and pretentious. It is a massive outdoor, open air stadium that can seat up to eighty thousand, or fully a quarter of the modern populace of Highcourt, at any one time. Its dimensions are six hundred feet by five hundred feet long and nearly two hundred feet in height. King Edwin would also not have it built of any stone. While its foundations are built from granite of mined in the Worldpine Mountains, had white limestone brought in from far-away Tarkath to give the amphitheater its distinctive, almost luminescent sheen.

While the amphitheater largely sits silent in the modern day, during Edwin's rule it would be filled to capacity at many times of the year. Spectators would watch racing and other tournaments, but by far the biggest draw were the blood games. Personal combat had been a big part of life in Arnesse, but Edwin takes it to a new level when he allows prisoners to fight each other to the death for a chance at their freedom. They would fight each other, in groups, in mock battles, or even fight against animals. It was a gory, savage display and during the height of the Summer, the games would last for an entire week, with those

who attended hosting extravagant parties at night.

Edwin I's reign comes to an end in 692. His daughter and heir, Lady Eleanor seeks the throne, but several rivals to her claim emerge in the form of at least four bastard children who say that King Edwin was their father as well. For the next six years Lady Eleanor fights what will come to be known as the Bastard War. She defeats two of the claimants, but in an effort to resolve the dispute without further bloodshed and loss of life, she offers to marry one the strongest of the remaining bastard claimants, Lord Royce Wolf, her half-brother.

dragons courses through the veins of noble families of Aragon and they do not want to squander it on those not of the purest bloodlines. This is likely why the Aragon family has four pureblood cadet families, at least double the number of any other family in Arnesse.

The fact that actual incest is so rare in the North made the case of Lady Eleanor Bannon and Lord Royce Wolf, particularly scandalous. While there have been many Bannons who have married their cousins, first, second, or otherwise, this was one of the few times that such a normally conservative house would do something like this. Those who are strong advocates of the Bannons say that Lady Eleanor consent to such a thing because she wished to avoid continued bloodshed. Those who wish to detract from House Bannon are quick to say that this was merely a further indication of the weakness of their blood and general unfitness to rule the Kingdom.

As one who has studied this subject at great length, I find that the sensationalism attributed to this particular marriage to be overwrought. I will admit that the case of Eleanor and Royce is good tavern scandal, but in the history of Arnesse, there have been far more grievous cases of incest done under far less noble pretenses.

Incest in Arnesse

Preceptor Tytos
16th Day of the 5th Moon, 761 AS

While oft a topic both lascivious and scandalous, incest, or the sexual relations between very close relations such as parents and the children or brothers and sisters, is in fact quite a rare occurrence in Arnesse. In studying the family trees of at least twenty major noble families in the Kingdom, I found only a handful of times that this has happen and most of it is within House Aragon and the nobles of Tarkath. House Aragon and its vassals had ten such cases in three hundred years of records.

When I spoke with the magisters in the Ashen Tower of Tor Oman they related that some members of House Aragon were singularly obsessed with keeping their bloodlines extremely pure. They believe that the last blood of the

Despite the controversy behind their union, Queen Eleanor I is crowned in 698 and with the strength of Lord Royce's army, she is able to bring all her rivals to heel by 700, thus ending the Bastard War. Though it is widely rumored that Queen Eleanor and the newly named King Miles detest each other, a child is born from their union, Giles. King Miles had a public affair with Lady Lesha Aragon, from which a son, Charles is born. King Miles accepts him as his own son and gives him a Bannon name. This action leads

ultimately to a duel with a disloyal Aragonese champion that ends the King's life.

Notes in the margin...

It's worth noting that this brave knight's name was Sir Drevyn Durant, of the Blood of Ezjdar. It is said that following the duel, Sir Drevyn escaped to the depths of the Tarkathi wastes where he lived out the remainder of his days in obscurity. Still others say Sir Drevyn became a figure of legend known as the Dust Knight. Tales are told of this folk hero who travelled the wastes aiding those in need and liberating the oppressed and enslaved from their masters.

Nebucoronius

Giles comes of age in 727 and takes the crown amid a time of want in the land. Edwin I's excesses had cost the Kingdom much of its treasury and he spends most of his rule improving the administrative structure of Arnesse. He would break all the protectorates into smaller subdivisions known as boroughs and encourage the use of local officials such as castellans and sheriffs to regulate the regular flow of commerce and taxes. Giles also worked to restore and improve much of the trade and commerce infrastructure within the Kingdom and encouraged an expansion of power among the guilds. More towns and cities were founded

during the reign of Giles I than by all the kings for the last century.

A Time of Plenty

Grand Magister Oberan

27th Day of the 6th Moon, 763 AS

The growth of boroughs and cities during the reign of King Giles I was a time of great prosperity for the Apotheca. Before his reign many nobles saw it as a luxury to have a Magister in their employ; during and after it, a Magister was almost a necessity. This growth was mostly due to an expansion of functions performed by magisters for their lords and ladies. In the years before Giles I, many magisters were exclusively scholars, tutors, apothecaries, and chirurgiens. In those days, a castellan or seneschal could easily manage an estate or a fief on behalf of their lord or lady. But the needs of a growing society demanded administrators that could assist with civica, city planning, architecture, and paperwork on a level that was beyond most nobles.

The Apotheca had already been trained in many of these disciplines and stepped in to assist, not in place of the lords, castellans, and seneschals, but as their aides and assistants. In the years since, magisters have continued to be an invaluable resource

to the noble and their lands. While the general prosperity of the Kingdom has not grown as much under Giles I as under his father, the growth and expansion of cities and towns inexorably continues. This all but ensures that the role of the magisters in the Kingdom and the prosperity of our order will be secure long into the future of Arnesse.

Giles took Lady Rosalind of House Bannon to be his queen and she bore him a son, Giles. Giles I also reworks much of the legal system in Arnesse, including the ability for spouses to annul their marriage. Rumors of malcontent between he and Queen Rosalind become reality when he annuls their marriage. She and her son flee North, there to take residence with House Hale.

King Giles I declares his intent to marry Lady Elysande of House Corveaux 734 and the Queen bears Giles a second child, Emma. But by 742 rumors of Elysande's infidelity to the King force him to take action. She is tried and found guilty of adultery and put to death. Queen Elysande's cousin, Alice, comforts the King and they soon fall in love. He weds her in 743 but she dies less than a year later in childbirth. Struck by grief, the King's health begins to fade.

Notes in the margin...

Historians have been unkind to Queen Elysande but it is worth noting that a review of the legal records by this researcher and the consultation of Archmagister Graydon of the College of Law, I find the case made against the Queen lacking in convincing evidence. All the witnesses involved either later recanted their testimony or were never heard from again. Fortunately, the Queen was able to obtain a draught of deadly poison from a merciful friend the night before she was to be put to death in a grisly public spectacle.

Nebucoronius

It is during this time that he takes more serious action against the rise of the Aurorym faith. It is said that King Giles I has a vision that the Aurorym will lead to the ultimate demise of the Kingdom of Arnesse and he tries to place a series of restrictions on religion once again. This causes unrest among much of the populace and when he takes Lady Maeve Innis as his bride in 748, rumors spread that she has bewitched him to turn him against the Aurorym.

When Queen Maeve is announced to be with child in 750, the fear of an Innis heir to the throne fuels the rumors that the King and Queen are both involved in witchcraft. These rumors are further fanned by his son, Giles, who, unbeknownst to his father, has converted to the Aurorym faith. In secret, Giles gathers troops from House Blayne,

House Hale, and rebellious factions within House Bannon to march on Highcourt. Giles meets his son on the field of battle at Lanton and is defeated soundly.

The True Account of The Battle of Lanton

Archmagister Honorius & Preceptor Linstrom

16th Day of the 5th Moon, 761 AS

Regardless of what other houses may say, this is the accurate account of the Battle of Lanton that occurred in 751 A.S. as the authors are from the opposing sides of the conflict. This paper is co-authored by Preceptor Honorius in the employee of the royal house of Bannon and Preceptor Linstrom in the employee of House Blayne.

The King Giles I's army was 50,000 strong and largely composed of Bannon and Corveaux soldiers. The King had the opportunity to bolster his forces with Argonian spears however he chose to turn away the aid as he had already promised Iron Guard from house Richter. The Iron Guard would never show as only the token

force of outriders would arrive before the battle from Richter. The Aragon forces leave the King's camp and relocate away from the battlefield but still close enough to watch it unfold the next day.

Opposing the King was his son, Giles the younger, later to known as Giles II. Giles the younger had amassed a force of 30,000 comprised about evenly of Hale, Blayne and traitorous Bannon soldiers. With a significantly smaller force and facing the elite trained King's army, Giles the younger was not favored to win the upcoming conflict. So confident of his upcoming victory, King Giles I choose to take to the field of battle personally. Bringing his entire household which included his very late in pregnancy Innis wife along with him.

At the insistence of Preceptor Linstrom, a side note has been added to this record about the armaments of the individuals that go by Saint Celestine the Eternal and Saint Decima the Immaculate Aegis. From his observations both

Celestine's staff and Decima's shield are clearly of ancient make. Maybe even predating the Cataclysm. He has offered to stay on with the Blayne's in the hope of further study of the items and the one named Celestine that is said to be immortal. If the armaments are that old, we should obtain them for safe keeping.

Back to the battle and no more nonsense about ancient lost things. On the day of the battle, the gleaming armored knights of the King's army faced off against the smaller mismatched forces of Giles the younger. The Vellatora of house Blayne took the centerline of Giles the younger's forces with Hale on their right and Giles the younger's Bannon's on their left. Confident, the king ordered his cavalry to alone charge and break the formation of the other army in two. What the King did not expect was the zealotry of the Vellatora knights. They refused to break formation and while taking heavy losses as a result, they eventually decimated the King's cavalry.

With the loss of the only cavalry on the field, the sound to advance was heard from the

lines of Giles the younger. The archers of the King's force took their toll but the Vellatora infantry were the first to reach the Bannon infantry, soon to be followed by the Hale then those Bannon loyal to Giles the younger. The fighting was intense on both sides, with numerous losses. At some point as a complete reversal of the King's original plan, the centerline of the King's army started to falter from the zealous Vellatora. It was then that some, not all of the Aragon forces from the previous day join the field of battle in an attempt to save the King's faltering line. It would be too little, too late and they too are counted among the thousands lost. By the end of the day, Giles the younger had been victorious.

The King and Queen are taken captive and put on trial for witchcraft. Supposedly during the conflict, Maeve bears the child who comes to be known as the "Witch Prince" Reynard. Maeve tries to have the child secreted away, but he is hunted down and killed by Knights of the Five Towers. King Giles and Queen Maeve are both found guilty of witchcraft and burned alive for their crimes. Some say that it was less Giles's

*nvovlement in any kind of sorcery and more
the string of broken alliances and oaths in
pursuit of the love that caused his undoing.
His son is crowned King Giles II in 751 A.S.
Giles II promptly cements his alliance with
House Blayne by marrying the beautiful
Aline, daughter of Lord Frederick Blayne.
The King also grants a portion of the
Midlands known as The Troth to House
Blayne as the Hearthlands Protectorate.*

PRESENT

Excerpt from the Yearly Address to the Apotheca's Generally Assembly, 763 AS

At this point, we stand on the precipice!

*We have already seen signs of magic returning,
and we must each play our part to stop it!*

*Preceptors, seek out these new dangers! Find
them before they fall into dangerous bands!*

*Keepers, hold tight to your secrets! Prevent the
spread of cataclysmic knowledge!*

*Magisters, guide the nobility! If magic is found, it
must fall into worthy hands!*

Novitiates, yours may be the last generation!

*We are all that stands between this kingdom and
the threat of a new cataclysm!*

King Giles II has been in power for twelve years and the Apotheca has not prospered under this monarch. With the rise of the Aurorym faith, less and less people are quick to trust an ancient order of mystics with origins in Tarkath. What has taken the Apotheca centuries to build is slowly being

unraveled by superstition and zealotry. Fearing repercussions against them and following the King's lead, some Magisters have converted to the Aurorym in the hopes that it will protect them from accusations of wrongdoing and witchcraft.

An Aurorym Archmagister now sits on the Inner Council and there are rumors that he seeks the Grand Magister's seat so he can make the conversion of the Apotheca to the Aurorym mandatory for all. There are deep divisions within the brotherhood on this issue. Some feel as though conversion will destroy the very essence of the ancient order and others feel as though it is necessary for the Apotheca to survive.

But one thing the Apotheca has proven to be is extremely hardy. They are one of the oldest institutions in Arnesse and during the last seven centuries there has rarely been a time when a Magister did not stand at the side of a noble as a trusted advisor. But these times have called for some to change old habits. Normally the Apotheca strives to be an apolitical organization. While in the shadows its members may play the great game, as a guild their only outward political loyalty is to the Crown. Magisters have been so apolitical that if a castle or fief was captured in war, the Magister would often not be killed, but merely serve the new lord or lady.

If there is one weakness of this ancient order it is that it does not change quickly or easily. They always believe they can endure through any changes or strife by using their neutrality as a defense. But with the rise of the Aurorym, the guild is being forced to take sides to maintain its standing and this has sent parts of the organization into a state of confusion. This has caused some magisters to take sides and outwardly become more political. In some cases, this has made them vulnerable and while not common, some have already lost their lives. Most magisters are very focused on the world they can see, taste, touch, smell, or feel. As an organization, they are poorly equipped to deal with these new threats so many magisters have had to learn to deal with them on their own.

While the Apotheca has seen little impact at Court, many have noticed that the magisters are being consulted less and less by the royal family. This has led to other nobles following suit and a general fear that this will become more widespread. There is talk among the halls of the Apotheon that the guild may have to take steps to secure its future. What no one can agree on is what those steps should be. In the interim, many magisters in more remote areas, having not received orders as to how to proceed, have begun to flex their muscles a bit more and work to protect their interests. The magisters have two powerful incredibly weapons at their

disposal: knowledge and secrets, and increasingly, many are realizing that in order to survive they will have to use them.

As if matters weren't complicated enough, reports have begun to trickle in from throughout the Kingdom of increased activity by unnatural creatures. Several magical artifacts have been found and there is a pervasive fear that the power of sorcery may be returning to Arnesse. The Apotheca has long been ready for this day and they are seeking all information on the topic. While it would be their preference for magic stay removed from the land forever, if they can't stop it from returning they want to control it when it does. This has led the Apotheca to cast its gaze toward the newly discovered land of the Annwyn. The very appearance of the land where there was none before has led most to draw the conclusion that some kind of mystical power is involved. For that reason, the Apotheca must travel to this new land and discover its secrets.

THE TRADITIONS OF THE APOTHECA

KNOWLEDGE IS POWER

If there is a currency within the apothecariums other than the Dragon, it is knowledge. Specifically, secret knowledge. Because what is a man if not a miserable pile of secrets? After all, a magister spends their life in study, uncovering the lost, the sacred, the profane. They strike not with the hammer, neither do they till with the plow. The tools of their craft are the quill and the parchment; the herb and the vial. And though they may garner the odd coin through their trade, it is that which is stored in their minds wherein lies the true value. For what good is a gold Dragon when trying to cure an ailment, mend a wound? Thus, the magisters of the Apotheca deal in knowledge, though perhaps more importantly, secret knowledge, and in doing so have raised the pillars that have supported the foundation of their centuries-old order.

Within the confines of an apothecarium, the magisters share information on recent discoveries, the results of studies, or any other academic pursuit to the extent that they wish. And all through the excruciatingly tedious process demanded by the pedantic pageantry of academia. Publishing one's findings can sometimes be tantamount to administering the arrangements of a royal wedding. And damned is he who forgets to include a reference to some obscure footnote penned upon a crumbling parchment lost under other such scrolls, lying dormant upon some dusty shelf. Beyond any tantalizing discovery or groundbreaking research, a magister's reputation is perhaps even more grounded in their attention to detail in documentation. Bordering on what some might say is

the absurd. Anecdotes abound of magisters who have had their works tied up in review for years, whilst their peers go on to publish many, not-so-coincidentally similar works. A magister is quick to learn that withholding some information in this regard then, is not only required, but in fact key to their career and future standing within the order. This dynamic has created an interesting duality among the magisters. One must be careful not to produce so little work of real value so as to be forgotten or dismissed, while also managing not to produce something that others may want to appropriate as their own. So maybe this rigid process is for the best. The world is indeed entering into a new age and thus, it will require the knowledge of the past to inform the decisions of the future. But then again, when has the world ever learned from its past mistakes?

Outside of their walls however, they can be a bit tighter lipped. Even when a magister of the lowest rank is sent out into the world, be it to serve in the keep of a lord or lady, research some phenomena of interest, or simply to collect a specimen or two, they are often less than forthcoming in regards to the true nature of their work and what they reveal to those on the outside. Those of the Apotheca are wont to say that knowledge freely given is coin not earned. And this goes doubly for the more senior members of the order who are quick to dole out harsh punishments upon those whom are found to adopt more liberal policies with regards to openly sharing with others what has been so hard won. The summation of a magister's knowledge is said not only to be his own, but a mere pebble upon the mountain that is the research and trial of those who have come before. Those who have not the coin to pay are considered to be on a need-to-know basis, while those who do may simply receive those services which a magister is trained to render.

But let it not be said a magister is never helpful. Some measure of discretion is always permitted when sharing information with others, subject to the severity of the situation of course. There are even those who may perform a time of service, rendering their surgical services freely throughout the kingdom, both as a means of perfecting their arts and buying themselves a means by which to impress others among the apothecariums.

Punishments for those who carelessly trade secrets vary from a warning and demotion in rank for first offenses while further violations can result in the removal of one's tongue so that the offense cannot be committed again. Unlike many orders the magisters take their vows seriously and expulsion from the order is not an option in many cases. Those who

would be cast from the order are instead put to death, usually by poison, so they cannot share their secrets.

CELIBACY

Motivated by the idea that distractions are the plague of the mind, for good or ill, the magisters have adopted a strict policy of celibacy for those of their order. People being people however, their histories are rife with well documented cases of those who have fallen quite short of this high-minded pursuit of a life free from the distractions from love and from lovers.

To this day, there is an unspoken rule that taking a partner, in any capacity, is done so with the utmost of discretion and at great personal risk. For the needs of the human are base which, in all their glory, are well documented, foot-noted, and cited in the more scandalous works of the order such as, "The Trysts of Midnight," or the "Lascivious Practices of the Aragonian Maid." Wherein, one may learn of the many ways one might be coerced into forsaking one's vows.

Punishments for breaking one's vow of celibacy vary, but have been known to be harsh. While the first offense can garner a warning and demotion in rank, further violations can result in castration so that the offense cannot be committed again. Unlike many orders the magisters take their vows seriously and expulsion from the order is not an option in many cases. Those who would be cast from the order are instead put to death, usually by poison, so they cannot share their secrets.

ANAMNESIS & THE COLLECTIVE

Mystics and oracles are words best left for the Fayne, yet oddly, one might find the concept of the Apotheca's Collective to be another side of this strange coin. The Apotheca brews and then imbibes of a singular decoction they so aptly name the Anamnesis Decoction. A vile substance to be sure, it is said that it allows them to tap into and assimilate with a great collective unconscious comprised of all those magisters who have come before. As to its credulity, and whether or not it simply artificially enhances the senses for a time has done nothing to slow its propagation and popularity within the order. Its effects are those of increased insight, more effective study, and some say, even the ability to receive advice and guidance from the magisters of ages past. The subject of much study, debate, and speculation, the Anamnesis Decoction has been found to have some negative effects, however. Those who have subjected themselves to

prolonged use and consumption of the substance show signs of memory loss, paranoia, and in extreme cases, insanity. Many magisters espouse that the mind is the most powerful, and only tool one will ever need; that long hours of study are the only real way of enhancing one's mental faculties. Whatever the case may be, the magisters of the Apotheca show no signs of ceasing in their use of the mysterious potion. For the rise of a magister is often predicated upon their penchant for subtle ruthlessness; how far one is willing to go to undermine the reputations of those above you and how many shortcuts one is willing to take to arrive upon a discovery, revolutionary or no. It is no surprise then, that the Anamnesis Decoction is a welcomed guide down this perilous path.

ON MAGIC...

The matter of magic is a complicated topic within the halls of the apothecariums. For centuries the Apotheca have been the guardians of knowledge, most importantly magical knowledge. After the Eldritch Cataclysm, the Apotheca's Inner Council determined that magic was too dangerous to be held in the hands of the masses and since then they have actively worked to restrict, curtail, and secure all knowledge of magic under lock and key. Towards this end, magisters have voraciously chased down rumors and stories of magical occurrences on the off chance that they might make a discovery. Once found, most folk willingly give over knowledge and items to a Magister who then ensures it is all securely locked away. There are stories of magisters who failed in this protocol and in doing so tampered with powers far beyond their comprehension. If there is an offense for which the Apotheca will issue a death sentence, it is unauthorized tampering with magic.

The other side of the coin is that magic fascinates the Apotheca. The Ashen tower in Tarkath is said to house the largest repository of magical treatise and texts in all the kingdom, some of which even date back to the Eldritch Age and possibly before. And while these have represented tantalizing intellectual pursuits to many magisters, those examples of early writings on magic that still remain are kept under lock and key, accessible only by a few. Crumbling leather bindings hide the old words of silenced voices. Magic was something that existed in the world, and while its echoes may be heard in the healing arts and potions of the Apotheca and the purported oracular gifts of the Fayne, the magisters are wont to say that none will ever see its like again. Some magisters have predicted that magic will return to the world again and the order has been diligently preparing for that momentous event for the last three centuries.

Most members of the Apotheca would be content to make sure things stay just the way they are. Indeed, what is a paltry poultice or suture when one may simply wave their hands about and close a wound or cure an ailment? Centuries of research would become invalidated, hard won discoveries made moot. Many fear that the return of magic would make obsolete the efforts of the Apotheca, relegating them to the dark corners of their offices, clamoring to legitimize themselves in a world wherein they once enjoyed high esteem. Certainly, this philosophy is not shared by all, however common sentiment is that magic is not something that many in the Apotheca would like to see return.

If the magisters could not prevent the return, they are determined to understand and master the power of sorcery. While metaphysics researchers are not common in the Apotheca, those that are focus on both obtaining lore and relics as well as seeking to understand them. Most in the brotherhood are confident that with their vast repositories of knowledge and artifacts, if magic were to return, that they would have a significant advantage over even their closest rivals.

THE APOTHECEUM AT HIGHCOURT

The Apothecum at Highcourt is the foremost institution of education and study in Arnesse and is comprised of a number of Colleges that cater to the various paths of study traditionally pursued by the magisters of the Apotheca. The Apothecum is a sleeping, grey and white stone giant of towers and arched buildings, running low and wide along the thoroughfares of Highcourt. Robed men, young and old, walk quickly in and out of oaken doors, their heads down, deep in thought, or engaged in seemingly heated debates with one their colleagues, gesticulating and pointing as though they're casting some sort of spell. The Apothecum sits behind head-high walls, accessed by ornate iron gates that hide its inhabitants from outside onlookers, and perhaps more importantly, outsiders from the curious eyes of those magisters who've yet to lose their attachments to the world outside. It is a world unto itself, often referred to by locals as the "hidden kingdom."

The Colleges are overseen by the Archmagisters and Preceptors of the order, and administered by the Keepers, who manage and advise the other magisters and Novitiates. Most classes are taught by those of the Keeper rank as many of the Preceptors find it inconvenient to do so themselves. Their time is deemed to be better spent revalidating their role among the other Colleges of the Apothecum, embarking on

some academic pursuit or other, or ensuring that their presence does not go forgotten among the courts of Arnesse.

COLLEGE OF METAPHYSICS

Preceptor Malthus has overseen the College of Metaphysics for over twenty years. He is a man of 65 years, many quirks, and has garnered a bit of a cult following among his students despite his general perception as a bit of a kook who wastes his time studying dead concepts and practices that are of no real value. His desk is scattered with overturned inkwells, rolled up parchment, bits of food scraps, and is in the general disarray of one whose interests are strictly limited to his studies; of which the organizational arts is not one. The College of Metaphysics concerns itself mostly with the study of that which is beyond the natural world and known science. It would be easy to assume this is magic, but that is only a very small, and very restricted portion of what the college studies. They focus much of their time on research of unnatural creatures that exist in the world, chasing rumors and myths to find evidence and samples of these beasts. They also are known to track remnants, the undead and spirits to attempt to communicate with them and find out more about life after death. There is also a whole school of research into the realms beyond the Vale, other worlds that supposedly influence and crossover into Arnesse.

The rise of the Aurorym Faith has been of particular interest of late, given its claims that its followers have demonstrated peculiar, if not wholly validated, preternatural abilities. The Preceptor has been one of the few magisters in history to have been granted access to the Reverie, where it is said he was able to document the most complete guide on their practices to date. Though this is not saying much, given the amount of real, academic research done on the secretive order.

Preceptor Malthus's has been attributed with spreading the rumors that magic may return. His belief that though magic may be dead as it was, it is now merely lying dormant, awaiting to be reawakened. This has made him popular among many of his students who would very much want to see this type of event happen. Though just how it is to be reborn, who is to do it, and if it is even possible are matters many in the Apotheca are not even willing to humor with a debate. Preceptor Malthus likes to believe himself stranded on his own proverbial island, taken seriously enough to be left to his own devices, but not so serious that any of his colleagues are willing to align themselves to his cause.

COLLEGE OF THEOLOGIANS

The College of Theologians devotes itself to the study of the spiritual and religious practices of Arnesse. Though originally not a religious man himself, Archmagister Emmon has converted to the Aurorum faith after he was promoted to the Inner Council. He oversees the College at the Apotheceum and likens his role to one of a learned advisor, and less some stodgy paper pusher or robed shut in. The College contains a vast collection of religious texts including some manuscripts from the time of the Great War. They are even said to have preserved King Richard Bannon II's edict ordering the death of Magnus Blayne. Among their collection of artifacts are old Draiochta charms, illegible texts of the Ephorian Priests, and the pride of their collection, a small, solitary branch clipped from Bridgit's Oak in the Thornwood. There is an unspoken shame of the Apotheca that holds many of the relics found buried away in their cellars or locked away in cabinets are the sacred items of those who were given shelter by the order during the Great War; meager payments for their safe passage and shelter at a time when they were at their most desperate. The magisters here embody a vulgar duality; serving gratefully in the courts of the very lords and ladies that not so long ago, by the account of history, oppressed and brutalized the very peoples whose dead histories and lost cultures now are used as a means by which to further their academic pursuits and validate their role in the Apotheceum.

There are rumors that Archmagister Emmon has been not-so-subtly divulging the details of his new friend and confidant, the Auron, Owen, Patriarch of the Dawnbringer Rectorix in the Blayne city of Scrow. It was Patriarch Owen who initiated Emmon into the Aurorum faith and the men are seen together frequently, the Archmagister taking lengthy absences from the College to attend the Patriarch in Scrow. Some say that there has even been talk of the Patriarch taking up an honorary position in the College, given that he too, has very recently made a very generous donation on behalf of the Aurorum and its many and growing fellowship.

COLLEGE OF NATURALISTS

The College of Naturalists is by far the most populous of the Colleges given the Apotheca's tradition in herbalism, botany, and the study of the apothecarial arts. It is indeed one of the pillars upon which the Apotheca has built the foundations of their institution. Presiding over the college is the Thornwood-born magister, Preceptor Rowengren. He is believed by many to be able to grow anything he plants, some even joking that he is half tree himself. At nearly six and a half feet tall, it would seem as though there might be some truth to this. The Preceptor is often seen whispering to the plants, as though sharing a secret with the only thing that might be capable of

keeping it. He is also one of the few that prefers to teach many of his own classes, which are given outside of course, among the trees, or perhaps sitting upon the low wooden benches that dot the lawn. Lectures can be exceedingly interesting, in the description of every flower and herb a story, as though it were the hero of its own tale. Many say that the tall magister speaks of the plants as if they were his friends, his brothers, his sisters; his family with whom he gets to visit every day. Though on the outside he is a docile, kind, and gentle man, rumors tell of a darker personal history. His lineage is thought to be derived of those refugees of the Thornwood who sought sanctuary behind the walls of the apothecariums. They were among those from whom was taken their spiritual heirlooms and anything else of material or sentimental value.

Upon the college grounds sits the largest indoor garden in the kingdom within which is housed many and varied specimens found all throughout the kingdom, the Herbaretum. Blood Medallions, Willow Root, Gold Lotus, and even the dreaded Ember Cap are all grown in abundance within its shimmering glass walls. Students tend the gardens daily, instructed in the distinctive properties of each plant. The novice magisters will sit for long hours drawing each bud, petal, and stem, some even plucking a sample to dry between the pages of their journals. Of their first texts is the quintessential guide, "An Introduction to Botanical Properties," by Arch Magister Hibberd, published in 743. A true staple in the field, it details all the common, uncommon, and rare reagents found in the more common apothecarial substances in fairly wide use and production today.

Cautionary tales abound of daring, or quite foolish depending on how you look at it, magisters conducting experiments with specimens they've collected on excursions as far south as Tarkath, and as far north as the Everfrost. Beyond keeping them alive in the first place, which is perhaps the real challenge, the adventurous magisters will often use themselves as test subjects when attempting to elucidate the plant's properties. Or even worse, there have been cases of them using unwitting magisters.

COLLEGE OF ENGINEERING

The duties of the magister are many, often transcending those ideals of the wise sage and advisor into the realm of nanny, tutor, and caretaker; one upon whose shoulders rests the myriad responsibilities of day to day life in a castle. Among the many functions of a magister at their court of employ is that of architectural advisor, castle foreman, and general tinkerer. The College of Engineering is among the oldest colleges in the Apotheceum and the center of learning for the

advanced engineering and design principles of the age. Its libraries are stocked with the rare and large tomes of the Castellan builders, whose illustrations of buttresses, towers, and gatehouses proliferate throughout their many pages. So too do the techniques of the exotic, the novel, and the strange find a home in their libraries. Though much of the knowledge of the builders of the past has been lost, the magisters here seek to document, study, and preserve the wondrous methods through which were constructed the towers of the Tarkathi Tors, the brooding, ornate castles of the Dusklands, and more recently, the exquisite Rectori of the Aurorym. The College of Engineering also teaches the arts of the Artificer, being the crafting and design of material trade goods. Though one not need to have received their education here to become a skilled Artificer, they employ some of the finest tradespeople and crafters in all the kingdom. While many of their students go on to serve in the noble families of Arnesse, so too has the Cirque been making increasingly tantalizing offers in an effort to bolster, and perhaps more insidiously, legitimize its operation.

Having only recently been granted the title, Archmagister Gyver is of Dusklander blood, descended of a long line of Richter builders and smiths. Though of no noble line, his was said to have taken part in constructing the Draven Rectorix and led many of the reconstruction efforts after the destruction wrought by the eruption of the Shardmount. Archmagister Gyver is the youngest of the Archmagisters at the Apothecum, garnering him no small amount of ire and jealousy among his colleagues. So what you will about his age, he is among the most talented builders in the kingdom. In his time away from the Apothecum, he has been away in the Duskland city of Elminsk, overseeing the construction of a new Aurorym Chantry. One of his own design, the small, but elaborate project has undergone many delays of late due to infrequent acts of sabotage, presumably originating from the neighboring Thornwood.

COLLEGE OF LAW AND LOGIC

The College of Law and Logic is a collective of magisterial faculty who have devoted their careers to the study of the evolution and application of sovereign law through the ages. Its office is occupied by a consortium of Preceptors whom, between them, represent each aspect of law and logical theory in ages both past and present. There are two schools of thought among their ranks, being the Sovereignists - those magisters who subscribe to the more conservative, traditional form of Bannon-scribed policy, and those logicians who study the policies and laws of the less totalitarian regimes of Houses Corveaux, Aragon, and the northland clans, the Autarchs. Among their peers and students have been the

advisors to the courts of Bannon, given their near uninterrupted legacy of rulership and codification of the laws of the kingdom. Their curriculum also focuses on the myriad minutiae of laws wherever they may be found throughout the realm, be it the details of trade agreements, treatise between feuding lords, or the interpretation of sovereign law in civil disputes at every level of society. Inherent in this academic pursuit are the principles and practices of logic, being the foundation upon which laws are structured. Though it is said that logic stops where the will of the king begins. Thus, the magisters of the College of Law and Logic have walked the narrow path between their position of neutrality in matters of the realm and providing the acting ruler with sound and trusted counsel.

Their classrooms are the great halls of debate in the Apothecum, wherein a magister might occupy the floor for hours, espousing and expounding upon theory after philosophical theory as it relates to the lecture of the day. And yet even after a rousing day of discourse, their achievements may only really be measured by the degree of credence the acting ruler is wont to give those of their ilk. For the value of even the soundest of counsel is only measured by them that hears it.

COLLEGE OF ANATOMY

The College of Anatomy occupies the sub-basements of the Apothecum given its suitably macabre requirements to keep the subjects of its studies at a lower ambient temperature than that of the upper floors. Students and teachers alike stalk its frigid halls and chambers in heavy dark robes and the long-nosed, leather masks of their trade, slinging large satchels filled to the brim with all manner of grisly instruments, painting a scene that is equal parts terrifying and fascinating. Arch Magister Helevor is the law here, among the dead, and the dying. He is a grim and serious specimen, found ever at his art; dissecting the heart of a fresh cadaver or carefully carving off a bit of diseased pustule for later examination. He can usually be found sucking upon a bit of Merchant's Leaf, a habit which has yet to work its way out of his life for nigh twenty years. This has turned him into a bit of a subject of study himself given the habit's curious side effects. His neck has become a striated miasma of visible blue-black veins which crawl their way up from his shoulders, narrowing out just before his sharp jaw. His moods now, are fluctuations between somber quiet and short, yet severe bouts of unprompted anger. It is said he used to be a more even-tempered, gentle man, yet became obsessed with treating his wife after she took ill with a particularly virulent and unidentified disease. Never again has been the same. Among his colleagues, he is tolerated for his unmatched surgical skill

and uncanny ability of deduction when treating an ailment. His management of the students leaves little room for error, favoring to “cut the fat,” as he is wont to put it, instead of muddying up the pure waters with any that are less than talented.

The students who pursue this path are said to be cut from a different cloth. Those with constitutions that tend towards the delicate aren’t long to last through their first few years of study. They are quick to the field, traveling throughout the kingdom for months at a time, setting the limbs and mending the wounds of commonfolk and nobility alike. When reports of diseases break, they rush to the scene with what might be called a morbid expediency and enthusiasm, descending upon the afflicted in their grim shrouds and alarming masks. To the uninitiated, this may seem a den of sawbones and death-fetishists, yet their grizzly lessons are only just a taste of the real carnage and bloodshed wrought by the wardens of the realm. Whereas a knight may shield themselves in steel plate and wield the sword and spear, the magister of medicine only has their knowledge and wits to win the wars of life and death.

CUSTOMS

A COPPER OR TWO

When a magister takes his studies abroad, it is customary for him to set aside a copper or two such that he may playfully purchase those plants with which he is presented by the local children. Indeed, while they are mostly weeds and grasses, the odd magister has reported children in the more remote parts of the kingdom presenting him with quite rare and sometimes strange new specimens. Whatever the case may be, it is always good form to provide said children with a copper or two.

THIS CALLS FOR A CELEBRATION

Before a magister is to set out on a journey of any real significance, it is considered polite to present them with those items that cannot easily be obtained while on the road. Sundries such as inkwells, parchment, and ink all fit this description, while the occasional nip of liquor is never turned away either. Likewise, when a Novitiate of the order is given his Dracodeucis, marking his passage into Magister-hood, it is customary to provide him with the everyday items required of his duties. Other special occasions include promotion of rank and returning from one’s first trip abroad.

THE SCRIBES OF ARNESSE

Literacy is common among the nobility of Arnesse but all magisters can read and write. This places them in a unique position to be scribes for their employers and individuals who require the service. Knowing that there are usually only a handful of people who can read and write in an area, it’s common for them to charge for transcription services. This also has the side effect of exposing the Magister to information and potential secrets. While the coin is nice, the information is of far more value.

Some magisters are also known to keep pet ravens and have set up a network of communication that links towers and apothecariums throughout Arnesse. While the missives cannot be longer than a few sentences, it is way for them to send messages either of their own or on behalf of others. While magisters often reserve the privilege of their ravens for employers, for coin one might be convinced to make an exception to the rule.

LEGENDS

The Apotheca trades and traffics in secrets, so it should be little surprise that there are many rumors and legends that have circulated about their organization.

A BOY’S CLUB

One scurrilous and persistent rumor is that this all-male Guild was founded by a group of homosexual scholars at a peculiar all-male bathhouse. Their vow of celibacy is a sham, nothing more than a front for what goes on behind the closed doors of the Apotheca towers: lavish all-night parties and sexual orgies. It is said that the reason they exclude women from membership is that they don’t want anyone to interfere with their boys club.

DONATED TO SCIENCE

There are always rumors about the Apotheca doing unauthorized experiments on the willing and unwilling. The organization has vehemently denied that any of this is going on. They have publicly admitted to performing autopsies on the deceased with the permission of their families. Credible evidence exists for those that look for it that they perform vivisections on animals and it’s not hard to believe that they also have done it on people. A common half-jest in most lower-class neighborhoods in Arnesse that if someone goes missing that they must have been “donated to science”, meaning that they likely were abducted by the Apotheca. It goes on further to say that

they much prefer when the Cirque does it because at least the body will be returned for burial.

A LOW PROFILE

There are rampant rumors connecting the Apotheca to witchcraft due to their close associations with magical lore. That, combined with the fact that they literally brew potions, causes some in smaller villages to try to take matters into their own hands. While it is not common, there are tales of magisters who have been run out of towns or even lynched for potentially being a witch. This has led some members of the Apotheca to keep a very low profile when they are travelling through more rural areas.

BLOOD RITES

Linked to the rumors about their use of magic, it is said that the Apotheca are blood mages and that beneath their towers in the depths of night they practice ancient sanguine rites designed to raise dark creatures from the darkest reaches. There are quite a few who refuse to have the Apotheca tend to their wounds because they are afraid that the Magister might be using blood magic to perform the healing or putting a terrible hex on them.

AN UNKNOWN ALLEGIANCE

In the Midlands and the Sovereignlands it is whispered that Apotheca is firmly in the hands of House Aragon and House Innis. That the Magisters are not only sympathetic to the cause of those great houses but that the Apotheca's leadership is in their pocket. This rumor is not helped by the fact that two of the largest and most influential magister towers lie within Thornwood and the wastes of Tarkath. It is also known by some that the Apotheca was originally based in Tarkath in the sole employ of the Lords of the South, but before the Great War, they switched allegiances to the Kingdom instead.

HIDDEN POWER

It is said that the hidden vaults of the Apotheca contain a weapon of immense power. Whoever wields this weapon would be able to bring the Crown under their control and rule all of Arnesse. The rumor goes on that the Magisters want to give this weapon to someone but that they are in council day and night to determine who that person might be. It is said that the Inner Council and the Grand Magister are for sale for the right price.

ORDERS OF THE APOTHECA

These are a few of the many different orders within the Apotheca. While they vary in terms of particulars, all are united in the search for knowledge, the maintenance of secrecy, and a steadfast attempt to hold neutral in these times of political infighting.

ASHENVALE ACQUISITIONS

Said to work in close proximity to the College of Metaphysics, this order is charged with tracking down magical items, relics, lore, and knowledge. They are small in number and highly trusted by the Apotheca order. While the specifics of how one joins the order are unclear, but it's said that an individual must be invited by the Inner Council and sponsored by an existing member of the order. What is known is that they travel frequently in pursuit of rumors and stories about magic or mystic creatures. Once they locate their quarry, they deal with the situation, explaining away the findings to the locals, securing all of the evidence, and returning it to a vault under lock and key. Rumors persist that these magisters don't just chase true magic but might actually wield it.

MAIMED ONES

The Maimed Ones are the blind, burned, or diseased who seek to better understand the human form. Most of this order seek to cure themselves and restore their bodies. Their quest is to seek mastery over anatomy-- that of others and themselves. It is with autopsies and self-experimentation that they improve their treatments and medicines. Due to persistent rumors that this order is heavily involved in vivisection and experiments on humans both living and dead, they tend to be secretive about their knowledge and practices. To join the Maimed Ones order, the Magister must have a permanent and serious injury of some kind and seek to study medicine.

THE NUX VOMICA

The Nux Vomica are masters of the creation of toxic and poisonous substances. Their myriad elixirs and formula ease the people's pains and solve many problems. They traffic in poisons, stimulants, and rare curatives primarily through Black Market connections. Joining this order is difficult as it involves one to become trusted by the underworld and very talented at apothecary arts. This is a risky line of work and even if one doesn't find themselves on the wrong end of a knife, handling and creating these substances is a dangerous art and not a few who walk this path become a victim of their wares.

THE GRIMSCRIBES

This Grimscribes are a repository of here-say, folklore, and devotees of sourcing the truth in all the fantastic tales still told around the kingdom. From the magical bones of saints, to the cursed black clovers of the Dusklands, to the mischevious fey that are still said to inhabit the dark paths of the Thornwood, all tales are said to hold some grain of truth. And no matter how small, the magisters of the Grimscribes will find them. Given their predisposition to long trips away from the Apotheon, special permission is required to join this order, and no one below the rank of Keeper is allowed to do so. The Grimscribes are often regarded as an order that uses the pursuits of academia to rationalize extended trips away from their duties. Keeper Miskaton, a member of the faculty in the College of Metaphysics, presides over the order and sees it as a risky, yet sure way to advance his career in the college should he make a verifiable discovery.

CHAPTERHOUSE 7

Little is known about Chapterhouse 7 other than it is supposedly an organization which keeps the vaults of the Apotheca along with their treasures, hidden lore, and relics secure and hidden. Members are not allowed to speak of their membership and rarely leave one of the major Apotheca towers. How one joins is unclear, but certainly involves the approval of the Inner Council.

HOUSE RELATIONSHIPS

The Age of Kings has marked a new era for Arnesse. Each great house struggles to maintain its power and legitimacy through navigating the mazes of power. This process has led many to form unlikely alliances with old enemies and make new and bitter enemies where before there were none. The following details the current state of the Fayne's relationship with the great houses of Arnesse, where appropriate.

HOUSE ARAGON

If Tarkath is the Father of the Apotheca, House Aragon is its Mother. It is said that a Tarkathi will never turn away a Magister in need and the Apotheca is always welcomed in the South. While the Apotheca knows the Aragons have gone to extremes in defense of what they believe in, they also know them to be a honorable and noble people. Even though they have similar origins, the Apotheca, through its neutrality and usefulness has managed to gain the trust of many in the North. The Aragons, called Snakes by many, are distrusted and

even reviled in some courts for their excessive and vice-laden behaviors. As the Aurorm gain strength in the North, so does the sun set on the empire of Tarkath. If there is a way a Magister can help the Tarkathi, they generally will, even if they do so secretly. The Magisters have worked hard for years to dispel the rumors that the Apotheca is directly linked to House Aragon. It is well known among the Magisters that if one has information to sell, that the Aragons are wealthy and always buying.

HOUSE BANNON

The Bannons has long been an issue for the Apotheca. While House Bannon has welcomed Magisters into its midst, most are left feeling like they are doing so if only to better keep an eye on them. It is no secret that the Bannons have no love for the Aragons or the Innis and that the Apotheca is rumored to have a relationship with both, automatically makes the House of Kings skeptical of a Magister's allegiance. The Bannons also value a rumor or secret as much as the Apotheca and they are good at both keeping them and extracting them from others. This makes dealing with these wolves a very dangerous but profitable proposition. Of all the houses, the Bannons always pay well and on time, in coin. Of late, the King and those nobles who have turned to the Aurorm faith have begun listening less and less to council from Magisters who have not converted. This has placed many members of the Apotheca in the very strange position of being on the outside of some affairs. That being said, the Bannons need the Apotheca for two things. First, they need Magisters to run their Kingdom as they are not going to do it themselves. Second, they need someone to keep them looking good in the history books. These facts will keep the Apotheca in good standing with House Bannon for many years to come.

HOUSE BLAYNE

House Blayne presents a conundrum for the Apotheca. The House itself has struggled for the hundred and fifty years it has been in power, mostly because they have refused to have Magisters aid them in the administration of their domains. In some cases, they lack the funds to pay for the services but in others they have refused to give over the reins of authority enough for the Magister to be effective. The House does not refuse to use the services of the Apotheca, but there are less Magisters in the Hearthlands than there are in other Protectorates.

On the other side of the coin, House has ties to the Aurorum and their near-magical powers are most interesting to the Apotheca. Some Magisters have purported that these powers signal a return of magic. That there may be some divine being which is fueling these gifts but is still hidden. So while House Blayne can be a source of frustration, the Apotheca is often willing to put up with it in order to get closer to the truth about their faith. Members of Ashenvale Acquisitions have been rumored to be lurking in the Heartlands of late.

HOUSE CORVEAUX

House Corveaux has a good relationship with the Apotheca. The Order of Mercy of House Penrose is said to have once actually been an order of the Apotheca, though some scholars contest this is not true. Of all the organizations in Arnesse, the Knights of Mercy and the Apotheca share a similar mission and commonly work together on the field of battle to bring succor to the wounded. House Corveaux has an extensive, bustling Protectorate that is often in need of the services of the Apotheca and Magisters are common in courts from King's Crossing to Orgonne.

HOUSE HALE

The Apotheca have good relations with the Northmen for the most part. While it's true that most Magisters have not travelled into the deep into the Everfrost, they maintain a strong presence in the Winter Vale. The Hale are a combative group and injuries are common, so the services of the Magisters are often needed. Also, the people of the Everfrost have a long-standing tradition of shamanism, so it is easy for them to relate to the idea of a wise man among them. The Apotheca has a particular interest in the Everfrost because it is perhaps the last great unexplored frontier in Arnesse. There are also tales told of a darkness that lies in the North, beyond the ancient wyrding stones that mark the edge of civilization itself. Few Magisters have made the journey, but those that have and returned alive, tell of a great mountain made of black ice that allegedly contains an ancient evil.

HOUSE INNIS

House Innis is one of the closest historical allies with the Apotheca. It has been this way for centuries and this was only strengthened when the Magisters aided those who sought refuge during the Darkest Night and times when Innis Draiochta were being run to ground. The only thing to beware of with the Innis is that they are often a political target for the stronger great houses and throwing in too strongly with them can cost one in the eyes of those in power. In addition, the

Innis have a lust for lore that nearly rivals that of a Magister and they will typically seek to discover secrets whenever they can, even if that means taking things which do not belong to them.

HOUSE RICHTER

Once it was good to work with House Richter. They paid well and as a house of industry, there was rarely a time that something didn't need done. Since the explosion of the Shardmount, things have changed in the Dusklands. House Richter has changed as well. The Richters have fallen on hard times and in their desperation, embraced a dark part of themselves. This darkness has spread through the noble courts of the Dusklands, bringing with it despair and depression. The Richter's courts are less welcoming of late and have often become a beehive of politics and distrust that has proven to be the death of more than one magister. While the Apotheca continues to serve as requested to be assigned to the Dusklands by the guild seen as a punishment by some and an exile by others. Given the shortages of food and supplies in many areas in the Dusklands, magisters are often forced to get extremely creative with civics and logistics. To make matters even worse, given Richter's aggression against House Innis's borders within the last few years, many magisters fear that war in the North is soon to follow.

HOUSE ROURKE

The Apotheca sees little value in business relationships with House Rourke. They tend to live in unpleasant circumstances on the water and in shanty towns, far from civilized quarters and libraries. Accordingly, they tend to over-charge them for services because it's hard to find people who want to work in those conditions. The Rourke also tend to simply take what they like and when they need the services of Magister they will kidnap one. This forces the Apotheca to pay high ransoms to get the magister back. Even then, it is not uncommon for the magister to not be returned alive. Of late, the guild has taken to paying ransoms less and less and hoping that this will discourage House Rourke from the practice. All magisters are warned to beware a Rourke at all times.

THE FAYNE MOIRAI

If there is an organization that embodies all that the Apotheca opposes, it is the Fayne Moirai. The Apotheca is logic, science, and reason, they are superstition, mysticism, and deception. If there ever was anything magical about their order, it has long-since died out. In the eyes of the Magisters, this all-female order is composed entirely of charlatans, soothsayers, and frauds. The Apotheca competes with the Fayne more than any other organization as they both serve as

advisors. This frequently causes two opposite points of view to come into conflict. Though this rarely ever boils over into violence, they have a huge amount of friction and each organization is more than willing to take any opportunity they can to discredit or embarrass the other.

Interestingly, both organizations have found that with the rise of the Aurorym, that neither are as welcome as they used to be in the noble courts where that faith holds sway. This organization stands as a common threat to the power of both the Fayne Moirai and the Apotheca. The question remains if either guild will set aside nearly three centuries of rivalry and fundamental differences in philosophy to do something about it.

THE CIRQUE

With a group that is as intellectual as the Magisters, there could not be a world that is more different than their own lives than that of a tradesperson or crafter. Thus the Magisters have a difficult time relating to the Cirque beyond the fact that the two do a lot of business together. Mostly this business relationship consists of Magisters selling their decoctions, elixirs, potions, and tinctures to the Cirque, who then turns around and sells them for a substantial mark-up. The Apotheca gets paid quickly and does not have to move the wares on its own time. The Cirque makes a healthy profit from the affair. Some Magisters choose to walk a different path and deal in illegal substances like poisons and drugs. Those who get involved with the Black Market are often warned of the risks. It can be incredibly lucrative, but it is also extremely dangerous. Most wise Magisters know that while the Cirque may appear harmless, one does not forget their payments, one does not double cross them, and one rarely trusts them with their belongings.

THE HEXEN

The Hexen and the Apotheca have had a tumultuous relationship over the years. Both groups seek to gain more information on unnatural creatures in the world and have, for mutual benefit, shared notes. However, they also have frequently been in competition for this lore and this has led to more than one incident in which each group claimed the other has stolen something. The two groups have a fundamental difference in why they want the lore. Hexen say they desire to the lore to defeat threats and aid the people. Magisters want the lore to study and often deliberately deny anyone access to it. If people die because of this, they are merely collateral damage. Most Magisters will talk to a Hexen on the off chance that they can learn something, but they are going to be careful what they share and almost never give them access to

their notes or scrolls. Magisters have observed that the Hexen seem to feel almost the same way about them and thus the two factions are often locked in a game of cat and mouse as to who can gain the most lore but give the least away. More than a few times, the people around them have paid for this lack of ability to work together for the good of all.

THE AURORYM

There are two factors at work with how the Magisters see the faith. First, the Magisters have long been a proponent of religious freedom and sheltered many faithful during the dark years before, during, and after the Great War. This religion is different, unwilling to yield to reason, and has cast the mysterious and somewhat mystical ways of the Apotheca in a bad light. The faith of the Dawn seeks to cast the light of truth and dispel secrets. Given that the Apotheca built its very existence around secrets, the Aurorym represent the single force in the world that could force this great guild to its knees.

The Aurorym also represent a source of fascination and fear for the Apotheca. Fascination with the near-magic they seem to display and even though it is localized to unnatural creatures, it is the closest thing Arnesse has seen to an actual incantation in four centuries. This has led some Magisters to make a calculus and convert to the faith. Some in the hopes to avoid what they see is an inevitable purge of the unfaithful and others in the hopes of finding out the true source of their abilities. The organization has not officially made a declaration about the Aurorym faith, but most Magisters are being forced to fall along lines as to how they feel about it. Some are converting, others are finding ways to be unseen and hope that this blows over, and still others are seeking ways to resist and oppose the spread of the religion. Quite a few feel that this faith is but the first sparks of magic returning to the world, an event which the Magisters have sought to prevent since the Eldritch Cataclysm. This has only reaffirmed the need find out the nature of their powers so that if magic does return, the Apotheca will be best positioned to be its master.

PLAYING AN APOTHECA

An excerpt from the letters of now, Keeper Verlaine

Dearest Jon,

It has been five years. Five years of tedium, lectures, servitude, and humbling myself before men, many of whom I might have otherwise told to lick the shit off my boot. Though I am grateful to be sure. The magisters of the Apotheon have been far better fathers to me than that awful cunt of a man who has no business even calling himself one. Perhaps I should have endeavored to become a knight such that I could have taken a short trip home before my assignment to crush his nose. Though come to think of it, my time in the college of anatomy with that beast, Helevor, has afforded me far more creative and prolonged ways to make him suffer. We shall see if a bit of time in under the heat of the southern sun doesn't weaken my resolve.

Speaking of which, Preceptor Cillian tells me I am to head south for Tarkath on the morrow, to begin an apprenticeship with a Keeper there that has been serving one of their dusty rulers who fancies themself some manner of poisonous serpent. I shall do my best to remain a neutral party in all things, but I can feel the Midlander in me shudder at the thought of serving their ilk. I have only ever heard Tarkath to be a strange and wonderful place; that no magister can truly call himself such, lest he work and live among their kind. I shall quite like to see the Ashen Tower. Your stories make it sound as if it were a world unto itself. This will be my first time away from the Apotheon in as many years and I hope the evils and trials of the world outside do nothing to diminish my character.

Oh! Have I told you already? Perhaps I have. I have begun my metaphysical studies and could not be more thrilled. In fact, this new pursuit is what prompted this whole journey in the first place. It was quite plain that Helevor did not think very highly of me anyway. How was I to know that imbibing an Anamnesis counted as cheating? What a hypocrite! The man's always got a bit of Merchant's Leaf tucked up the underside of his cheek. And I hear he's even rendered some kind of powder from it. Said to be ten times as potent. Who would even use such a thing?

But no matter. Where was I? Yes, so there in Tarkath is the High House of Obolus, which beyond any administrative duties I shall owe my mentor, is the real reason I am to travel there. Its line is said to be quite involved with matters of the metaphysical, not least of which are their Fayne, whose comings and goings I have been tasked with documenting. To the best of my ability anyway. Can you imagine? What if it is like they say among the college; that magic is simply lying dormant and dreaming in some forgotten part of the kingdom? And I, Verlaine, Magister of the Apotheca were to uncover it. Well, come to think of it, I am not sure what would happen. They would either make me Grand Magister or throw me in a darkened cell and lose the key.

I have packed a good number of decoctions and other such potions for the trip, in addition to a significant sum provided me by the college for expenses. I only hope to make it last the trip. We are to join up with a Cirque caravan for a majority of the expedition, which heartens me, given that none of my traveling companions, myself included, are all that proficient with a blade. I shall write to you again upon my arrival to Tarkath, though I fear it shall be many turnings of the moon until I do so.

Your Dear Friend and Colleague,

Magister Verlaine