

A Note from the Publisher

A physical copy of *The Bats of Mercille* is probably the rarest and most collectible of **Ars Magica**[™] publications. Two editions exist, prior to this electronic reanimation: One was the original jump start kit; 100 copies were made and sold at the 1988 Gen Con/Origins (the conventions were combined that year) by Lion Rampant. The following year, another edition was released at Gen Con, featuring some editorial changes and updates to the newly released 2nd edition of the game. My recollection is that several hundred copies were made, and perhaps 100 were sold at the convention. I remember there being a box full of copies, with their bright yellow cover pages, left behind in Minnesota when Lion Rampant moved to Georgia in 1990. I presume those copies were at some point thrown away (probably by the new owners of the house where most of Lion Rampant's staff had lived). Thus there are perhaps 200 or 300 copies of both printed editions in circulation. And when I say "printed," I should perhaps clarify that they were photocopied at the college print shop and hand-collated at the last minute in order to be on sale at the convention.

This digital edition reproduces the 1989 version, complete with Darin "Woody" Eblom's hand-written entries on the character sheets. The adventure proper is an 8 page booklet that came stapled. The other pages were loose, and it was all sold together in a plastic baggie.

For the **Ars Magica** enthusiasts and completists who have long wanted to take a look at this adventure, or maybe even work it into their own sagas, it's our pleasure at Atlas Games to make it available to the world once more.

*John Nephew
Duluth, Minnesota
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Game Statistics

Notably absent in the 1989 version of *Bats* are the statistics and some descriptions for storyguide characters and monsters. The following information comes from the 1988 version, and so were made for first edition rules.

Special thanks to Lisa Stevens, who passed along the ancient text files from which they have been harvested.

Descriptions are in the order of appearance in the story.

Brother Devlon

Description: A heavy set, portly man in dirty, tattered brown robes. A Franciscan, T-shaped, iron cross hangs around his neck. The hanging jowls on his face shake whenever he gets excited.

Brother Devlon enjoys having authority and having people listen to him. Unlike most of the humble brothers who are in his order, he is arrogant and self-centered, and seeks the comforts in life. Before the terrors began, he was in town drinking with his cronies under the three oaks and building up to his traditional home-spun sermon later on in the night. The local priest always got upset about these impromptu sermons.

Brother Devlon is a bit of a con-man. He doesn't cheat people to gain their money or belongings; he cheats them to gain their trust, to gain their respect. Being a poverty stricken wandering friar is nothing to him as long as people listen to what he says. The worst thing you can do to Brother Devlon is to ignore him.

Role-playing tips: Fill up the stage with your personality. You command attention; and you secretly and fervently pray that you get it. Let desperation overcome you if you start to be ignored, or the people turn away from you.

Elder Yeoman in the Manor House

1st +4, Fat +5, Atk +9, Def +6, Dam +14, Soak +7

Trafalgo

Description: A rotund little man, of diminutive proportions, the only similarity he makes with others of his size who serve as court jesters is a little checkered hat without which he is never seen (save when he makes a bow in front of a lord or lady or in front of the altar at a church.) He has black coarse hair combined and gentle, clear, soft skin gives him. His general appearance is that of a mischievous rascal.

Though a midget, Trafalgo has a mightier heart than many of those he plays to in the stone halls of the most powerful lords. Having seen and faced many dangers in his lifetime, Trafalgo has never lost courage or the use of his wits, and his assorted talents have somehow always gotten him out his troubles. Though he usually travels alone, Trafalgo will travel with others whenever it becomes a possibility, for he loves engaging company. Trafalago is a noble hearted and sober man whose major love and interest is his music. He cares not a wit about his appearance, and certainly not other folks' ideas about who or what he is. He accepts ridicule with such a solemn and clean heart that often his tormenters become his friends. Trafalago has many friends from many different social classes, and would be very amenable to meeting wizards and getting to know them. The Bishop of Toulouse calls Trafalago the bravest man he knows.

Role-playing tips: Handle yourself with extreme dignity, and even if someone starts to "mishandle" you, maintain your composure. Look kindly upon those who tease and torment you: they are but children who have grown too large.

(If one of your players loses their character, you could have them play Trafalgo for a time.)

The Bats

When small bats attack, count a swarm as one attack, and then don't bother rolling attack at all -- the automatically hit and do +10 damage and give -4 to almost all actions performed by the person being

harassed. It is possible, though difficult, for the larger bats to attack at the same time.

Human & Herbivore bats

1st +2, Atk +6, Dam +10, Def +8

Body -3/Incap

Special Powers

- The squeaking of the bats brings on the "terror". This is a horrible fear of a life worst than death, of a disgusting, protracted torture before and after death. In short, the terror is visions of what horrible fate that might await a person. Have the characters make cowardly vs (any appropriate Personality trait -- players choice) roll when the bats first emerge from the cave. If the cowardly wins out they feel a strange fear slide into their perceptions, a feeling of dread -- and receive a -1 to all rolls. Whenever the high pitched screeches of the bats can be heard, another cowardly vs (any appropriate Personality trait) roll must be made. If the character is more cowardly than, for instance, reliable, they will run away into the night in terror. During this roll, if some character can make a leadership roll of over 8+, while trying to bolster the bravery of the others, then add their leadership score to everyone's opposed roll to the cowardly. For the purposes of breaking through Parma Magicas, give this Terror a +25 CrMe penetration roll.
- Any close relative or friend of a person who has turned into a bat may be faced with the "dreams". Spouses and close siblings are especially susceptible. While they sleep, they somehow touch the mind of the relative who is now a bat. This wakes them up and they usually scream in tormented anguish: most are also driven insane by the thought of living a life as a monster. Those who have had the "dreams", often believe that they are now living in hell, and that they themselves look like one of the monstrous bats. This fate might possibly affect some of the characters if one of their compatriots is turned into a bat by the serpent.

The wings of the bats are each worth 2 aurum vis.

Shlith-hrin

Size +4, Int +2, Per -2, Stm +8

1st +4, Atk +8 (normally +14), Dam +15 (norm. +19), Fat -2 (norm +6), Def +2 (norm +8), Soak +18 (+12 if struck in the belly, where her is stretched tautly) Use the Rein•Hagen special at least twice (p. 149, Ars Magica).

Body levels - 0/ 0/ -1/-1/ -3/-3/ -5/-5/ Incap

If severely endangered she will break away from combat, will dive to lowest part of the lower pool, and will stay there for up to five minutes. While she is down there she may use her aquam magics (see below) to harass or injure her attackers.

- Her special attack is her deadly gaze which can sap the will to live from almost any mortal. Each time she looks upon someone, if she catches their eyes, even if just for a second, she can drain their spiritual energy (she can do this once at the start of every round, and in combat can only do it to an enemy who is fighting at her front). Any character who is caught by her gaze will stiffen up and receive -2 to all their rolls that round, and then must make three fatigue rolls of 6+ or lose a fatigue level every time they fail. Those who actively avoid her gaze while battling her receive -3 to all rolls (except Soak).

- She also has great powers over water, so let her use any aquam magic of up to 25th level that affects water directly. It takes her a whole round to do something with magic, but costs negligible fatigue. Shlith-hrin has not been in combat for centuries however, and has forgotten many ways in which to use water to effective use in combat. When the characters come in the chamber and approach the pools, she may cause all the water to spray high up in the air like a fountain would. She will use this distraction to get closer to the intruders as to better attack them. This will be a beautiful sight so be sure to describe it.

The Bats of Mercille

Introduction

This is a Jump-Start Kit for *Ars Magica*™. In its original form it was the first Jump-Start kit; we made 100 copies and sold them all at the 1988 GEN CON/Ori-gins® convention. Since we had so much fun writing and selling that special supplement (exclusive to the convention), we decided to do it again. Besides doing something completely new, the *Stormrider*™ Jump-Start Kit, we decided to continue the tradition of an inexpensive, limited-edition kit for the conventions.

The basic adventure in this revision of *The Bats of Mercille* is the same as last year, but it has been edited and expanded, and updated to conform to the second edition of *Ars Magica*. If you also own our "other" *Ars Magica* Jump-Start Kit, *The Stormrider*, you may find that some sections of that kit have some semblances to this kit — in particular, the village scene. This is of course no accident. At the time I wrote *The Stormrider*, I didn't realize this little story would ever see the light of day again, so I decided to "reuse" one or two ideas. If you plan to role-play through both stories you may wish to change a few details (for instance, there are three oaks in the middle of *Stormrider's* village, Javielle, as well as in Mercille). Otherwise you could leave these details in, and perhaps speak mysteriously of synchronicity.

Even with the editing and development we've done to it, this kit is less polished and less sophisticated than you might expect from *Lion Rampant*. In it are displayed the genesis of many of the ideas that have since surfaced in our other products (and will continue to do so). It is in this light that I hope you judge this kit.

These convention supplements are not intended to be anything more than old-fashioned adventuring frivolity — a dab of role-playing here, a dab of adventure there, a dab of hard core combat here. If they continue to be successful, we'd like to have a new one at each convention in the future. But don't expect that our regular products are going to resemble this one; these convention specials will be the lighter side of *Lion Rampant*, a vacation from our "serious role-playing agenda".

This supplement is dedicated to Woody Eblom, whose search for fun in role-playing has kept me from becoming too pretentious — thank you, Woody.

Now let the games begin!

Understanding this Supplement

In case you're not familiar with the Jump-Start Kit presentation, let me explain a few things to you. A Jump-Start Kit provides you with pre-made characters and a story specifically designed with those characters in mind — we do the work for you so your first adventure can be run quickly and easily. With this kit, even a group of complete novices can role-play a satisfying game of *Ars Magica* with only half an hour of preparation time.

To properly storyguide (gamemaster) this story, you must have read a few chapters of *Ars Magica* and have skimmed the others. Read the Introduction to *Ars Magica* carefully; it gives an overview of the game system and background. Be sure to also have a firm grasp on the Combat and Magic chapters because those rules will frequently come into play. Finally, read the Saga chapter to understand the setting in which this story takes place.

You will need to read this entire kit, from start to finish, before you attempt to storyguide it. Additionally, before you read the main text of the kit, you should skim the eight characters included in the kit, as well as the Briefings you will later pass out to the characters. Go and read them now, and then come back here to finish reading the story itself.

Story Outline

The characters journey to a distant village on the basis of a rumor, and find it largely burned and devoid of life. A few people can be found hidden in some of the houses and in the church, but strangely, everyone else is gone. The survivors talk madly of swarms of deformed bats coming out from a cave every night, bringing with them a horrible black terror. After investigating the town, and perhaps fighting with the bats, the characters find the tunnel that is called The Ear of Lucifer. After a short exploration they will find a large serpent, the lord of the bats, who has lain there for nearly 650 years, since the day the Velorindin Forest lay across this land like a great quilt. This serpent goes by the name Shilth-grin, and can trace its lineage far back, farther back than the characters might imagine. A fight is likely to break out with the serpent in a climatic battle of magic and brawn in the serpent's strange, magical lair.