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Trial by Fire



An **Ars Magica™**
Fantasy Roleplaying Adventure
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Contents

Introduction	4
Time and Location	4
Summary of Plot	4
Theme	4
Running <i>Trial By Fire</i>	5
Players' Introduction	5
What the Magi Know	6
Options and Embellishments	6
Chapter One • De Panne	7
Rumors	7
Public Mood	7
Mass Flight	7
Organizing De Panne	9
Rulers, Law and Order	10
Magic	10
Chapter Two • Layouts	12
The Town	12
The Tunnels Under De Panne	21
Smoke Hill	23
Chapter Three • The Coming of the Dragon	27
Advent of the Dragon	27
Panic	28
Townfolk Against the Dragon	29
Trial By Fire	30
Looters	30
Aftermath	31

Introduction

Time and Location

THIS STORY TAKES place in Flanders during the 13th century. You can change the time and place without much difficulty, if your saga involves a different sort of world. Almost everyone here understands French and Flemish, while many also know German or Dutch. The PCs should have no difficulty communicating with locals.

Summary of Plot

THE TOWN OF De Panne faces a peril like none in Christian memory. Centuries ago, this province was under the sway of Pan Caudarax, the Dragon of Flanders. This beast has spent centuries in the fiery mountains of Iceland. However, when he left, he promised to return.

The Order of Hermes has many friends in De Panne. Redcaps regularly stop in De Panne's harbors and magicians trade with the local merchants for supplies. Therefore, the party's Covenant decides to deliver De Panne from the dragon. It sends the PCs to prepare a defense of the town.

The wizards have even learned when to expect their foe. According to *The Secret Chronicles of De Panne*, Caudarax specified the day and the hour of his arrival. He swore to destroy "the thieves of De Panne," on the moment of the "Crescent Sun." The

"Crescent Sun" is an eclipse, predicted by an ancient druid of Flanders. It takes place in three days. The magi have that long to prepare De Panne.

With some investigation, the magi may learn the motive for Caudarax's return. The dragon's hoard contained a tool of the Roman oracles, the fabled Rosewood Crown. When he left Flanders, he left it behind. Deep within the dragon's abandoned lair, a thief works his way toward the crown. This thief is a mysterious sorcerer who styles himself the Warlock of De Panne. The dragon, however has known this for centuries, having looked into the future by using the Crown himself. Caudarax even knows that the magi will attempt to thwart him. He does not care. He plans to arrive just after the theft, and wreak his rightful vengeance on De Panne.

Theme

TRIAL BY FIRE explores the theme of forethought and its uses. The omen of a thief brings Pan Caudarax to De Panne. The dragon's own prophecy summons the characters to fight him. Both predictions are true. Yet they are a natural part of the real world, with their own place in the web of cause and effect. The clever use prophecies as a tool, to turn circumstances to their own advantage. If the magi simply accept matters as pre-ordained, they will miss real opportunities for victory in *Trial By Fire*.

Medieval Flanders

THE DARK AGES ended early in the county of Flanders. This area was one of the first European regions to generate a surplus of goods and therefore became the first to develop a trading economy. To sustain the profitable trade, noblemen granted merchants the necessary charters to found independent cities, governed by their own councils. These cities nurtured art, trade, and freedom which commoners could scarcely imagine under strictly feudal rule. In the **Ars Magica**™ game, some of these cities also take an uncommonly enlightened view toward wizards.

Flanders merchants export wool. In return, they import furs and timber from Norway, a variety of goods from Italy and spices from the Far East. These major businesses support a large number of smaller ones, and merchants from across Europe meet in Flanders to trade.

During the Thirteenth Century, Flanders belonged to the Duke of Hainault. Most of this region is now part of Belgium, although portions of Flanders extend into France and the Netherlands. The people of Flanders speak the Flemish language, although Dutch, French and German are also common.