

Alchemists, Bishops and Courtesans, oh my!

By Elegwen Ó Maoileóin

Author's Notes: *In the following story, italics usually represent role-playing suggestions or tips. These can be suggested to the players, or guide the Storyteller in how he describes the scene to know what to incite and stir in which character. Depending on style of play and familiarity of the gamers, this information may be used in many ways.*

A cocky young noble, his tutor, a beautiful courtesan, an alchemist's apprentice, a struggling artist and a merchant wanted for murder. All of their destinies become entwined when Edmundo Brunetti, the eccentric Alchemist and scholar is abducted and a they are embroiled in a dangerous conspiracy and forced to enter a world of arcane lore, mysteries and sinister bankers: set against the back-drop of Florence at the height of the Italian Renaissance.

Story Goal: Save the alchemist, save the world.

Main Villain: The banker Filippo Morenzo of House De Medici.

Villain's Allies: His hired thugs

Other opposition: The Bishop, Giani Maldini and his spies and Church knights.

Genre: Intrigue, Comedy

Time Period: 1559 AD

Setting: City-State of Renaissance Florence.

Mood: Humerous, adventurous, sinister, arcane.

Scene outline:

1. A feast without celebration

Goal: Over come differences and search for the alchemist.

Opposition: The natural dislike of the apprentice and the son for one another. At this stage any other divided loyalties will not be obvious though questions may be asked as to who knows who, and how. *More* conflict certainly lies in wait! Also the, as of yet, unknown kidnappers.

Location: Chambers of Edmundo Brunetti in the Florentine Alchemists' guildhall.

Tie-in: Apprentice knows the Guild master and where he will be. He will know what has happened here.

Notes: The Guild master is in the brothel just down the way. His chambers are locked so it should prove easier to just go and get him.

Setting: Guild hall – Florence, Italy.

Tie-In: The apprentice knows the guild master who, if anyone, would have knowledge of the alchemist and who else might be interested in the codex, enough to abduct the old man. He also knows of the Masters fondness of ladies of questionable virtue, or as he likes to put it "Ladies of the night."

2. Of Guildhall and Brothel

Goal: Survive the ambush

Opposition: The Guild master's henchmen.

Location: The Brothel and Guildhall.

Tie in: Signature ring (or heraldic device) of house de Medici.

3. Healing the Hurt

Goal: Find the clues to the location of the Philosopher's Stone.

Opposition: Race against time before the henchmen or their masters return.

Location: Alchemist's chambers in the guildhall.

Tie-In: The correspondence in the Alchemist's lab.

Notes: The golden liquid is a 'Panacea'. There are many important items to be found in the lab – Not all of them are safe to consume!

4. Where to Look?

Goal: Get to the old Church and find the Philosopher's Stone.

Opposition: The unseen kidnapper. Also, they are in a race against time.

Location: Possibly the streets between the Guildhall and old Church.

Tie-in: Both the correspondence and the delivered letter.

Notes: The Church of Santi Apostoli is in fact a real church in Florence believed to have been founded by Charlemagne and his Paladin, Roland.

5. A Florentine Stand-Off...

Goal: To escape the stand-off with or without the Stone.

Opposition: Bishop Maldini and his thugs and the agents of House de Medici (Morenzi).

Location: The Church of Santi Apostoli, Florence.

Tie-in: The combined knowledge they now possess.

Notes: The Players need to prioritize. How much can they escape with? Their lives and that of the old alchemist are top priority, of course. If they are daring and lucky enough, the Stone will be theirs too!

6. A Forked Road or End Game?

Goal: Escape and then decide where their loyalties lie. What will they do next?

Opposition: House De Medici, possibly the Bishop.

Location: Variable – Most likely some where very safe away from the church.

Tie in: -

Notes: House de Medici will hunt them down regardless of whether or not they possess the Stone. If they don't possess it, their agents will try to kill them to tie off loose ends. No witnesses will be allowed. The

Bishop will be less likely to try to kill them but he will chase them and try to persuade them to give it to him. He will reason first, bribe second, then cajole and if nothing else works he will try force once again.

Characters:

Brother Alberto - the alchemists apprentice.

Squire Vincenzo Brunetti – the Alchemist's errant son.

Paolo de Bonati - The Alchemist's old friend and his son's long suffering tutor.

Giulia Algeiri - The Courtesan, the apprentices sister, and niece to Bishop Maldini.

Giovanni Marras – A struggling artist seeking the patronage of the missing alchemist and caught between him and house de Medici.

Francesco di Brunetti – A hapless minor merchant, distantly related to the alchemist seeking the protection of his house and being pursued by House de Medici.

Backstory: *The old alchemist sits at his desk and finally breaks the code of the Chaldaen text left him by his long dead master. He sends word to his son, his apprentice and his patro – the Bishop – to attend him for a celebratory dinner at his chamber in the guild house. But when each of these responds they arrive to discover the eccentric old scholar missing.*

1. A Feast Without Celebration

Introduction – Inciting Incident

The old alchemist's apprentice knows that the codex was finally deciphered and read, also that many of the powerful leaders of the city had chided the old (many said) mad alchemist for years about his claims of unlocking some ancient secret of the metals. But now it seems to have been done and to mysterious consequences.

All the characters arrive, expecting an evening of drinks, dinner and the obligatory boring tale of how the old scholar has uncovered some insipid detail of Etruscan pottery or some such.

The characters will get to meet each other for the first time while waiting to be let into the hall.

Role-Playing Tips: *The apprentice might be surprised to meet his sister there. Having chosen radically different lives from one another, the siblings (might) have a tense relationship.*

Young Vincenzo is no fan of the apprentice, who he sees as constantly trying to usurp his place in his Father's heart and indeed his will!

The apprentice sees Vincenzo as a cocky and reckless drunk.

Nothing is improved when the apprentice notices that his sister knows the young Vincenzo.

At the Guild Hall

[MAP here of Guild Hall building, situated on the outskirts of downtown Florence]

When you arrive at the Guild hall it is late evening, dark outside and there is nobody about. This would seem strange, as surely there would at least be a cook around and a servant to serve dinner. The

apprentice has a key to the Guild hall and should let the alchemist's guests in.

A Quick Glance (2-5 mins)

The only light in the room is from the lanterns you bear and the embers of a dying fire.

- 1. Servants:** Three servants trust up like chickens in the basement.
- 2. Doorman:** Another servant – a portly man – lies inebriated and passed out.
- 3. Bottles:** A large, empty bottle in his lap.
- 4. Dinner Table:** A table is set with plates, cups and utensils.
- 5. Hearth:** Water has been boiled in the hearth, and now cools as the embers dwindle.
- 6. Paintings:** Many old paintings on the hall's walls show renderings of previous alchemists and hall masters.
- 7. Tapestry:** A massive tapestry hangs on the northern stone wall, possibly to warm the room. (But the apprentice knows rumours say that the several hundred year old work of art is whispered to change over the centuries, and predict the future of the world. Though, none alive can recall when the tapestry showed anything other than what it shows. An Egyptian pyramid, with a gap between the peak and base. Around the base people dressed in garb of every culture stand and stare upward.)
- 8. Sconces:** Many sconces hold candles to light the room. All are unlit.
- 9. Chairs:** Fancy chairs are placed around the table, but also in corners.
- 10. Persian Rug:** An expensive but old Persian rug covers the floor behind the dinner table. (At times, performers dance, give plays, songs or readings there.)

A Close Look (20 mins)

The apprentice has keys to most areas. And knows where the keys are for the rest (in his master's desk drawer under a sketchbook). However, the one door that cannot be opened is the Guild Master's office and laboratory.

[MAP of Guild Hall interior. Only two floors, with a secret laboratory used by all the alchemists and their apprentices. The Guild Master's office, however, includes a room on both ground level and the second story – a staircase leads between them.]

- 1. Servants:** One of the servants has bruised his head.
- 2. Doorman:** --
- 3. Bottles:** --
- 4. Dinner Table:** --
- 5. Hearth:** --
- 6. Paintings:** --
- 7. Tapestry:** The tapestry does look different. But then again, it always seems a little different. Though no one has ever proven any change.

8. Sconces: --

9. Chairs: --

10. Persian Rug: --

11. The Master's Chamber: The master's door and chamber is not only locked without key, but held by some trick of engineering or magic. It cannot be gained entry.

12. The Guild Hall: In general, nothing else seems amiss in the hall.

Thorough Investigation (1 hour)

This result can be gained for any single detail if a challenge is made to find out any single fact.

1. Tapestry: A thorough study of the tapestry shows the alchemist at the edge of the cloth, staring up at the eye, a book and stone in his hands.

2. Hearth: The charred remains of a letter are burned. Magic could reform the letter and reveal the speech the alchemist intended to give.

Notes: Alberto might suggest that Giulia stay behind, ostensibly because clearly, something is afoot here but mostly because he thinks that Vincenzo is a shameless carouser and fears he will turn his charm upon her. He should try to insist she leave.

But being the freest kind of woman in that day and age, the courtesan wants to accompany the young men to find the old alchemist – it seems she knew him, somehow, was fond of him and now grows worried. It also seems she has insight into the intrigues of the city and the alchemist guild.

It might occur to them that he has been kidnapped because of this codex that he was working upon. They should attempt to find it or any clues that might lead them to find it, other relevant information, or the old man himself

2. Of Guildhall & Brothel

Rising Action – Significant Event

Down the road from the Alchemist Guild hall is the city's most famous brothel. A sign outside reads:

"Il posto più felice su terra. "

Or – The happiest place on earth.

The guild master frequents the place to, drink, whore and carry out his various business arrangements on occasion.

On entering the brothel the Madam immediately besets them and tries to entice them with a plethora of fleshly delights and more if they seem reticent.

Downstairs is filled with men bouncing whores on their laps; merchants, Fops, priests, scholars and others of money. A few students (?) are singing bawdy songs that might shame a sailor.

Once they interview the Guild master, they discover he claims no knowledge of anything they are

talking about. He says the guild humoured. Vincenzo's father and his outdated understanding of divine science. He tells them that the old man probably forgot that he was to meet them and to think nothing of it.

If they press the issue, saying that clearly the servants were attacked and it is clear that he was kidnapped or worse, he looks genuinely worried and tells them to await him outside while he finishes up. As they are leaving he nods to his hired henchmen who are enjoying the house services.

He accompanies them back up the street to the Guild house.

Once there he has his thugs set upon them with the intention of killing them.

He has been bought by an agent of the Medici house. After the secret of the metals is discovered and delivered to Cosimo, the Guildmaster will be the one who oversees its use and has been promised a fortune and vast resources besides.

Five sturdy men beset them with clubs and billy clubs. Though these weapons are crude, the men wielding them are ruthless and callous. At your discretion some of the clubs might have added protrusions such as nails etc.

If the players kill all the badguys, then have the Guildmaster flee. He will return and report to his masters. If they are very efficient in their dealing with the thugs, then at least one will try to flee.

A perceptive character might notice a ring or heraldic device on one of their attackers. This is the symbol used by House Medici to show that the bearer is a retainer. Of course House Medici will claim that the bearer- being a thug stole it from one of their trusted servants.

Once news reaches the Agent of house Medici then he will try a different approach. . .

Goal: Survive the ambush

Opposition: The Guild Master's henchmen.

Setting: The brothel and Guild hall.

Tie-In: The ring ties the De Medicis to the mystery. This should be worrying, very worrying indeed. The Guild Master is of course a direct tie as well.

Notes: Cosimo, though a great Patron of the arts was a ruthless bastard. The family's motto is:

'Money to get power, and power to guard the money'

Their coat of arms is a predominantly yellow field with 5 red spots on it.

3. Healing Their Hurts

Complications –

The characters have probably taken a nasty beating here. They may be seriously wounded or even unconscious.

Help is not far away though. They are in the alchemist's guild and there may be useful materials in the laboratory.

Note none of the characters are doctors but they don't have the time to go looking for one especially at night with the Thugs on the streets possibly bringing reinforcements.

The laboratories are on the first floor of the building. They are all locked except Vincenzo's father's

laboratory, he rarely bothered to lock it and no one was ever too bothered about what was in there till now. The locks on all the doors wouldn't be hard to break except that of the Guildmaster's, whose door and lock is stout.

A Quick Glance (5 mins)

Bench - A large work table and a stool. Large flasks of liquids sit upon the table. **Braziers** - A brazier in each corner of the room.

Burlap sacks - Various sacks of what might be a black grain (but certainly isn't).

Glass jars - Jars of freaky animal parts and preserved plants line the many shelves. **Large Book** - An alchemical tome with arcane symbols upon the outside as well as a mini library of various relevant books and scrolls close by.

Glass ware - Racks of odd glass ware.

Candles - Candles, spare wicks, tapers flint and tinder etc.

Odd ingredients - Various pigeon holes and drawers either locked or brimming over with foul smelling substances.

A Closer Look (20 mins)

(and for those who are able to read both ancient greek and Latin - things are labelled variously and randomly in the two languages-)

[insert list of chemicals]

As well as a host of poisons not in the least which is cobra venom (and no there are no labeled antidotes, though there are antidotes. One must assume that the old scholar knew which was which).

The above materials are all contained in the burlap sacks, glass containers or sealed wax pouches. In the case of Phosphorus, it is sealed under a layer of oil in a stoppered flask. Those foolish enough to expose it to air will be in for an explosive lesson.

There is also a host of substances labelled as 'gruit'. Any character with relevant knowledge of either Alchemy or brewing can tell that gruit is a catch all term for the various plant extracts that were used in brewing before hops were used. Many of them were believed to have mystical properties or be poisonous or both e.g. Deadly nightshade.

The books and scrolls vary from such diverse topics as Metallurgy, Astronomy, Physical sciences, Medicine, Mysticism, Architecture, Shipbuilding and collected occult and folk beliefs and in languages as diverse as Italian, English, Latin, Greek (both modern and Ancient) and various other 'Muslim' languages i.e. Anything a good Christian should not even contemplate learning. Needless to say the scope of such a collection is mind boggling not to mention bordering on heretical if not, then out right heretical.

It could be that certain of those titles (were they to be recognised) ending up in ones possession could mean execution, ex-communication etc.

Amongst all of this, are three notable discoveries. Two are in drawers. It is important that the characters find these.

Six viles of a pale, almost golden liquid. Literally almost golden (not in the way beer is described as almost golden). They are in a small box, carefully placed and labeled as "Elixir of Panacia" - Sometimes called panakeia. She was the greek Goddess of healing (the cure not the journey of healing). A mess of papers and architect's blueprints and receipts as well as correspondence from various Monseignors of the church, builders and merchants.

The codec itself wrapped carefully and hidden in a false compartment behind the shelves and drawers. Scribed on one letter, on the back in Ancient Greek, is "This is it, this is the place. " The letter discusses an altar and something about a knight placing "it" here to reside for huundreds of years.

A *Thorough Search* (1 hour)

will reveal the wherabouts of the previous important items;

Bench - A flask labelled (in greek) the elixir of heroes. There are 7 draughts left using the measuring spoon. Consuming one draught gives the characters 3 luck points. Further drafts past one bestow no further effects.

Braziers - A brazier in each corner of the room.

Burlap sacks – Yes that dark grain is indeed gunpowder and salt petre. It is not yet properly refined but they can certainly take some with them if they wish.

Glass jars – One such jar is labelled ' Elixir od Samson' and has what appears to be the phallus of some animal floating in it. This potion has no effect but does taste truly disgusting. The penis is from an ox.

Large Book - The alchemical tome with arcane symbols upon the outside and many of the scripts are in various ancient languages, some are spells of protection and spells to ensnare a lover. Most are ingredients for various exlixirs and potions.

Glass ware - Racks of odd glass ware.

Candles -One large black candle has a rune that is only visible when lit. If the 5 surrounding candles are lit when this happens the person lighting them can concentrate for a few moments and see in the flames, the face of one person they think of, as long as that person is still alive. This works everytime the candle is lit.

Odd ingredients - Various pigeon holes and drawers either locked or brimming over with foul smelling substances. Most of these are merely gone off but as mentioned a few are down right dangerous and many are the ingredients of potions including the potion of the 'panacea'.

The Correspondence

Depending on how long the characters spend reading the correspondance, they will find out the following;

A *Quick Glance* (5 mins):

The old Alchemist was seemingly very concerned about the restoration of a small church called Santi Apostoli.

The Church is close by in Florence city.

A Closer Look (30 mins)

He went to a lot of bother to have it redecorated, convincing Cardinals, Bishops, architects and artists to have it temporarily closed and refurbished.

1. He was busy taking out loans and scrounging up money from Bankers, donators and Merchant houses.
2. Apart from touching up the wood work etc, he has received donations etc to pay for new frescoes and a goldsmith to re-work the Altar. In fact quite a lot of detail surrounds the altar and its design etc. He seemed rather concerned about it. He has hired a man named Baccio D'Aggnolo to alter the altar and over see the addition of a new bell tower and our own dear artist to paint the new frescoes.

Goal: Find the clues to the location of the Philosopher's stone.

Opposition: Race against time if the characters are hurt.

Setting: The guild house laboratory.

Tie-In: The correspondence in the Alchemist's lab.

Notes: The golden liquid referred to as the 'Panacea' will restore lost hit points that are injuries of the flesh. It will cure only a few hit points and only one will work per person no matter how many they swallow. It will cure; cuts, bruises, scratches, boils, pimples, rashes, open sores and gouges or other similar punctures of the flesh. It will not cure; diseases, insanity, heart problems, broken bones, stop haemorrhaging, repair nerves, cure poison etc. None-the-less, there is enough raw material in here to help with first aid, cleaning and binding wounds etc.

This is a creation of the old man himself, though he failed in his original desire, it is a modest healing 'potion', far beyond anything else of its day.

4. Where Do We Look?

Crisis – Decisive Moment

Once the characters are done cleaning their wounds, they might decide to help the servants but chances are they'll ignore them.

What they do not as of yet notice is that they are being watched and have been so for a few hours at this stage. Their stalkers are of two different factions: 1) House de Medici 2) Church agents under the guidance of ...Bishop Maldini!

Let the players decide what they want to do. About a bell (1 hour) after the fight with the thugs, the characters are approached (wherever that might be) by an unarmed young man in dark clothes.

He refers to them by name or at least to either the Courtesan (Giulia) or to the alchemist's son (Vincenzo). He declares 'I have a writ of some import Sir'.

After handing it over he leaves directly, though not hastily. The letter is flattened and sealed in red wax with no mark.

If they stop him and demand who gave him this writ, he just says that he is a messenger and he gets paid to deliver not to ask questions. Besides by the time they open the letter and read it he should be away.

The letter reads:

"If you ever want to see the Alchemist Murreto alive, again, then meet us at Dawn at the Church of Santi Apostoli, opposite the Piazza del limbo. Bring the Philosopher's stone and come alone. If you deviate from this plan then the Old man will be killed."

If the players wish, they may arrive at the Church well before dawn and stake it out or begin their search. In any case it is plain that the kidnapper seems to think that they possess the philosopher's stone. It should also be evident at this point that, it resides somewhere in the church.

Goal: decide on the next course of action, get to the church and find the

Opposition: The unseen kidnapper. The players also need to find the Stone as fast as possible.

Setting: Possibly the street.

Tie-In: The letter from the kidnapper delivered by messenger.

Notes: The Church of Santi Apostoli is in fact a real church in Florence. It was built in the 11th century and was believed to have been founded by Charlemagne and his paladin Roland. It is a small, unassuming church and one of the few churches to maintain its Romanesque and high medieval features.

Across from the church is an actual area called the Piazza del limbo – a cemetery for babies who died before receiving the sacrament of baptism. If you want to add another worldly feel to this part of the encounter then you can describe the Piazza as feeling oddly still and unnerving.

The church is closed. Not all churches actually keep their doors open all the time. This one is about to undergo reconstruction.

Outside the church the players will at once spot the following details:

1. Bell - There is a comparatively small bronze bell, currently elevated on a wooden and brick framework with ropes attached.
2. Donkey - A small donkey is tied to a post sleeping. It explains the donkey shit everywhere.

3. Building materials - There are bricks, lime, sand, shovels, hawk and trowel (for plastering – the hawk is the flat board to hold the mortar) etc.

4. Graveyard – There is a graveyard for children who died before they were baptised across the street. It is said to be haunted. Any one entering there with ill intention loses 2 luck points. Should they conduct themselves in a violent manner or other wise 'inappropriate manner' e.g., spilling blood, fighting etc then the restless souls may very well become displeased. . .

They will have to force the door open. There are no shortage of tools about. This does bring up a possible moral quandary: Italians are quite religious, even more so in renaissance Florence.

After they break into the church by whatever means they will note :

1. Church interior - that the church is very small.

2. Altar - The altar is in the far left corner and not towards the centre as they might imagine. Statues – There are many statues of saints and holy knights along the walls of the church.

3. Sheets – Much of the furnishings are covered with sheets to protect them from the up coming construction.

4. Knight – There is a statue of a namless knight. This knight is the paladin Roland.

Should a character pray genuinely at his feet, or indeed any one of the others give them a bonus to an appropriate stat. e.g praying at the knights feet might give a will bonus or dodge, praying at a saint's feet might give them a luck bonus or healing check bonus or perhaps a wisdom check or should they pray for guidance when looking for the stone, then perhaps a bonus to their perception...

The plan, with a nave and two aisles with a semicircular apse, shows Palaeo-Christian influences. It has green marble columns from Prato. The ceiling is wooden and richly decorated. Unassuming it might be from the outside but much of the inside is exquisite and with the intended alterations it will be truly remarkable.

They will need to spend a time searching for the stone – at least 30 mins.

As suggested before it is hidden behind the altar itself and under a flagstone. The stone has been here a long time and was placed here by Roland. The seam is as such undisturbed and very hard to spot. It might also cause a minor moral dilemma – it could be construed as desecrating a church, though it is about to undergo reconstruction. It make some time and effort to dig the stone up and Dawn is fast approaching.

Within this secret cavity lies a plain wooden chest banded with iron, though remarkably neither the iron nor the wood has been effected much by the ravages of time.

The stone itself is a glass sphere, about fist sized and as it is removed from the box it captivates the eye such is it's beauty. Deep within the glass there seem to be a swirling mass of soe magenta colured substance which deepens towards the core and forms and eye. The person holding it can feel a dull throb, pulsing from it and coursing down their arm, the feeling fading before it reaches the elbow.

The Philosopher's stone was commonly believed to grant the bearer a host of powers including the transformation of base metals into gold and silver and the production of a panacea but in fact it merely boosted or amplified the knowledge of the alchemist to an astounding degree. There fore allowing them to truly comprehend the secrets of alchemy.

5. A Florentine stand off.

Climax – Confrontation

Goal: To escape the Mexican stand off with or without the stone!

Opposition: The bishop and his thugs and the agents of House de Medici.

Setting: The church of Santi Apostoli, Florence.

Tie-In: The correspondence that led to here.

Notes:

This scene is perfect for action and comedy. Because it is a stand-off between three different parties and it's basically a construction site there is plenty of room for Pirate of the Caribbean style action as the stone rolls across beams and passes from hand to hand.

The agent working for the Medici household - Filippo Morenzo – the banker himself enters mere seconds after they retrieve the Philosopher's stone. He has ten armed and armoured men with him. He congratulates the characters on doing so well but then apologizes that he will have to relieve them of their burden.

He has brought Vincenzo's father and all they need to do is swap him over.

Of course he fully intends to set his men upon them once they hand the stone over. They can still make the swap.

Then he begins his gloat.

"With this my master can bank roll the Pope, buy the favour of heaven, relaunch the crusades, build a thousand churches to honour God and bankrupt his enemies. Live forever and grant great power to those who are ever loyal to him. .."

Before he has the chance to finish his rant he is interrupted.

"Not so fast you Medici toad."

It is none other than Bishop Giani Maldini and six armed knights of the church. Swords drawn they advance and pause a few paces away.

"Your master must be as ignorant as you are. Don't you know that you need to know how to make a formula to use its power? Have a talented alchemist tucked up his sleeve does he?"

The mercenary Banker replies :

"Why yes he does of course and further more he has the will and vision to use such a wondrous artefact. What will you do with it? Make yourself Pope? You short sighted petty man. You shall never know greatness. "

At this point the Bishop addresses the courtesan in whatever seems appropriate, she is his niece.

Perhaps something like "Well my dear, be a good girl and retrieve the stone bring it here, I shall not forget this."

The agents of de Medici will play their card addressing Francesco, the hapless merchant who they framed, killing the courtesan as they both slept.

"Francesco, my master will be willing to over - look the disagreement between the two of you, all you have to do is reach out and take it, bring it here and stand with us. "

Both side don't really want to fight, they would prefer treachery but both sides will certainly attack each other and are not afraid of spilling blood... a lot of it!

6. Forked Road or End game?

Resolution – Outcome

Will the players wait till one side attacks to escape or will they first side with one party or the other?

A fight will mean the clashing of swords, people slipping in donkey poo and drawing attention as the noise from the fight and the now braying donkey echoe through the night of sleepy Florence.

The Bishop is less likely to kill them all outright. Then will they choose merely to escape, or to escape with the old Alchemist and or the philosopher's stone?

If they escape what will they do next? The de Medici are the most important and influential family in Florence and maybe even all of Italy. They will be forced to pick sides after all even if they do escape. If they escape with the stone then they will be in grave danger as they will be hunted relentlessly.

Goal: Escape the church alive and or with the stone and Alchemist.

Opposition: The Bishop's men and the agents of House de Medici.

Setting: The church grounds of Santi Apostoli, Florence.

Notes: If you really want to make the last fight scene very confusing you can add more minions from other interested parties and even the priest of the church might happen along because of all the activity.

Characters' descriptions and back ground

Brother Alberto - the alchemist's apprentice.

Age: 35

Physical description: A small man with an insatiable hunger for knowledge. His soft hands are stained from the many chemicals he dabbles with and his eyes are squinty from the strain of pouring over alchemical tomes in naught but candle night.

You have studied the divine sciences all of your life. Alas, for many in this new era, now scoff at their potential not to mention their practice. The church does not hinder your work. Indeed it seems that on a rare occasion you have been the recipient of a mysterious benefactor's good will. This mysterious person has yet to reveal themselves but you believe it is some one amongst the church who smiles upon your work and that of Alchemist Brunetti.

Brunetti has been blessed by God with a vast intellect and a good family back ground that allows him fianance his work. You help him as much as you can and what an education it has been!

Though often highly secretive you believe he has almost finished his master piece – a true Panakeia, that which the ignorant would call a Philosopher's stone. The stone - as one so steeped in Alkymkal lore such as your self knows – would serve to amplify a scholars knowledge. Both are prizes worthy of a life of devotion.

Alas for poor Master Brunetti, for though God has blessed him in so many ways, he has cursed him with a drunken lout of a son who indulges shamelessly in pleasure of a carnal nature.

Still for you that means that the Masters work will be entrusted to you. You strive to make yourself worthy of such a breath -taking gift.

Squire Vincenzo Brunetti – the Alchemist's errant son.

Age: 25

Physical description: A handsome young man of athletic build. His hair is carefully oiled and his nails manicured. His eyes are a dark brown and full of the fiery passion of youth. His carriage bespeaks of a man in his prime who has all the self assuredness and arrogance that comes with being an excellent duelist and blades master.

Damn his eyes any ways. What is the meaning of delivering an 'urgent writ' in the middle of one's break in the country side? There you were, hot in the pursuit of the lovely (not to mention very wealthy) Lady Angelina, niece of the Duc of Lombardy's Castillian.

Besides you fully intent to take the lovely young lady's maidenhead and win that fine wager.

You do relish a challenge. It better be good news. Perhaps he has come in to a vast fortune? That would be excellent, then you wouldn't feel so bad about touching him up for some more funds – you appear to have had another bad streak on the cards. Actually that's a lie, you'd never feel bad about asking for more cash. Still though it would be nice if it was about money.

You'd feel better about meeting him if you had a glass of red in you, or better still – a flagon! Ha!

Might help you stomach that so called "apprentice" of his. What age is that man? Why is he still and apprentice? Don't they stop being apprentices at ...14 or so? Damned alchemists!

Still, all that said he is your father and he is more than tolerant with you. Wouldn't hurt to hear what he has to rant about.

Besides, there is no way around it really is there? What with your tutor having received the letter first and insisting that you leave straight away. Clever move admittedly.

Ah well, at least the wine will flow, the old man can stock a cellar, that's for sure.

Paolo de Bonati - The Alchemist's old friend and his son's long suffering tutor.

Age: 45

Physical description: A strong, broad man with brown hair now greying at the temples and nape, lending him a most distinguished look. His dark eyes are quick and glittering with intelligence. The corner of his mouth is a skein of crows feet, evidence of his excellent sense of humour. The furrows almost carved in to

his brow attest to the same for his patience as a tutor.

Though strong and broad, he is light on his feet and still tutors the art of the duel as well as Philosophy, Greek and riding.

When your old friend approached you to tutor his wild son, you were deeply honoured. After all, he was like a mentor to you when you were younger not to mention a drinking buddy. Hard to believe that Edmundo once had a modicum of adventurous spirit in him. You suppose that's where the son got it from, it certainly wasn't from his poor lady mother, may she rest in peace.

Still it was a job many other Tutors had failed at. Vincenzo was a handful, a demon from the depths of some pit in hell others said. What utter nonsense.

Head strong to be sure, prone to drunkenness? Certainly. Frequently lecherous? Absolutely but you see past that. He is a fine athlete and duelist and his mind is as sharp as his blade when needs be.

Still it occupies your days, having never had any children of your own, so in a way he is like your own son. You are looking forward to what Edmundo has to say? What could be so important. Doubtless some Portuguese trader has returned from Goa or Indonesia or some such, bearing the skull of a Witch doctor of some dread tribe of cannibals. Hmmm... maybe this will be an interesting dinner after all.

Giulia Algeiri - The Courtesan, the apprentices sister, and niece to Bishop Maldini.

Age: 25

Physical description: Giulia's silky, brown curls tumble down her back and her smile could melt an ice berg. Blessed with beauty and a keen mind, she is slim of hip alas, leading her Uncle to despair for finding her a husband.

When your Uncle, Bishop Giani Maldini summoned you, you thought nothing of it. When he produced a letter, in the hand of the renowned and eccentric scholar and alchemist, who was rejoicing over some secret revelation, you were practically seething with curiosity.

That your Uncle wished you to attend the dinner in his stead, was the best news you had had in months. Thank the lord for matters of the cloth keeping him occupied that evening.

A dinner with alchemists, scholars and who knows what else! Worldly men, full of wit and charm and most of all fascinating stories and secrets. Of course your Uncle had chosen well, out of all his retainers and family, who else could converse with more confidence on matters pertaining to elixirs and Philosophy and geometry? Your brother obviously but knowing him, he is too busy holed up with the Alchemist himself to stir from that dark hole they call a lab.

Knowing your Uncle, he is probably hoping you will meet some young beau there worthy of your hand. Now to give your hand maidens the slip, can't have them spoiling your fun and reporting back every juicy morsel now, can we? You intend to have a fine time of it, even if your saintly brother is there and that's that.

You've been reading up on all the greats and their ideas as well as some more conventional

schools of thoughts as well.

This will be a night to remember if only your brother doesn't.....hmm well plenty of wine and ego stroking will take care of that...

Giovanni Marras – A struggling artist seeking the patronage of the missing alchemist and caught between him and house de Medici.

Age: 24

Physical description: Medium height, hunch shouldered and timid you are naturally shy except when discussing your art or indeed that of any of the great masters. Though you have bad posture you have a fair enough face and a steady hand with a brush, soft brown eyes and a face people seem to trust.

You've had dreadful luck recently. In fact you are convinced you've never known any good luck. Perhaps you were born under a bad sign? Hmm wasn't the sun in Virgo? Nevermind that! Concentrate. Master Brunetti has written to you of a great project he wants undertaken, he has seen your work and believes your talent was delivered by God himself to you in the womb.

Praise the lord, work! It's hard to get the work these days. It's not about talent at all, it's all about how much influence you have and who you know. That damned De Medici never even replied to your petition!

There is always the church of course which is what Master Brunetti pointed out, was the new commission.

Odd you hadn't heard of any new major church works being commissioned. None the less, you will wear your finest clothes tonight, laugh at his jokes and eat every last bite. Another perk, fine food and wine!

Dear lord, let this work out for you, this really is your last chance. That damned Murretti will have you knee caps if you don't get some coin soon!

Francesco di Brunetti – A hapless minor merchant, related to the alchemist.

Age: 29

Physical description: Tall and handsome, you keep your beard trimmed and your teeth white. Your twinkling eyes see all and your sharp mind excels in areas of finance and deal making. You are healthy and fit and as your lean limbed body suggests, you enjoy horse riding and hunting.

It's been a bad month. The girl seemed like an angel. She glided into your life. You should have known she was bad news, that easy smile, those sensuous breasts, those tantalizing curves, those lips kissing...well...everywhere.

Who did she work for? What did she want? Irrelevant.

Some one murdered her beside you in bed, as you both slept. Had you not awoken from a bad dream you would have been found beside her corpse by the chamber maid in the morning, covered in her blood.

You are convinced God sent you the dream, he truly works in mysterious ways.

You fled, still half drunk and filled with confusion and fear. Is it possible that the de Medicis would go so far? How much do they really want that contract you recently procured? Bad enough to kill an innocent girl it seems. Ok well ... not so innocent but still.

What was in that contract anyways ..? Odd chemicals, very odd indeed, massive amounts too. Now why would any one need so much of the tools of an alchemist's trade?

You wrote to your cousin Edmundo, a good soul and asked to meet with him to discuss it. He of course was delighted to do so and declared that he had something vital to announce to you that you should join him for dinner.

Well you will have to explain some of it to him and ask him can he keep you safe for a while.

He will for he knows that family is important. He is a good soul indeed.