

JERRY STRATTON
www.jerrystratton.com

A NEW ALCHEMY

Copyright © 1998 Jerry Stratton

Pages: 10 comic, 22 script

NOTE TO EDITOR: If it is necessary to divide this story into installments, it can be done as follows: Father Mat's arrival (pages 1-3), the witch's sacrament of confession (pages 4-6), and the witch's trial (pages 7-10).

NOTE TO PENCILLER: This story takes place in 1629 in Würzburg, Germany. I've provided examples of clothing and architecture. Feel free to use your own references for additional color if you have them.

1629 was not a plague year in Würzburg, but the plague was present. Likewise, there was no war in Würzburg, but the Thirty Years' War was raging elsewhere in Germany, and would overtake Würzburg in 1631. At this time, Würzburg is Catholic, and under the German emperor's rule.

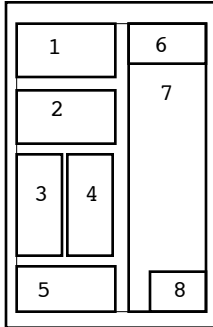
I've provided the following references:

1. Clothing and architectural period references.
2. Photocopies of woodcuts from Francesco-Maria Guazzo's Compendium Maleficarum for use in the CREDITS, Page 1, Panel 1, and as a guide for the depiction of witch activities on page 9.

NOTE TO LETTERER: When Father MAT writes letters, the text should be shown in mixed case, using an elegant handwriting style.

PAGE 1

Panels 2, 5, and 7 are all part of the same letter.



PANEL 1. Use the woodcut samples I've sent you as an example of what I want in the background of this panel.

1. TITLE: A NEW ALCHEMY
2. CREDITS

PANEL 2. This is a letter, written on a wooden desk. Father MAT'S hand and quill are visible. The edge of the ink pot might be. MAT'S hand is visible just up to the sleeve, which is a black robe (see references for Jesuit clothing). Father MAT is middle-aged, and a scholar, not a laborer.

3. LETTER: Dearest Mother: I am writing you from my new office in the University. It is small and cramped, but it is – Deo Gratias! – mine.
We arrived in Würzburg this morning.

PANEL 3. This view is from a hundred yards or so behind and to the right of a black carriage as it approaches the city gates of Würzburg. Farmers leading horses, pigs, cattle, and chickens are also moving towards the gates. It is morning. Just outside the gates, to the right, barely visible in the distance, is what looks like a copse of oddly misshapen small trees: the site of the witch burnings of the previous evening. The site is isolated from the small homes and hovels that otherwise cluster about the outside of the city. Inside the city (beyond the walls), only a few buildings are two-story or more. A large cathedral is just visible towards the center of the city. (See the example of the Mainz cathedral, as well as the pictures of modern Würzburg cathedral.) For the CAPTION, use a woodcut.

4. CAP: THE CITY OF WÜRZBURG IN GERMANY, AUGUST 1629

PANEL 4. This view is from just behind and to the right of the carriage. FATHER MAT is visible in the window, looking ahead anxiously. A crucifix is tied to the front of the right side of the carriage. The view of the city, and the witch-forest, is the same as above. Father MAT is middle-aged, 38 years old, with just slightly graying brown hair. He is medium height, five foot, eight inches, and just barely overweight. His face is only barely showing the signs of approaching old age.

PANEL 5. This is the LETTER of PANEL 2, continued.

5. LETTER: I meet with Friedrich this evening. You remember Father von Spee? I haven't seen him for four years. We have much to discuss.

PANEL 6. This is the LETTER of PANEL 5, continued. It speaks about PANEL 7, below it.

6. LETTER: As we entered Würzburg, we passed the place of executions. It resembled a small wood from the number of stakes, and yet hundreds more are known guilty. Thousands are suspected.

PANEL 7. A close-up of the site of executions. There are 28 witches on the stakes (you don't need to show them all), amid a larger number of stakes. Four are on a flat trailer, drawn by a single, scrawny horse. One witch is being taken down by three grubby workers – they are used to this, and are immune to the grotesqueness of what they are doing. Two of the 28 were burned alive; the rest were strangled first. Since all were burnt, though, it'll be a subtle difference. Take minor liberties to show this difference, if you can: the two who were burned alive died in immense pain, and struggled as they died.

PANEL 8. This is the end of the letter started in PANEL 2 and continued in PANELS 5 and 6.

7. LETTER: Both High and Low are suspected. All of Würzburg searches frantically for the Contract of the Fraw Renberg, containing the signatures of 8,000 who have given themselves to Satan. Truly, his armies are Legion.

Your son and servant in God,
Bernard
August 8

PAGE 2

This page takes place in Father FRIEDRICH VON SPEE'S office. It is sparsely decorated. The walls are stone; there is no window. The door is small and wooden. Father VON SPEE is about the same age as Father MAT, 39 years old. He is thin, with graying black hair. He is showing signs of age a bit more than Father MAT.

PANEL 1. Father MAT has just walked in the door. Father VON SPEE looks up. He welcomes Father MAT as an old friend.

1. VON SPEE: GUTENTAG, BERNARD. HOW WAS YOUR TRIP?
2. MAT: NAH, GUT. I'D HEARD YOU HAD A PROBLEM HERE, BUT I DIDN'T REALIZE HOW BAD, UNTIL I SAW THE GOLGOTHA OUTSIDE THE GATES.

PANEL 2. VON SPEE sighs and is holding back some anger. MAT doesn't notice this.

3. VON SPEE: YES, IT'S A TRAGEDY.
4. MAT: HOW CLOSE ARE WE TO FINDING THE BOOK? I AM ANXIOUS TO—
5. VON SPEE: THE BOOK? WHAT?

PANEL 3. MAT explains to VON SPEE. VON SPEE is disappointed with Father MAT'S credulity.

6. MAT: WHEN I WAS AT THE GATE, THE GUARDS SEARCHED US FOR A BOOK, A CONTRACT, THE FRAW RENBERG?
7. VON SPEE: OH, THAT. I SUSPECT THAT THE CONTRACT WAS A 'SPECTRAL' CONTRACT, AND WILL NOT BE FOUND BY MEN.

PANEL 4. MAT is confused.

8. MAT: BUT SURELY IF IT WAS SIGNED BY HAND, IT IS A REAL DOCUMENT?
9. VON SPEE: IN THE REALM OF WITCHES, NOTHING IS REAL EXCEPT THE CONFESSIONS OF THE... ACCUSED, AND THE FIRE AT THE STAKE.

PANEL 5. VON SPEE changes the subject slightly. He is planning something, and the look on his face shows it. MAT catches a few of the vibes, but mostly ignores it.

10. VON SPEE: BERNARD, I AM CALLED AWAY TOMORROW, AND REQUIRE HELP IN THESE TRIALS.

11. MAT: CERTAINLY! I AM EAGER TO START, FRIEDRICH. THIS IS A BATTLE WE CANNOT AFFORD TO LOSE.

PANEL 6. VON SPEE is annoyed at his friend's ardor. This is a close-up on VON SPEE.

12. VON SPEE: ...YES. I NEED YOU TO TAKE THE FINAL CONFESSIONS OF TWO WHO HAVE REPENTED.

PANEL 7. MAT is disappointed and trying unsuccessfully not to show it. This is a close-up on him.

13. MAT: OH... YES, FRIEDRICH. PLEASE.

PAGE 3

Father MAT is at dinner with a few other priests. Father von Spee is not among them. PANELS 1 and 5 are a LETTER, similar to that on PAGE 1.

PANEL 1. This is the start of the LETTER.

1. LETTER: Dearest Mother: Tonight I dined with Frs. Flade and Schuyler at an inn here. The Proprietor is a wonderful man, and gave us our meal at no charge, as a gift to God.

PANEL 2. Fathers MAT, FLADE, and SCHUYLER sit at a table in a simple inn, eating. Each has a tankard of wine. There are three other tables in the inn, each with one to three people. There is one WAITRESS, carrying two tankards. She is young (about 16), slightly plump, with brown hair.

2. MAT: FRIEDRICH BELIEVES WE'LL NEVER FIND THE FRAW RENBERG CONTRACT.
3. SCHUYLER: FATHER MAT, LET'S NOT DISCUSS THAT HERE.
4. FLADE: IT'S NOT AN APPROPRIATE TIME—

PANEL 3. Father MAT is surprised at their reaction. SCHUYLER and FLADE would rather just eat. They're uncomfortable speaking about this subject. The WAITRESS is speaking to her father, the PROPRIETOR. The PROPRIETOR is overweight, dressed very well, and balding.

5. FLADE: —AND FATHER VON SPEE IS NOT NECESSARILY THINKING CLEARLY ON THE SUBJECT.
6. MAT: WHAT DO YOU MEAN? I'VE ALWAYS HELD FRIEDRICH'S OPINIONS IN HIGH REGARD.
7. SCHUYLER: TO THE MEAL, FATHER MAT!

PANEL 4. The PROPRIETOR is speaking with the WAITRESS, and pointing at the priests. The WAITRESS is obviously tired. The PROPRIETOR is slightly worried.

8. PROPRIETOR: KEEP THEIR TANKARDS FULL, LAURA. WE DON'T WANT THEM ANGRY WITH US.
9. LAURA: THAT'S A NEW ONE, ISN'T HE?
10. PROPRIETOR: A FATHER MAT, I BELIEVE; CAME IN FROM THE HESSE LAST NIGHT.

PANEL 5. The EXECUTIONER walks in, dressed in finery. His wife is by his side, also dressed in fine clothes. They are dressed in purple and red brocades with gold and silver lining. (Since this is black and white, of course, you'll have to imply this!) The EXECUTIONER is an overweight, balding, middle-aged man. MAT glances at them in surprise. SCHUYLER and FLADE continue eating.

11. MAT: NOBLES, HERE?

12. SCHUYLER: THE HANGMAN. I THINK HE'S INTERESTED IN THE PROPRIETOR'S DAUGHTER.

PANEL 6. SCHUYLER is smiling, MAT is curious about how this situation is going to develop. FLADE is more interested in his food.

13. MAT: A BIT BENEATH HIS STATION, ISN'T SHE?

14. SCHUYLER: I THINK HIS WIFE FEELS THE SAME.

15. FLADE: BUSINESS...

16. SFX (FLADE Eating): CHOMP

17. FLADE: ...HAS BEEN GOOD FOR HIM.

PANEL 7. This scene is a close up of MAT. He has a pensive look on his face. He suddenly realizes that, of course, business *would* be good for executioners.

16. MAT (thought): I GUESS NOT ALL WHO FIGHT LUCIFER NEED DO SO IN POVERTY.

PAGE 4

This page (except PANEL 1) takes place in the jail. Father MAT is visiting the condemned witches that Father von Spee asked him to visit. The jail is a wooden structure, strong but quickly made. See the sample copy of the *Bamburg* witch-house. Father MAT is wearing simple black priest robes.

PANEL 1. Father MAT is kneeling before a cross hanging on the wall in his office.

1. MAT: LORD, GRANT ME THE WISDOM TO AID THESE PEOPLE IN THEIR BATTLE AGAINST YOUR ENEMY.

PANEL 2. Father MAT is entering the jail. A sign above the door reads "HEXENHAUS". A GUARD, wearing simple armor and a sword, greets him.

2. GUARD: FATHER! WHAT BRINGS YOU HERE?

3. MAT: I AM FATHER BERNARD MAT. FATHER VON SPEE HAS ASKED ME TO TAKE HIS CONFESSIONS TODAY. I UNDERSTAND THERE ARE TWO REPENTANT WITCHES?

4. GUARD: ONLY ONE, FATHER. THE YOUNGER DIED LAST NIGHT.

PANEL 3. The GUARD is shaking his head. Father MAT is questioning him, confused.

5. MAT: DIED? INSIDE THE CELL?

6. GUARD: BROKEN NECK. HANGMAN LECH SAYS, HER LITTLE MASTER BEAT HER IN REVENGE FOR CONFESSING.

PANEL 4. Father MAT is taken aback. This is a smaller panel, a close-up of Father MAT.

7. MAT: MY GOD, SATAN IS EVERYWHERE!

PANEL 5. This is a smaller, close-up panel as well. Father MAT makes a simple sign of the cross.

8. MAT: MAY GOD REST HER SOUL. AT LEAST, SHE DIED REPENTANT.

9. CAP: THE OTHER IS THIS WAY, FATHER.

PANEL 6. This panel 'faces' PANEL 7 (and has to be on the same level as PANEL 7)—this panel is Father MAT, and he's facing the condemned WITCH in PANEL 7. They're both sitting in simple wooden, low-backed chairs.

10. MAT: YOU HAVE CONFESSED TO WITCHCRAFT. IF YOU HAVE ANY SINS TO REPENT, YOU SHOULD DO SO NOW.

PANEL 7. The WITCH is facing Father MAT (in PANEL 6), and is in quite bad shape. She's been tortured. She's wearing a short, simple dress. Her legs are swelled and red, her fingertips are mangled, some of her fingers have no nails. She cannot sit up straight due to the pain in her back. She's middle aged, but of course looks quite older due to what she's been through. In short, she looks a lot like the stereotypical old hag. The hard, wooden chair she's sitting on is a lot more uncomfortable for her than for Father MAT.

11. WITCH: FATHER, I HAVE LIED.

PANEL 8. A close up on MAT. He's rolling his eyes. There is almost a smirk on his face. He was expecting such horrible things, and she is confessing to some petty untruth.

12. MAT (thought): LORD, WHAT VENIALITY.

PAGE 5

This page is entirely made up of the confession of the WITCH to FATHER MAT.

PANEL 1. Father MAT admonishes the WITCH for worrying about such small things, given the magnitude of the crimes she's committed. The WITCH is very scared. She's going to die soon, and she needs God's forgiveness for her *real* sins.

1. MAT: UNTRUTHS ARE CERTAINLY AMONG THE LEAST OF YOUR SINS, WOMAN.
2. WITCH: FATHER, MY LIES HAVE SENT FIVE TO TORTURE AS WITCHES. I NEED GOD'S FORGIVENESS.

PANEL 2. A close-up on Father MAT. He's astonished and trying not to show it.

3. MAT: WHAT?

PANEL 3. The WITCH is sobbing softly, her head in her hands. Remember that she's stiff from her tortures. She's facing (except that her head is down) Father MAT in PANEL 4.

4. WITCH: FATHER, NONE OF THOSE I NAMED ARE GUILTY OF ANY SINS TO MY KNOWLEDGE. I DO NOT EVEN KNOW THEM. GRANT THAT MY SOUL REST IN PEACE!

PANEL 4. Father MAT is stern, standing before her (facing her in PANEL 3).

5. MAT: WOMAN, YOU MUST RECANT THAT TESTIMONY. FORGIVENESS DEMANDS IT.

PANEL 5. This is a close-up on the WITCH'S tortured face. She screams her answer.

6. WITCH: NO!

PANEL 6. Father MAT sits back down. His face is twisted between disbelief and anger. MAT and the WITCH are practically in silhouette. The view is from about eight feet away, seeing both of them, and the two torches in sconces on each corner of the room behind them. The room is simple stones, with wooden supports.

7. MAT: YOU ARE LYING NOW. I DON'T BELIEVE... WHY DID YOU ACCUSE THEM, IF THEY ARE INNOCENT?

PANEL 7. This is a close-up of the WITCH, from Father MAT'S perspective (thus, she's looking straight up at the READER). She's about to explain, but isn't sure she should.

NO DIALOGUE

PAGE 6

This page is the WITCH'S soapbox. Try to be as expressive as possible with the WITCH, while maintaining the simplicity of features that draws the READER into identifying with the WITCH.

PANEL 1. The WITCH is looking down again. This is a view of only her body. Father MAT is not in this panel.

1. WITCH: I WAS ASKED ABOUT THEM SO OFTEN, I COULD NOT HELP BUT SEE WHO IT WAS HE WANTED ME TO ACCUSE. SO I DID. ANYTHING TO END THE TORTURE. BUT I KNOW NOTHING ABOUT THEM, BAD OR GOOD.

PANEL 2. The WITCH is looking up at Father MAT, in response to his statement. She is pleading with him.

2. MAT (OP): IF WHAT YOU SAY IS TRUE, YOU SHOULD TELL THE COMMISSIONER.
3. WITCH: I BEGGED THE COMMISSIONER TO STRIKE OUT THEIR NAMES! HE ANSWERED THAT IF I DECLARED THEM INNOCENT I MUST BE PUT TO THE TEST AGAIN.

PANEL 3. The WITCH is pulling up her short, prison dress even further, pointing at her tortured legs. Again, Father MAT is not visible in the panel – this is a view of the WITCH.

4. WITCH: FATHER, LOOK AT MY LEGS! THEY ARE LIKE FIRE! I COULD NOT STAND SO MUCH AS A FLY TOUCHING THEM! I WOULD RATHER A HUNDRED TIMES DIE THAN SUBMIT TO THE TORTURE AGAIN.

PANEL 4. This is a close-up on Father MAT. He is frozen in surprise and fear. His mouth hangs open just a bit, and a fly buzzes around his eyes.

NO DIALOGUE

PANEL 5. The WITCH is begging Father MAT, pulling at the hem of his robes. Father MAT is only partially in this panel.

5. WITCH: I BESEECH YOU, FOR GOD'S SAKE, HELP ME BE SAVED! I HAVE BEEN FORCED TO CLAIM THAT I HAVE TAKEN PART IN THE MOST TERRIBLE CRIMES, FORCED TO DENOUNCE PEOPLE I HAVE NEVER MET! I KNOW I MUST DIE, BUT GRANT GOD'S FORGIVENESS ON MY SOUL!

PANEL 6. This panel shows Father MAT, from the front, leaving the room. The WITCH, behind him, is crawling on the floor, sobbing, reaching out to him to stay.

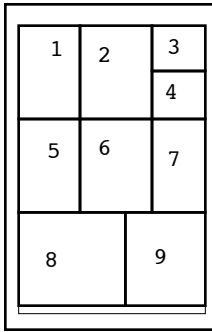
6. MAT (thought): THIS POOR WOMAN IS CONFUSED OR OBSTINATE.

7. WITCH: FATHER!

8. WITCH (to self): GOD HELP ME.

PAGE 7

Father MAT and Father VON SPEE are in a private writing room at the University. There are nice wooden tables, reasonably soft chairs, and a window to the outside. They are drinking wine from simple wooden cups, and have a glass bottle of wine on the table.



It is early evening, and the setting sun is visible.

Sample Page Layout

PANEL 1. Father MAT, as usual, is the more anxious one. Father VON SPEE is resigned, but angry.

1. VON SPEE: WHAT WOULD YOU EXPECT OF HER, BERNARD? IF SHE RECANTS, SHE'LL BE SENT BACK TO THE TORTURER; IF BRANDED UNREPENTANT SHE'LL BE BURNED ALIVE.
2. MAT: BUT FRIEDRICH! WHAT OF THE PEOPLE SHE'S ACCUSED? THEY COULD DIE!
3. VON SPEE: THEY WILL DIE, BERNARD.

PANEL 2. Father VON SPEE is angrily lecturing, using the bottle of wine to punctuate his statements. This panel is a view of VON SPEE from MAT's perspective.

4. VON SPEE: THIS IS CRIMEN EXCEPTUM, AND STRONG MEASURES ARE REQUIRED TO FIGHT IT. AND WHEN THEY'VE DIED, SEVERAL MORE SHALL DIE FROM THEIR CONFESSIONS, AND SEVERAL FOR EACH OF THEM, UND SO WEITER, UNTIL WÜRZBURG AND GERMANY ARE EMPTIED.

PANEL 3. This panel is Father MAT from VON SPEE'S perspective.

5. MAT: BUT HOW? WHAT KIND OF A CONSPIRACY IS THIS?

PANEL 4. A close-up of VON SPEE.

6. VON SPEE: IT'S NO CONSPIRACY, IT'S ONLY GREED.

PANEL 5. Father VON SPEE is lecturing again.

7. VON SPEE: EVERY CONFESSION IS GOLD IN THE EXECUTIONER'S POCKETS. EVERY TRIAL IS GOLD TO THE JUDGES AND THE PROSECUTORS.

PANEL 6. Father VON SPEE continues.

8. VON SPEE: WILL THE EXECUTIONER SHOW MERCY? SHALL THE JUDGES BE MORE LENIENT? THE PROSECUTORS LESS AMBITIOUS?

PANEL 7. Close-up on Father MAT. He's confused and taken aback by his friend's tirade.

9. MAT: I DON'T KNOW...

PANEL 8. Father VON SPEE pours another drink for himself and MAT.

10. VON SPEE: DO YOU THINK YOU'RE THE ONLY ONE TO SEE THIS? CORNELIUS LOOS SAW IT LAST CENTURY: "BY CRUEL BUTCHERY INNOCENT LIVES ARE TAKEN, AND BY A NEW ALCHEMY GOLD AND SILVER COINED FROM HUMAN BLOOD." HE WAS JAILED FOR HERESY, HIS BOOKS BURNED.

PANEL 9. The sun has set below the window sill, leaving it shaded in the room. This panel should be a close-up on VON SPEE, with the window visible behind him.

11. VON SPEE: WE ARE LIVING IN THE KINGDOM OF DEATH, AND THE EXECUTIONER RIDES A BLOODED HORSE.

PAGE 8

The trial takes place in a small wooden court reminiscent of our own traditional courtrooms. Father MAT is going through a crisis of conscious. He feels the urge to speak out, but knows it would lead almost certainly to his death. His LETTER intersperses with the panels. See the sample court trial drawing.

NOTE TO LETTERER: The main 'dialogue' on this page is Father MAT's LETTER. It should be similar to the LETTERS on the previous pages, but as an inset scroll. Father MAT is under some emotional stress, so his handwriting should be slightly worse than in the previous letters.

PANEL 1. In the courtroom are the JUDGE, the EXECUTIONER, the GUARD (the same one from PAGE 4, PANELS 3-4), the CLERK, and Father MAT. Father MAT is intrigued, worried, and a little scared. See the sample picture of a courtroom for details—it's a very simple room, not at all the standard courtroom of modern times. There is a desk for the judge, and some chairs for the others. The CLERK has a quill pen, an ink-pot, and some paper.

NOTE TO LETTERER: The word 'too' here is *actually underlined*, not bold: remember that this is a letter!

1. LETTER: Dearest, Loving Mother! I came to this city to see so much, and I have seen too much. I have become involved in the witch problem; so I asked an acquaintance in the courtroom, if I could view a trial.

PANEL 2. The JAILER is explaining the fate of the first accused to the JUDGE, marking it with hand gestures. The CLERK is writing this down.

2. LETTER: A convicted witch was called to the court to testify as to her accomplices; but she was already dead. The jailer said she was found with her neck broken. He did produce the list of those she named.

PANEL 3. The CLERK is diligently writing. This is a close-up on the CLERK, from the side. Behind him is Father MAT, with his hand to his chin, thinking. Do not show the paper that the CLERK is writing on—no need to show these words twice.

3. LETTER: The Judicial Report read "the Devil would not let her reveal any more, and so wrung her neck."

PANEL 4. A male WITCH has been brought out. He is held by the GUARD and a second GUARD. He cannot stand himself, because he has been tortured severely on the rack and other devices. His face is bruised and thin, and he is emaciated. The JUDGE is admonishing him strongly. The EXECUTIONER is folding his arms in disapproval.

4. **LETTER:** The next witch recanted his confession when he came out. The Judge took him to task—every time he leaves the Torturer, he rescinds his confession!

PANEL 5. The JUDGE is looking at the CLERK, and handing some papers to the CLERK, at the same time sentencing the WITCH to death. The WITCH is crying.

5. **LETTER:** He was sentenced to be burned alive, without benefit of hanging.

PANEL 6. A woman is being helped into the room by the GUARD. She is another female WITCH. She has been tortured by whip and finger-screws; this should be barely visible from our vantage point. Father MAT is deliberately looking away at this point.

6. **LETTER:** The last woman I saw (there were 6 witches brought before the Judge this day) had confessed to the most heinous crimes, all "without torture." Yet her fingers were torn, and the whip was plain on her skin.

PANEL 7. Father MAT is talking with the GUARD. The two are seen from a vantage point behind the EXECUTIONER, who is writing out a BILL.

7. **LETTER:** I asked my acquaintance how she could come about this without torture. Had she come this way to the Court? Had her Master done her in?

8. **BILL:** Bill, Tortures & Executions
1st degree: 1,26
2nd degree: 2,26
travel, expenses: 0,48
rope, stake, preparations: 2,0
strangling, burning: 4,0
disposing corpse: 1,26

PANEL 8. Do a close-up on the GUARD. He is matter-of-factly explaining the definition of *without torture*. The EXECUTIONER is handing the bill to the CLERK, as the CLERK hands a piece of paper to the JUDGE.

9. LETTER: "Oh," he replied, "that is only the 1st degree; compared to what could have been used, it is very light."

PANEL 9. At this point, we leave the dialogue-by-letter, and re-enter 'normal' comic-book dialogue. The JUDGE is reading from the paper handed to him by the CLERK, who is ready to write. Father MAT is trying to blend in with the background, having recognized the confessed WITCH as one of those who was falsely accused.

10. JUDGE: YOU HAVE BEEN ACCUSED OF WITCHCRAFT, AND HAVE CONFESSED TO SAME.

11. MAT (thought): SHE HAS BEEN ACCUSED FALSELY, AND YET HAS CONFESSED.

PAGE 9

Throughout this page, Father MAT is trying to be as inconspicuous as he can in a room of only a few people. His conscience is getting the better of him. In some panels I call for insets that show what the CLERK or JUDGE is describing. Use the woodcuts from the *Compendium Maleficarum* as examples. Border the woodcuts with wavy lines, or another appropriate means, to show that this is the way they think of the actions being described.

Most of these panels are focused on MAT. Even though the other characters are the only ones saying anything, they should still be basically background, while we focus on MAT'S crisis of conscience.

PANEL 1. The CLERK is poised to write on one of the papers in front of him. The EXECUTIONER is a bit tense. He's not absolutely sure she's going to keep going. The WITCH is just broken. She almost imperceptibly nods her assent. Father MAT has his hand to his chin again, thinking and nervous.

1. CLERK: DO YOU CONFIRM?
2. WITCH: YES.
3. MAT (thought): COULD IT BE TRUE ANYWAY? COULD IT BE GOD'S GUIDING HAND?

PANEL 2. The CLERK is reading from some paper in his hand. There is an INSET of a woodcut showing witches riding on broomsticks (side-saddle) through the night sky. Father MAT is rolling his eyes towards heaven, his arms folded before him. He is shaking practically imperceptibly.

4. CLERK: YOU FLEW BY NIGHT TO THE FRAW RENBERG, TO A DEVIL'S MASS WITH EIGHT THOUSAND OTHER WITCHES.
5. MAT (thought): YOU ARE GRASPING AT STRAWS, BERNARD.

PANEL 3. A close-up on the WITCH. Her eyes are closed and her head is bowed.

6. WITCH (whispering): YES.

PANEL 4. The CLERK continues reading from the paper. The JUDGE is leaning forward in his chair to listen. The woodcut INSET shows women baring themselves to a mostly goat goat-man. See the examples. Father MAT is tense, and still has his arms folded in front of him, but more as if he's trying to get a grip on himself.

7. CLERK: AND THERE COMMITTED UNNATURAL ACTS WITH THE DEVIL, ALONG WITH THE OTHER WITCHES PRESENT.

8. WITCH (whispering): YES.

9. MAT (thought): IF THIS WOMAN IS INNOCENT, HOW MANY
OTHERS ARE?

PANEL 5. The CLERK continues to read. The EXECUTIONER nods in satisfaction. MAT steps forward, poised to speak.

10. CLERK: YOU SIGNED YOUR NAME IN THE DEVIL'S BOOK.

11. WITCH: YES.

12. MAT (thought): I MUST SAY SOMETHING.

PAGE 10

PANEL 8 is an all text panel at the bottom of the page.

PANEL 1. The CLERK leans back, and picks up another piece of paper. The JUDGE looks up at the WITCH. Father MAT changes his mind and steps back, looking a little embarrassed.

1. JUDGE: DO YOU NOW REPENT OF THESE MOST HEINOUS CRIMES?
2. WITCH: I DO.
3. MAT (thought): NO. IT WILL ONLY IMPLICATE ME.

PANEL 2. This is a close-up of the CLERK handing the JUDGE a piece of paper with a list of names, written in script. No need to show them all, just enough to show that it's a list of names.

4. LIST Sen. Baunach
 Ldy Baunach
 F. Silberhans
 mkt st. bookseller
 Fr. Stab
 Babel Znickel
 Valkenberger's daughter

PANEL 3. The JUDGE holds up the list, as the CLERK sits down. Father MAT is horrified.

5. JUDGE: AND DO YOU CONFIRM THESE NAMES AS THOSE YOU HAVE SEEN AT THE NIGHT-MEETINGS YOU HAVE ATTENDED?
6. WITCH: I DO.
7. MAT (thought): OH NO.

PANEL 4. Father MAT holds up his right hand to interject a note. This panel should be a view of Father MAT's upper body.

8. CAP (JUDGE): FOR THESE CRIMES YOU SHALL BE EXECUTED. MAY GOD HAVE MERCY ON YOUR SOUL.
9. MAT: EXCUSE ME.

PANEL 5. This is actually four panels—a small close-up of the GUARD, the CLERK, the EXECUTIONER, and the JUDGE, arranged in a two by two square. They're not expecting anything strange, and are simply looking up at Father MAT. Center the reader on the square, so that they're all looking at the reader. Project a bit of Father MAT's paranoia into the faces.

PANEL 6. This is a tall, thin panel adjacent to PANEL 10. Father MAT turns around to leave. Show this as a somewhat slow, deliberate turn, using afterimages or something equally effective. The panel itself should grow progressively darker towards the right side, preparing for the dark gray PANEL 7.

10. MAT: I... HAVE AN ENGAGEMENT ELSEWHERE.

PANEL 7. This last panel is dark gray. The lettering is white, in the same script that's been used in the previous LETTERS. This panel's borders should indicate that it's the LETTER.

11. LETTER: The report read simply, "she died penitent." I had no choice. I could not break the seal of the confessional. How many others know what is happening, yet remain silent?

PANEL 8. Separate from the rest of the page, this panel gives a summary of what happens in the future.

12. CAP: In 1631, Father Friedrich von Spee published, anonymously, *Cautio Criminalis*, an indictment against the witch trials. He later served as priest to the plague victims in Treves, until he himself died of the plague on August 7, 1635. Father Bernard Mat is a fictional composite of many contemporary confessors, and has since disappeared into history.

The witch trials continued for another century before abating, and *crimen exceptum*—*exceptional crimes*—are still used by political power-seekers who wish to strengthen the hold of governments over the governed.