

The Sorcerer's Court is presently (at the time of *Serpent*) composed of four "natural born" sorcerers — The Serpent, The Unicorn, The Hydra & The Leviathan — and three apprentices — The Raven, The Wasp, & The Howler. As their name implies, those natural born are literally



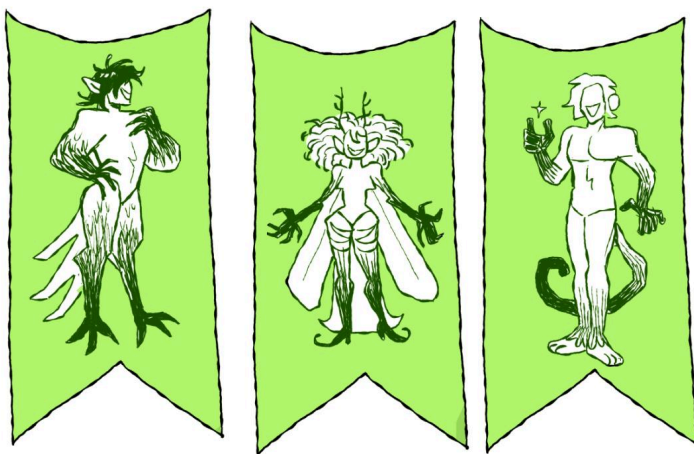
beings that were brought to life by nature's will, to act specifically as watchers and protectors of the earth. They all technically have their own territories, but Vicon is the only one who does his job as assigned. The others are either wayward travelers or dormant entirely, and only gather together in times of great turmoil.

Before the court was formed, Vicon was similarly avoidant — but more brash and impulsive than the others, his ego leading him to seek greater power and wider adulation. Eventually, his pursuit became too frenzied, and his attempt to usurp the human king had to be quashed by the other sorcerers. As punishment, he was sentenced to imprisonment beneath the Spire for 100 years.



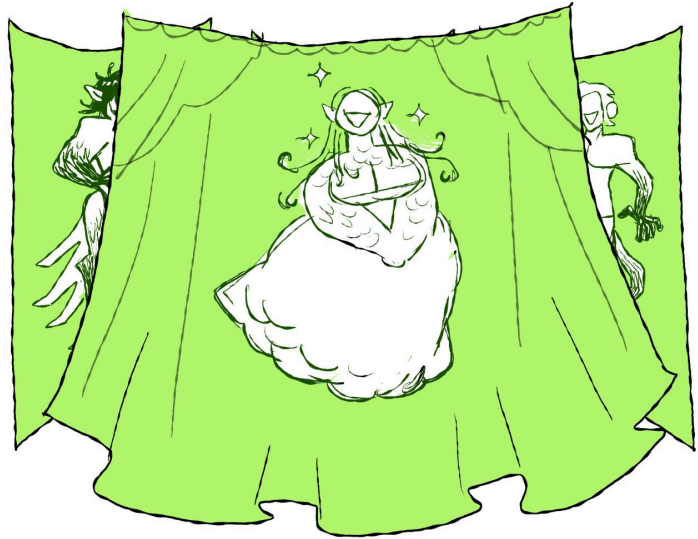
Some decades later, the newly appointed young King Juren befriends Vicon, releases him early on good behavior, and encourages

him to take on apprentices to stand in place of his "siblings" and operate more formally with the support of the monarchy. Juren himself holds a tournament to select the three young hopefuls: Mirren for his cunning, Damiana for her brutality, and finally Cathal for his charm.



Two of Vicon's apprentices are, unfortunately, similarly hungry for power and status, and at the end of their century of training, they part from the Spire on a variety of bad terms (to be detailed in *The Howler's Captive & The Wasp's Bridegroom*). Only Mirren remains, acting as a patrolman rather than a full member of the court. Vicon is left alone once again to tend the north.

He remains this way until Juliette comes to him and becomes his fourth and final apprentice. After her naming as the Swan, she not only establishes herself as a direct member of the human royal court (during the now Queen Irina's rule), but also announces her intention to restructure the Sorcerer's Court under Vicon's explicit command. She keeps their relationship a secret, presuming correctly that the other sorcerers might resent her ambitions otherwise.



*Howler & Wasp* will take place in tandem maybe 50 years after *Serpent*, after Juliette's naming but before she makes her plans public.