

WARHAMMER® FANTASY ROLEPLAY™



LURE OF POWER™

NOBILITY IN THE EMPIRE

WARHAMMER FANTASY ROLEPLAY

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LURE OF POWER™

A GUIDE TO NOBILITY & SOCIAL ENCOUNTERS IN THE EMPIRE

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CORE PRODUCT

Throughout *Lure of Power*, reference will be made to the *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay* Core Product. This refers to either the books within the *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay* Box Set (*Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay* Rulebook, *Tome of Adventure*, *Tome of Blessings*, *Tome of Mysteries*) or the Guides (*Player's Guide*, *Game Master's Guide*, *Creature's Guide*).

NEW RULES

In addition to a wealth of new information and background material on the nobility of the Empire and Ubersreik specifically, as well as Slaanesh and his minions, *Lure of Power* includes some new and expanded rules on social encounters and secret societies. Players and GMs should familiarise themselves with these new rules before using them in play.

NOBILITY RULES

Includes new optional rules and content for playing noble character. These rules can be found in Chapter 5, starting on page 26 of this book.

SOCIAL ENCOUNTER RULES

Includes new optional rules and content for running expanded social encounters as well as the Duel of Wits. These rules can be found in Chapter 5, starting on page 32 of this book.

SECRET SOCIETIES RULES

Includes new rules and content for secret societies as well as their hidden inner circles. These rules can be found in Chapter 3 of the *Book of Pleasure*.

MARKS OF SLAANESH

The Ruinous Powers may bequeath a special boon upon one of their followers, a Mark of Chaos. The Mark of Slaanesh and its effects are discussed on pages 8 and 15 of the *Book of Pleasure*.

USING THE MATERIALS INCLUDED WITH LURE OF POWER

Lure of Power includes a variety of new cards, sheets, and components for the Game Master and his players.

NEW CARDS

The action, location, item, condition, and talent cards can be added to the other cards of those types and used as needed.

CREATURE CARDS

Lure of Power includes 17 new creature cards. Full rules for creature cards can be found in the *Creature Guide* and abbreviated rules can be found in Chapter 2 of the *Book of Pleasure* on page 11.

MUTATION CARDS

Lure of Power includes 6 new mutation cards. The complete rules for mutation and corruption can be found in *Winds of Magic* or the *Game Master's Guide*, available separately. If you are not using the rules for mutation and corruption, then when an effect calls for a target to suffer corruption, the target should suffer an equal amount of fatigue and stress instead.

PUNCHBOARD

The punchboard components should be carefully removed from the frames. The pieces can be added to your existing supply of tokens and standups for *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay*.

SECRET SOCIETY SHEET

The Old World is filled with members-only organisations that vet aspiring members. Membership structures can be so complicated and convoluted that it is relatively easy to conceal a society's darker, or even profane, practices from the public and, in many cases, lower members of the organisation. Secret Society sheets are used to track the depth of any PC who has joined a society's ranks. See Chapter 3 of the *Book of Pleasure* for more information about Secret Society sheets.



RETAINER CARDS

As characters grow in wealth and power, they may find themselves in a position to acquire a staff of talented and loyal assistants to attend to the day-to-day business they themselves have neither the time nor interest to manage. These assistants are known as retainers, and are represented by cards very similar to item cards. See Chapter 5 of this book for more information about Retainer cards.



SET ICON

The cards and sheets included with *Lure of Power* are noted with a special set icon. This allows you to quickly identify the supplement materials when sorting, adding, or removing cards from your game.





CHAPTER ONE

NOBILITY IN THE EMPIRE

The Empire is a federation of independent states – often called provinces – governed by hereditary rulers that derive their authority from the founder of the Empire himself – Sigmar Heldenhammer. It is from the ranks of these ruling ‘Elector Counts’ that an Emperor is chosen, an individual fated to lead this conglomeration of disparate peoples against whatever evils the world may conspire to inflict upon it. The Empire is beset by numerous foes, both from within and without. The mountains teem with savage green-skin tribes, while the dense forests that swathe much of the land resound with the atavistic war cries of beastman warherds. Chaos incursions from the north are a constant threat and the fractious southern nations of the Old World are rarely at peace with one another for long. Worse still is the threat of internecine war between the Empire’s own provinces, for each is descended from one of the ancient tribes of man. Though united by Sigmar so long ago, the people of each state are proud, and the entire federation has been plunged into bitter civil war many times over the millennia.

It is the solemn responsibility of the noble classes of the Empire to guide the provinces through this age of war. They must lead the armies of the Empire in times of calamity and govern wisely during the fleeting periods of calm. In this, the nobility can trace the roots of its powers back two and a half millennia and more. Before the age of the Empire, the men of the west were scattered across vast

tracts of forested land and divided into bitterly warring tribes. Men slew one another without reason or remorse, all the while cowering from the darkness of the forest eaves. Beastmen and other, nameless things ruled the shadows while orcs and goblins descended from the mountains to enslave and slaughter at will. A tribe without a strong ruler could not stand against such dire threats. Before the coming of Sigmar, the race of men stood ever upon the brink of extinction.

When Sigmar united the tribes, he laid the foundations of the system that has endured, in one form or another, to the present day. Provinces have risen and fallen over the centuries, and new city states have been born as rural populations flocked together into large settlements, whether to pursue some trade or simply seek protection from the evils that roam the land. Sigmar himself has been elevated far beyond the patron of the Empire and is now venerated as a deity. The rule of the noble classes is enshrined in the tradition established by their godly ancestor and the tribal chiefs he united. Knowing that their authority is rooted in the deeds and commands of a god, the Elector Counts rule over their lands with an iron grip that has, thus far, at least, kept the darkness at bay.

THE TRIBES OF MAN

The peoples of each province are the descendants of the ancient tribesmen united by Sigmar. Most tribes existed for untold generations before the birth of the Empire and fought numerous, bitter wars over that time. They had their own traditions and heroes, and all tribes claimed a blood-right to the territories that sustained them. Most men spoke a common tongue, but each tribe had its own accent and often its own dialect, so that two men from different tribes could scarcely understand one another in conversation. Two and a half millennia later, the same still holds true, especially among the more isolated provincials. These folk cleave to the old ways almost as if the Empire had never risen to unite the warring tribes.

In the years preceding the birth of the Empire, the land was ruled by about a dozen main tribal groupings with numerous vassal tribes beneath them. Some harboured bitter resentments towards one another, while others were staunch allies. Though all claimed ownership of vast areas of land, such title was notional at best, as some would say is still true today. In reality, most men lived behind crude wooden palisades and earthworks, and those who dared work the land did so with one eye ever watchful for savage beastmen and greenskins emerging from the forests. If the alarm was raised in time, they might escape to the nearest hill fort; otherwise, they were likely to suffer a hideous death at the hands of the vile beasts that truly ruled the lands.

In the northernmost reaches of the land now called the Empire lived the Udose and Roppsmenn tribes. The latter were driven into the cold lands of Kislev when they aided the savage Norsii against Sigmar's army and in so doing forfeited their place in the nascent Empire. The Norsii themselves were driven across the Sea of Claws where their descendants still live today, warring with one another and their neighbours and venerating cruel gods whose names civilised men do not speak.

In the east lived the Ostagoths, a hardy people whose lands were shadowed by the towering World's Edge Mountains. The descendants of the Ostagoths established the province of Ostermark. South of the lands of the Ostagoths were those of the Asoborns, the Brigundians, the Merogens, and Menogoths, and the provinces that stand today in those territories are known as Stirland, Averland and Wissenland. For centuries, the province of Solland existed here too, before the mighty orc warlord Gorbak Ironclaw slew its Elector Count, seized the trappings of his power, and razed much of the land to ashes.

In the shadow of the Grey Mountains on the Empire's southern borders lived the Unberogens and the Endals. The former claimed the region now occupied by the province of Reikland, while the Endals' lands comprised the southern portion of the region known as the Wasteland. Further west still were the Bretonii, a tribe that refused to submit to Sigmar's rule and was driven over the Grey Mountains to settle the lands now known as Bretonnia.

The northern portion of the Wasteland was claimed by the Jutone tribe, a proud and independently minded people whose leader Marius swore allegiance to Sigmar only in the aftermath of his great victory at Black Fire Pass.

To the east of the Jutones' lands were the Teutogens, who were absorbed into the Unberogens when Sigmar slew their ruler Artur, as well as the Thuringians and the Taleutens.

Most of the land claimed by these peoples was, as it remains today, dense, dark forest. Even today, comparatively few roads cross the region, for the woodland is voracious and will reclaim any path hewn through it within a short space of time. In those distant days, the only metalled roads in existence were those built by races older still than man – the elves and the dwarfs, who had abandoned much on the Old World over the centuries. The Old Dwarf Road, leading from Black Fire Pass to the west, was one of the few passable routes, the remainder being little more than hunters' paths that existed only so long as they were used. Most people did not travel far afield themselves, for to do so was simply too dangerous. Occasionally, a caravan of dwarf merchants would emerge from the mountains, and it was by the teachings of these master craftsmen that men learned to work metal. When travel was called for, many men utilised small coracles to navigate the rivers, though to do so during times of flood was all but suicidal.

It was on the road from Axe Bite Pass in the Grey Mountains that Sigmar's tale began and the foundation of the Empire was laid.

SIGMAR AND THE BIRTH OF THE EMPIRE

The legend of the birth of Sigmar is the legend of the birth of the Empire itself. There are numerous variants of the tale, each with countless twists and turns according to local tradition. The only contemporary accounts recorded at the time were those set down by the dwarfs, for men were far more concerned with simple survival than maintaining written histories. Most accounts agree that all manner of portents were witnessed prior to Sigmar's birth, most of them foretelling that the son of the Unberogen chieftain Bjorn and his wife Griselda would grow up to be a man of great significance. The legend states that Sigmar was born upon the field of battle and that his mother died during his birth. At the very moment Sigmar came into the world he would have such effect upon, a twin-tailed comet crossed the sky, perhaps the most portentous sign of destiny and fate in the Old World.

The young Sigmar is said to have possessed a unique drive to set aside the struggles of men and bring the tribes together to fight their enemies as one. At the age of only fifteen, Sigmar rescued the dwarf High King, Kurgan Ironbeard, from marauding orcs and thus earned the eternal friendship of the doughty old warrior. Kurgan presented the young Sigmar with the mighty, rune-bound war hammer Ghal-maraz, the name meaning 'skull splitter' in the tongue of the dwarfs. The weapon would become one with the warrior and the Empire, as much his sign as the twin-tailed comet that marked his birth. At the Battle of Astofen Bridge, Sigmar truly earned the right to bear Ghal-maraz in battle, defeating a large band of orcs besieging an isolated settlement. The years that followed saw Sigmar's father Bjorn fall in battle against the savage Norsii, but in so doing such an example of kinship was set that Sigmar was able to forge unbreakable ties between a core of tribes. Still, some would not join him, viewing his vision of unity as a means of crowning one man above all others, and many battles were fought against those who opposed Sigmar and his allies. After many years, many battles, and many bold deeds in which he proved his right to lead, Sigmar had united those tribes that would stand together and expelled, defeated, or otherwise subsumed those that would not. And just in time, for the nascent Empire was to face the greatest challenge of its as-yet brief existence, one matched few times in its subsequent history.



At the Battle of Black Fire Pass, the tribes of men stood alongside the dwarfs of King Kurgan against the largest greenskin migration ever to have threatened the Old World. Men and dwarfs fought for many long hours, the narrow pass funnelling wave after wave of orcs, goblins, trolls and other vile creatures onto their lines. Sigmar commanded his forces as no man ever had before, directing the defence, and retiring spent warbands while committing fresh ones as the enemy came on relentlessly. The terrain worked to Sigmar's advantage, for the orcs and goblins could not commit their superior numbers all at once. Though horribly outnumbered, the men and dwarfs under Sigmar and Kurgan held firm. Where the fighting grew desperate, Sigmar intervened, Ghal-maraz rising and falling countless times and turning the rocky ground of Black Fire Pass dark with greenskin blood. By the battle's end, the invaders were routed and the Old World saved, though at terrible cost to both man and dwarf.

Sigmar was crowned Emperor by the High Priest of Ulric and King Kurgan ordered his greatest Runesmith, Alaric the Mad, to forge a mighty rune-engraved blade for each of the twelve tribal kings who had sworn fealty to the Lord of Men. Though these were not completed until Sigmar was no more, the so-called 'Runefangs' remain to this day the symbol of authority by which an Elector Count rules his province.

Sigmar led his people through many more trials and crises, most notably defeating Nagash, the First Necromancer and Lord of the Undead, at the gates of Reiksdorf itself. Many years later, having firmly established the foundations of his Empire, Sigmar took leave of his people and his land. Some legends state that he grew weary of peace, others that he had some vow to fulfil or deed to perform. Upon the fiftieth year of his rule, Sigmar left his Empire without fanfare or ceremony. Travelling eastward, Sigmar passed by all the great works he had brought about and knew that his task was

done. Alone, he went east, never to be seen again, passing from the lives of men and into history. Within a generation, the Cult of Sigmar had been born; men claimed their lord had not died, but instead ascended to become a new god, one born of mortal origins but destined to defend his people as long as his Empire stood.

THE RISE OF THE ELECTOR COUNTS

Sigmar left no heir behind him when departed. Thus, it was unclear to whom the succession should pass. A situation that might have devolved into inter-tribe warfare and undone all the great works of Sigmar was settled when the kings determined to elect one of their number to lead. Thus was established the system of the Elector Counts, a system that would face many challenges over the millennia, but would also see the Empire through numerous wars and invasions. Sigmar had always sought to unite the tribes rather than to lead them and had only ever imposed his own will in matters that affected the Empire as a whole. No one man, Sigmar had declared, could or should rule the whole of the land, and the establishment of the Electors maintained this core principle. How each king ruled his tribe, or as time went by, each Elector Count ruled his province, was his business and his alone. He who was elected Emperor wielded great power, but only at the forbearance of his peers, who upon his death or abdication might very well set the crown upon the head of another's heir, not his.

Sigmar's mourning peers chose Hedrich I as the first successor, and it was this leader to whom Alaric the Mad presented the completed Runefangs. The first millennium of the Empire's history is barely recorded, for it was an age of strife and war, and those records that do exist are incomplete and often contradictory. In many cases, the archives of other races contain more details of this age than those of the Empire, but being recorded from the outsider's perspective, they are of little use to the scholar. Nevertheless, the system of Electors continued, producing some of the greatest heroes since Sigmar as well as some of the most nefarious villains in history. When the celebrated Emperor Mandred I was assassinated in 1152, no successor could be agreed upon and the system all but collapsed for an age. Three provinces declared their Count to be the true successor and a devastating series of civil wars was fought. In the year 1979, the Electors finally agreed upon a single ruler, but this was the infant Magritta of Marienburg, whose election the Grand Theogonist denounced. The Electoral system collapsed entirely, and the next three hundred years saw the provinces entirely divided. Without an Emperor to unite them against external threats, the provinces looked to their own protection, often neither seeking or expecting aid from their neighbours.

It was during this period that the mercantile burgomeisters first rose to prominence, for the power of the nobility was greatly curtailed by their inability to call upon aid from distant relatives. Instead of drawing upon familial or political influence, the nobles of each province were forced to seek it within their own lands from merchants, money-lenders, and other low-born, but wealthy, types. The need to tax the populace led to concessions and the granting of petty titles simply to raise armies and defend the land against the ceaseless invasions of greenskins, beastmen, the undead, and Chaos.

It was the Great War Against Chaos of 2302 that saw the Empire reunited under a single great leader. That man was Magnus the Pious, a warrior-leader second only to Sigmar himself in the adoration of

the people. By Magnus' deeds, the land was saved from the hosts of Kul, an incursion that razed much of the north and seemed for a time as if it would herald the end of the world itself.

Though the Electoral system would produce yet more incompetents, notably Dieter IV, who in his greed allowed to Marienburg to secede from the Empire in 2429 in return for uncounted wealth, the Empire was restored and endures to this day. With the accession of Karl-Franz in 2502, the Empire once again has a strong and beloved leader. And well it is, for the times ahead appear dark as an age of war never before witnessed descends upon mankind.

LORD AND VASSALS

Each province is ruled according to its own laws and traditions, many inherited and evolved from those of the tribe its people are descended from. Over the centuries, an impossibly convoluted feudal system has evolved, one riddled with such complexity and contradiction that an army of scribes and historians are required to make sense of it. Despite its inefficiency, the model of Imperial feudalism has seen the Empire through numerous crises and survived more or less intact despite every challenge.

Though the structure itself is so intricate that no two nobles can ever be entirely sure who is the senior until their credentials are well and truly established, the core principle by which each state is governed is fairly simple. Its ruler, by virtue of hereditary right, is the lord of all the land. In effect, the Count owns the land, and those who hold title over specific parts of it do so in trust and on his sufferance. This practice has its roots in the formalisation of power that occurred when the territories of the old tribes were set down and allocated to each king, and as power was decentralised after Sigmar's departure it grew in importance. Initially, each Count found himself the sole steward of the land, but in order to defend it against the numerous threats which he alone was responsible

for defeating, he had to make a compact with the nobles below him. This was achieved by way of dividing the land between the king's followers, granting each a region in return for his fealty and his promise to lend military aid when called upon to do so. Within the terms of this compact with the king, the nobles were free to rule the land granted to them as they wished, raising taxes, settling disputes, and further subdividing it between their own vassals as they saw fit.

As with all rulers, good men and bad have lorded over their subjects. The folk of some regions exist in abject misery, forced to eke a meagre living from the mud, while those of other areas grow fat under the largesse of beneficent masters. Some impose rigid laws upon their subjects while others remain aloof from their affairs. In theory, a lord may rule as he pleases, though in practise his title can be revoked by the Count in whose name he reigns. Such a drastic course of action is generally only undertaken when the rule has become so remiss that anarchy threatens to explode and affect neighbouring estates, or when the lord in question is unable to meet his duties to his master, in particular in the matters of taxation and military service.

The feudal model is applied at multiple tiers of society and so a vast and unwieldy system of noble rank has evolved. Relationships and power structures between nobles are notoriously tricky to ascertain and maintain, but a pecking order of sorts does exist. At the very lowest level, minor noble landowners control small areas, settlements, or farmsteads, ruling from a manor and holding court in a great hall. This is repeated at the next level up, the lower nobles passing on a portion of their own earnings to their liege lord. At the very top of the provincial chain are the Elector Counts, to whom many hundreds of vassals owe fealty, directly or indirectly.

Although the feudal system imposes a degree of order upon those enmeshed in it, there exists plenty of scope for disorder and outright conflict, especially between nobles of comparable rank. In many cases, there is no set notion of who is superior to whom, and bitter conflicts are often fought over very minor points of noble ranking. It is comparatively rare for patently lower-ranked nobility to rise up against more overtly senior masters, but clashes between neighbours of a more or less equal rank are far from uncommon. Most clashes are caused by slights, whether real or imagined, and are usually restricted to brief raids or border skirmishes that unleash little more devastation than a burned farmstead. Sometimes the argument is caused by a disagreement over land access or hunting rights. In most cases, the matter is resolved quickly; few nobles care to risk their lord getting involved and pronouncing a binding verdict. Occasionally, however, clashes do get out of control and more senior-ranked nobility is forced to take control, passing judgement and handing out punishment as they see fit.

In many ways, the complex feudal web extends all the way up to the office of Emperor, though in this case fealty is enforced not by the granting of land, for ownership of this is vested in the Elector Counts, but in the oaths each Count's predecessor made to Sigmar himself. Thus, while the Emperor has no power to repeal land rights or confiscate territory, he has a far more potent tool at his disposal – the power of tradition, passed to him in an unbroken line from Sigmar himself.

THE NOBLE'S DUTY

The system by which the nobility of the Empire maintains control obliges its members to adhere to a certain code of behaviour. These obligations are relatively few, but they do impose a certain standard



DAUGHTERS OF THE EMPIRE

If the system of noble ranking is complex to the point of being impenetrable to many, it becomes all but impossible to grasp when a succession involves a woman. The cruel fact is that the nobility is administered very much as a patriarchy, for good or for ill, and countless machinations are enacted every single day to ensure that female offspring are married off to give their families strategic advantage and ensure that it is the male offspring that maintain control of the line's resources. Despite this, women do occasionally come to power in the Empire; some Elector Counts have been, in fact, Elector Countesses. Such women are invariably far stronger than their male counterparts, for they must hold their own in the perilous intrigues of court. Elector Countess Emmanuelle von Liebwitz of Nuln is a great example.

that is not set down in any statute. Rather, the notion of 'noblesse oblige' (as the Bretonnians say) requires that a noble comports with the standards of his station, as judged by his peers, his people, and his gods. Over the centuries, countless nobles have fallen foul of the high standards expected of them. Some have caused the people they rule to rise up against them while others have brought the ire of their own lords down upon them.

In essence, nobles are expected to act in the best interests of the state, setting aside, if necessary, their own desires, wishes, and, in dire enough circumstances, their own lives. History is replete with nobles whose actions transcended all expectations and who made the ultimate sacrifice for the Empire. Yet there are just as many who fell far short and many more still who simply reaped the benefits of their station without ever experiencing an iota of hardship.

In addition to the abstract duties imposed by such ideals, the doctrine of noblesse oblige imposes a number of more formal tasks. There are, of course, many more, less obvious, obligations that are often the subject of local tradition or family custom.

THE MAINTENANCE OF ORDER

The most basic task of a vassal lord is to maintain order in his lands. This might appear obvious, but it should be remembered that the lands of the Empire are beset with peril and many of the settlements are separated from their neighbours by leagues of forest infested with all manner of fell evil. Bereft of a strong leader, men look to their own defence and seek to protect themselves in any way they can. If local strongmen are allowed to take control of rural areas or cities, anarchy and factionalism are sure to follow, putting the entire foundation of the Empire at risk. Without the maintenance of order, brigands would swarm the countryside, checked only by the savage beastmen, the true masters of the woods. Most lords maintain a militia, ranging from irregularly employed ruffians to uniformed troops, to impose their will on their subjects. How such militias are viewed by the population depends very much upon the manner in which they maintain order, for while some are veterans of the provincial armies well used to discipline, others are sadistic bullies with little genuine regard for their master's laws.

JUSTICE OF THE PEACE

The maintenance of order is dependent upon the laws that the local noble chooses to enact and the judgements he passes in his court. The Empire has developed a complex web of laws that are maintained and applied at several different levels. At the most basic level, the local noble is expected to implement the laws of his superiors and impose his own as best befits the needs of his lands. In most cases, the local noble hears the grievances of his tenants and passes his judgement accordingly, in so doing establishing a body of principle by which his lands are governed. Some nobles take great pains to hear both sides in detail, consider the matter carefully, and apply every precedent relevant to the case, employing numerous clerks and factors to assist him. Others are capricious or uncaring, passing whatever judgement befits their mood with more concern for the coming afternoon's dalliances than the matter before them.

DEATH AND TAXES

While death is a universal currency in the Old World, taxes are far more difficult to gather. The defence of the Empire is an expensive business and cannot be left to the individual provinces. Collecting taxes is one of the most important duties entrusted to a lord and it is one he makes every effort to fulfil, for he himself is subject to them by his own superior. Taxes keep the roads open, the ever-encroaching trees hacked back every year, the militias armed and trained, the watch towers garrisoned, and the walls of fortified towns kept strong. The Emperor makes demands of the Elector Counts just as they do their vassals, for the defence of the Empire cannot be the sole burden of the outlying provinces. Averland alone cannot hold Black Fire Pass and the provinces bordering the Middle Mountains cannot guard against the numerous monstrous creatures and greenskin tribes that descend from them each year to slaughter and plunder the surrounding lands. Reikland alone cannot watch the passes through the Grey Mountains for invasion from the south and the northern provinces cannot be expected to hold the hordes of Chaos at bay alone. All these expenses must be paid with the taxes collected by the nobility.

MILITARY SERVICE

The single most important duty that a noble owes his liege lord is military service. In times of war, a noble is expected to muster and equip his tenants, form them into regiments, and field them as required by the needs of his superiors. In general, the noble himself is expected to lead his men and many are well schooled in the military arts. The defence of the provinces and of the Empire as a whole is not left entirely to these locally raised forces, however, and each province maintains its own standing army of professional soldiers. Many nobles serve in their province's army, earning a name for themselves and discharging their duty to their lord. Even after such men return to their estates, they will answer should war call again, taking up arms and armour kept ready for just such a need.

Many of the richer noble houses find it simpler to employ mercenaries to discharge their obligations of military service. Such lords prefer to see their own tenants labouring in their fields and to employ experienced soldiers to maintain order and to fight when called upon to do so. These mercenaries are often veterans of the state army, but just as many are from farther afield, perhaps from Tilea, the homeland of many mercenary regiments, or the ever shifting petty princedoms of the Border Princes.

LIFE OF THE NOBLE

Everyday life for the average Imperial noble is an existence of sheer, unadulterated luxury compared to the life of the average subject. Commoners living in the countryside barely survive on the meagre income they earn working the land and many of them fall prey to the numerous perils that stalk the wilderness. Life in the towns and cities is not much better, for most commoners are barely-skilled labourers of one sort or another and crime and cruelty are everywhere. Even the pettiest noble exists far above such travails, their every whim fulfilled by a small army of loyal and attentive retainers.

Aside from the doctrine of noblesse oblige, scant few obligations are placed upon the nobility except those the various houses impose upon themselves. In general, the oldest children are expected to inherit the mantle of rank and are trained from an early age to bear it with dignity and skill when their time comes. Given the many dangers that exist in the Old World, wise parents often ensure that the second son is prepared too, just in case anything unpleasant should befall the heir apparent. Those further removed from the chain of succession may be assigned various fates by their sires, some entering the standing army as professional officers and others taking oaths with one of the many knightly orders. Some hear the call of the clerical orders and join the priesthood (the Cult of Sigmar is a popular choice for many nobles, though this can vary from region to region) and some are required to do so by scandal or similar circumstances. In most cases, such careers are imposed upon the young nobles by parents well aware of the mischief a young, pampered noble might find upon reaching majority. The intent is to invest the youngster with some experience and maturity before genuine responsibility becomes unavoidable.

Yet, not all noble houses are quite so diligent, or perhaps some noble scions are adept at avoiding responsibility or otherwise manipulating their existence to their own tastes. For the less virtuous nobility, their rarefied world is a playground of ceaseless distraction. All manner of pastimes are available to nobles who prefer not to sully their manicured hands with any form of career. Many indulge in courtly display, spending exorbitant sums on the season's latest fashions regardless of the poverty of their subjects. Some hunt the teeming forests, though they must be guarded by professional soldiers and guided by veteran woodsmen lest they themselves become the prey. Some nobles cultivate what they consider the finest of tastes, patronising favoured painters, sculptors, playwrights, and poets. Many relish in the noisy feasts and balls held in fortified manor houses while the hungry populace shivers without, fearful of the beasts of the surrounding forests.

But the life of the noble is also strewn with pitfalls, ranging in severity from minor inconveniences to being burned at the stake as a traitor to his liege. So great are the temptations that confront the average noble every day of his pampered life that many fall prey to hubris or indulgence.

Being at once spoiled and possessed of the wealth to indulge their every whim, many nobles surrender themselves to a life of intemperance that frequently ends prematurely. A diet of roast venison and fine wine might appear the ultimate in luxury to those barely able to afford a weak stew, but in truth many nobles end up as puffing, gout-ridden drunkards barely able to stand from the privy without help. In contrast, his pauper subjects might be lean and fit through the predations of a hard life and may even enjoy (or rather experience) a longer span of life.

Nobles who indulge their indolent passions at the expense of their few actual duties lay themselves open to censure or outright attack. Their own lieges may pull them up for their behaviour and demand recompense for incomes lost due to the misadministration of vassal lands or markets. Others might find themselves the targets of hostility from rival nobles who covet their resources and see an opportunity to take them by force. Many a feckless noble son has emerged from his chamber after spending the night abed with some perfumed doxy to find that the agents of his rivals have stolen his holdings right from under his nose, stripped his estates bare, and left his fortune in tatters.

Perhaps the worst fate that awaits those who surrender themselves to the extremes of the noble life is the risk to their very soul. The agents of the Ruinous Powers are never far away and even without them, the influence of Chaos is strong. Some nobles become obsessed with fighting martial duels and surrender their souls to Khorne. Others seek power by intrigue and draw the attentions of Tzeentch. The pathetic pleas of those struck down by disease and are willing to do anything to be free of their agonies might be heard by Nurgle. Those who turn themselves over entirely to extremes of sensations are ripe to be plucked away by Slaanesh, the Dark Prince of Chaos.





CHAPTER TWO UBERSREIK NOBILITY

The town of Ubersreik is ancient indeed, its roots stretching back through the ages to the time of Sigmar himself. Occupying a position vital in terms of the defence of the region and trade along the River Teufel, Ubersreik is an important town and much has been invested in its defences over the centuries. Currently, a council of guildmasters rules the town as the von Jungfreud family was stripped of its titles some time ago. However, the town and its surrounding region have long been the focus of the activities and ambitions of several noble lines that clamour there despite Ubersreik's status as a 'freetown' and therefore not subject to the rule of any noble house. Recently, rumours have circulated regarding the future of the town's status. Some even say that the Emperor is considering revoking its freetown status and ever-wilder theories appear each month. Ubersreik has become a hotbed of intrigue, towards which all manner of power-hungry individuals have been drawn. Nobles of every rank are circling, eager to fill the vacuum should the town council be stripped of its powers and a new liege lord appointed. Some travel to the Imperial Court in Altdorf, keen to press their point and curry favour with the Emperor. Others flock to Ubersreik itself, hoping to be in the thick of it when the inevitable shift in power occurs and to seize that power with both hands.



Every lord and every grande dame in Ubersreik, they wish to be the lord, n'est-ce pas? And so they must all dress the part and out-do one another day after day. If madame wears a wig with a feather, mesdames les autres must have two feathers the next day! It is good for business, but not so good for fashion.

- Madame Beaumartean, clothier to Ubersreik's best



What follows is a brief description of some of the major noble figures active in and around Ubersreik, and the balance of power between them. Game Masters can use these notables and the relationships between them to involve the PCs in the ongoing political turmoil engulfing Ubersreik as well as a springboard for any number of further adventures.

EMPEROR KARL-FRANZ, EMPEROR, ELECTOR COUNT OF REIKLAND AND PRINCE OF ALTDORF

As Elector Count of Reikland, the Emperor Karl-Franz occupies the highest tier in the pyramid of status and influence that rules the province. Despite their internecine struggles and alliances, all nobles in the state of Reikland owe him fealty and must act upon his word as the law. An impossibly complex web of blood and patronage extends outward from the Emperor's Court, made all the more complicated by the fact that he bears the titles of Emperor, Prince of Altdorf, and Elector Count of Reikland, as well as patriarch of his own house. In practice, Karl-Franz is almost entirely occupied with his duties as Emperor, and delegates the administration of Altdorf and of Reikland to any one of several close and trusted peers.

As Emperor, Karl-Franz' duties extend far and wide, throughout and beyond the Empire. Much of the time, he is concerned with the state of the northern defences, for the tribes of the north are ever on the warpath and invasion remains a constant threat. The orc and goblin tribes that plague the Worlds Edge and the Grey Mountains consume much of the Imperial Court's attentions too, for the passes must be kept open and the Empire's ancient allies, the dwarfs, must be aided in their constant war.

As Prince of Altdorf, Karl-Franz must balance the interests of the myriad factions that compete for status and resource in the city. Should the Colleges of Magic be granted too many concessions, the Altdorf University may withdraw its support. If the School of Engineers is exempted certain obligations, the merchant houses might take their trade elsewhere. These and a hundred other concerns encroach upon Karl-Franz' attention each day, despite the efforts of his regents and deputies.

As Elector Count of Reikland, Karl-Franz must see to the smooth running of this most prestigious of states, and it is in this capacity that he is most likely to interact with the various figures described here. As Count of Reikland, it is within Karl-Franz' power to bestow or withdraw titles, as happened when Ubersreik was declared a freetown. Though rarely exercised, he has the power to strip a noble of his title and nominate a successor. If the noble house in question is fortunate, the title will pass to another in the same line. If the crime is sufficiently dire, the entire family could be stripped of its rights and privileges, essentially revoking its title. The nobles competing for status in and around Ubersreik are well aware that to overstep the limitations of their rank might result in such a harsh censure, so they keep the less salubrious aspects of their conflict well away from the sight of the Court of Karl-Franz.

VIKTOR VON WALFEN, ARCHDUKE OF THE UPPER TEUFEL

Archduke Viktor is the aged, grizzled, and startlingly flatulent patriarch of the von Walfen line, a powerful house that dominates much of the southeastern portion of the Reikland. The family can trace its roots at least as far back as the fifth century and while scant records exist before that time, it is possible that the clan's claims that their ancestors walked alongside Sigmar himself are not entirely without basis. The von Walfens owe fealty to Karl-Franz by dint of title, but there are familial links too, for at the rarefied heights of noble power most houses are related to one another in some manner. Viktor is a broad-shouldered ox of a man, and in his prime he was a great and celebrated general of the state army. Now, however, Viktor's once muscular frame is running to fat, though there is life in the old dog yet, as any serving girl not quick enough on her feet is likely to find out.

Viktor holds court in an ancient fortified pile west of Stromdorf. He seldom leaves his mansion himself and relies on his sons and grandsons to conduct his business in and around Ubersreik on his behalf. Only the most dire circumstance or tempting prize will tempt Viktor von Walfen to attend in person, and should he do so, all will know the stakes are high indeed.





The Elector of Reikland,
Prince of Altdorf, by
the Grace of Sigmar
Emperor Karl-Franz



Nobles Great
& Small



fealty

kinship



Some Other
Nobles of the
Reikland



Viktor von Walsen, Archduke
of the Upper Teufel



Defender of the Widow's
Vale, Count-Palatine
Gregor Schadel Faust



Lord of Bogenhafen,
Graf Wilhelm von
Saponatheim



The Pfalzgraf of Black Rock,
Graf Sigismund von Jungfreud



Various Minor
Lords of the Gray
Mountains.

Marquis of
Grey Lady Pass,
Graf Tobias
Aschaffenberg



Other Nobles
Houses



Heinrich von Bruner,
Baron of Graustadt,
Magistrate of Ubersreik



His Heir, Lord Rickard
Aschaffenberg, Steward
of Grunewald Lodge



Ludmilla von Bruner, daughter
to Baron Heinrich, wife to Lord
Rickard Aschaffenberg



Landless
Lords &
Attendants



The Steward
of Grauwerk,
Graf Steirlich
von Bruner



Rannalt
Trocheim,
Steward
of Graustadt

GRAF SIGISMUND VON JUNGFREUD, PFALZGRAF OF BLACK ROCK

Graf Sigismund is the pre-eminent scion of the von Jungfreud line, formally the masters of Ubersreik and many of the surrounding domains. Since Ubersreik was declared a freetown, the family's fortunes have declined and Sigismund has been driven to ever more desperate deeds to cling to what power remains. Some say that Sigismund has unfinished business with Auerswald, the town with which he clashed and subsequently lost his title. So far, the renewed bitterness has been limited to skirmishes between the household guard of the rival noble houses, but should war spread, Graf Sigismund von Jungfreud will risk the severe displeasure of his superiors, and if that happens, all hope of regaining control of Ubersreik may be lost.

COUNT-PALATINE GREGOR SCHADELFAUST, DEFENDER OF THE WIDOW'S VALE

Count-Palatine Schadelfaust is a renowned warrior-noble, the scourge of numerous orc and goblin tribes of the Grey Mountains. Gregor is the first generation noble of his family, having been granted his Patent of Nobility by Karl-Franz himself following the Battle of Widow's Vale, a celebrated action in which the Emperor took part. Though a commoner by birth, Gregor is a rare example of man who rose from low station to high purely on the strength of his skills, deeds, and character, though the fact that Karl-Franz witnessed his deeds was certainly an advantage. At the battle that earned him his peerage, Gregor Schadelfaust rescued the isolated mountain community of Widow's Vale from the predations of orc warlord Ghizbak Edbanger and stalled the invasion into the Reikland that would inevitably have followed had the greenskins' migration continued unchecked.

Upon his ascension to the nobility, Gregor was made a vassal of Archduke Viktor von Walfen, and the two men sparked up an instant loathing of one another. Viktor resented the fact that a portion of his own lands had been gifted to Gregor, even if the title made the newcomer Viktor's vassal. The feeling was mutual, for Gregor was of the impression that the von Walfens may have history on their side, but had done very little of value to the Empire in many long centuries. Now, it appears as if Ubersreik is to be the stage for the inevitable confrontation between the two men. In all likelihood, the clash will be fought by proxy between hired sword and disposable goons, the two men maintaining an outward appearance of honour and duty while their agents slaughter one another out of sight.

GRAF WILHELM VON SAPONATHEIM, LORD OF BÖGENHAFEN

Wilhelm is the titular ruler of the town of Bögenhafen, and his line is considered an upstart by many others, for its Patent of Nobility is far younger than theirs. Despite this, the von Saponatheims have interests throughout the province of Reikland, their coffers swelled by the production of fine wines sold across the Empire and beyond.

Graf Wilhelm has cast his eye upon Ubersreik of late, for he is a wily individual well versed in what he terms 'aggressive takeovers'. The more established noble houses in the Ubersreik region are bitterly resentful of Wilhelm's interest there, and it is not inconceivable that several may set aside their own feuds long enough to ally against him. The Lord of Bögenhafen is cunning enough to have foreseen such a turn of events of course, and has made arrangements to buy or coerce the loyalty of several key individuals should he need to do so.

HEINRICH VON BRUNER, BARON OF GRAUSTADT, MAGISTRATE OF UBERSREIK

Heinrich is the representative of the Elector Count of Reikland in Ubersreik as pertains to all things legal. While he has formal power as a member of the town council, that power has been massively curtailed of late, following his family's alleged involvement in the activities of a Chaos cult. A bitter feud has developed between various strands of the von Bruner and the von Jungfreud houses and a great deal of blood has already been spilled. It remains to be seen if the two clans can set aside their differences long enough to influence any change in the status of Ubersreik, or if their feud will spill over into the wider game of conspiracy and intrigue.



LUDMILLA VON BRUNER, BARONESS OF GRAUSTADT

Ludmilla is the daughter of Baron Heinrich von Bruner and the wife of Lord Rikard Aschaffenberg. Outwardly genial, she is an intelligent woman who misses nothing that transpires in court. After growing up in the von Bruner house and witnessing its rise and near disgrace following the events at the Grunewald Lodge, Ludmilla knows well enough the ends she might one day have to go to defend her lineage. For now, she is content to support her husband, but should she need to intervene directly in the intrigues fomenting in and around Ubersreik, she will not fail to do so.

GRAF STEIRLICH VON BRUNER, STEWARD OF GRAUWERK

Graf Steirlich is a bitter man, twisted by the weight of failed ambition and the dark deeds he has committed in his quest for power. Many whisper that the von Bruners harbour a curse, but few have any inkling that Steirlich is touched, by fate at least and perhaps even by the Ruinous Powers. Steirlich is but a low ranked member of his house, his seat a fortified mansion in the midst of the remote Hagercryb Hills. He rarely emerges from his hall and when he does it is more often in secret than in the open. Few have ever seen the Graf's face, and rumours concerning the range of his disfigurements abound. Some even whisper that he is touched by dark powers and his body deformed as a result.

The Steward of Grauwerk has been drawn to Ubersreik because it provides an opportunity to expand his somewhat measly power base. Certainly, he has the ambition and the ruthless streak to do what must be done should things turn nasty in the freetown. To date, Graf Steirlich's superiors in the von Bruner clan have sought to rein in his darker methods, but how long that may be the case remains to be seen.

GRAF TOBIAS ASCHAFFENBERG, MARQUIS OF GREY LADY PASS

The Aschaffenbergs were granted the Patent of Nobility relatively recently, having been elevated to noble status by Magnus the Pious himself in the aftermath of the Great War Against Chaos. Graf Tobias is one of the most powerful members of the house, which is native to Ubersreik. His seat is a large, if somewhat ramshackle, peak-top castle south of the town, overlooking the confluence of waterways that converge to form the River Teufel. Tobias holds the title Marquis of Grey Lady Pass because the defence of that mountain corridor is the most sacred duty of his clan, entrusted to him centuries ago by Magnus himself. It is a duty the Graf takes very seriously indeed, and one he will do anything to fulfil.

The Graf's determination extends to every aspect of his line, of which he is so proud to be a scion. He is utterly ruthless in dealings with other noble households, especially those he regards as scheming against his own, and he has fought numerous duels against those he has fallen out with. As a native of Ubersreik, Graf Tobias regards it as only proper that should the town's status change, he should be the man to assume the mantle of liege.

LORD RICKARD ASCHAFFENBERG, STEWARD OF GRUNEWALD LODGE

Lord Rickard is a son of the Aschaffenberg line, but he has gained higher rank by marrying into the von Bruner family. A huge bearded bear of a man and a skilled swordsman, Rickard is honourable to a fault. He believes that the aristocracy has the absolute right to rule and will not hear of contrary views, but he acknowledges that not all nobles live up to the high standards their status should embody. Rickard is duty bound to follow the lead of his superiors, in both the Aschaffenberg and von Bruner families in matters relating to the status of Ubersreik, but will always endeavour to act with honour.

PCs may have encountered Lord Rickard Aschaffenberg at the Grunewald Lodge in the "An Eye for an Eye" adventure in the Core Product. It is possible he met a grisly end during the encounter, so the GM can substitute him for a close relative if they wish.

RANNALT TROCHEIM, STEWARD OF GRAUSTADT

Rannalt Trocheim is a virtual outcast amongst the noble houses of the Reikland, not because he has committed any specific crime, but due to the circumstances of his birth. Rannalt is the son of a union between nobles of different nations. His father was of the Empire and his mother of Bretonnia; numerous highly-placed rulers expressly forbade the marriage, but Rannalt's parents married regardless. Although they passed away and were buried together in a tomb high in the Grey Mountains, Rannalt is a man living in the shadow of his parents' sin. Rannalt's title – 'Steward of Graustadt' – is little more than a sinecure and carries with it only a small degree of status and almost no power. Rannalt's income is paltry in comparison to his peers, and it appears a concerted effort has been made to end the Trocheim line, through bankruptcy or worse.

Rannalt is essentially an honourable man, and he holds to the notions of honour and devotion that saw his parents defy the will of two nations to be together. Despite this, he is well aware that unless fortune smiles upon him, his line is likely to end. The rumours surrounding the situation in Ubersreik present an opportunity, and Rannalt intends to take advantage of it in order to secure the future of his line. How far his sense of right will prevail in the face of the dark ambitions of the competing nobility remains to be seen, and it is possible that Rannalt will hire skilled sell swords to do the dirty work for him whilst he looks determinedly in the opposite direction.



CHAPTER THREE

WEALTH & SOCIAL TIERS

For centuries, the society of the Empire was set in stone. The old warlords became the Elector Counts and their extended family, the barons. Favoured retainers and loyal allies were granted special status and title, and the order that came into being stood more or less unchanged for many generations. Since the Time of Three Emperors however, the system has slowly evolved, and not entirely to the liking of the ruling classes. As the population grew and become more concentrated in the bustling cities, new economies developed that were not based upon the ownership of land. The merchant class is on the rise; with every crisis, the ruling classes are increasingly forced to do business with them. During the age when no single Emperor ruled, the Counts were forced to borrow money from the merchants, which gave birth to a new class of bankers. Several centuries later, these upstarts are almost as wealthy as the rulers themselves and seek even higher status. Of course, the vast majority of the population is still poor. In an age of ceaseless war and brutality, their lot in life is not likely to change, though some brave individuals do seek to upset the social order.

For most citizens of the Empire, class is everything. Only the most fortunate or cunning ever rise in the social structure, but tribalism and mutual interest generally prevent anyone from falling too far.

Adventurers are a class apart, sometimes waking under priceless sheets of Cathayan silk and at bedtime settling in upon a ragged mattress of damp straw.

THE TIER OF BRASS

The lowest level of Imperial society consists of a teeming mass of common humanity whose every effort is expended simply pursuing the next meal. While the nobility might regard the peasants as a single class, they are in fact incredibly varied, ranging from skilled workers bonded to a particular estate, to families that have tended the same turnip patch since the time of Sigmar himself. Often, those towards the top of this tier look down upon those below them with as much haughtiness as any noble looking down upon a street-born urchin. Despite their humble place in life, members of the Tier of Brass can be every bit as intolerant and bigoted as those high above them, sometimes even more so. To the average rural peasant, the occupants of the next village over are the worst kind of scum and those who dwell in the big city are decadent, perverted debauchees (not that peasants would know the meaning of such terms).

refugees would be dead before sundown were they foolish or desperate enough to seek shelter beneath the eaves. Should the peasantry flee to the nearest walled town, they will certainly be forced to defend it, or perhaps simply thrown before the advancing enemy to slow them down.

THE URBAN POOR

Those of the Tier of Brass who inhabit the larger towns and the mighty cities of the Empire are scarcely better off than their rural cousins. They may be free of the fear of howling beastmen or savage greenskins emerging from the tree line at any moment, but the side streets and alleyways are populated by villains every bit as dangerous. Life in the towns and cities is as cheap as a tollyman's supper, and most dawns see dozens of fresh corpses drifting slowly downstream, throats cut and purses lifted. In the thinly populated countryside, the lost are desperately missed, but in the bustling cities they are not. It is said that a man could live his whole life and never speak to his neighbour, and that said neighbour would step over his dying body as soon as offer him the tidings of the day.

In the country, employment is more or less guaranteed since most families are indentured to serve a particular lord and have no other choice. The same is not true in the cities, where many struggle to find even a day's honest labour with no guarantee that the position will still be there the next day. Those lucky enough to find regular work often do so labouring for the merchant class, as stevedores or longshoremen. Many find employment in the warehouses and marshalling yards of the great trading houses, but such positions are coveted and subject to the ebb and flow of trade. Most are forced to make do with the most menial of positions that barely earn them enough to pay for a cold ratwurst sausage at the end of the day.

In place of the extended family, the more fortunate of the urban poor are members of the lesser guilds. Although extremely hard to join and jealous of what scant influence they possess, these guilds do ensure some measure of stability for their members. Most true tradesmen actually belong to the Tier of Silver and look down their noses at the lowliest of these so-called 'paupers' guilds, which include the Honourable Guild of Noddy Counters, the Grunberg Gongsmen, the Ancient Order of Corpse-Cake Bakers, and the Brotherhood of Dunkelburg Leech-Herders.

Of course, the career with the most stability is the life of the outlaw and criminal. While one in every hundred who embark upon such a career retires comfortably, most end up right back in the gutter with a knife in the back or a crossbow bolt embedded in the skull.

THE TIER OF SILVER

The Tier of Silver consists of people with some limited means of getting by in life; perhaps a small plot of land if they live in the country or a house if they live in the city. Artisans whose trade is not in great demand occupy the bottom of the tier while merchants at the top aspire to join the Tier of Gold. In general, those of the Tier of Silver know from where their next meal will come and often who will cook it for them.

THE COUNTRY GENTRY

In the countryside, those of the Tier of Silver may be skilled tradesmen, for every village needs its blacksmith, apothecary, baker, and the like. While individuals may or may not be members of a professional guild, they are usually well known and respected in their

THE RURAL POOR

The majority of those who occupy the Tier of Brass live in the countryside, in the numerous hamlets and villages clinging to existence along the roads and waterways of the Empire. Most are members of extended families that have lived there for centuries, or so they imagine since most are unlettered and no accurate records are kept. The existence of these extended familial networks generally ensures that should one family fall upon hard times, the remainder are able to offer help.

In the main, the rural poor's prosperity overwhelmingly relies upon two factors. The first factor is the harvest; peasants farm throughout the year keep starvation at bay and sell their surplus crops at market. Of course, almost any profit a peasant makes goes back to his landlord, and the average peasant keeps little more than one brass penny in five. As a result of their reliance on the land, most rural communities venerate nature gods in addition to Sigmar, especially Rhya and Taal. Myriad regional traditions beseech these gods for aid with the harvest, fertility, and protection from bad weather.

The other factor that regularly impacts upon the lives of the rural peasantry is war. With little or no warning, the fields can be reduced to barren, scorched wastes. Livestock can be taken by foraging armies, whether those of the province or the enemy. Peasant hovels can be burned by pillaging hordes or crushed beneath the clumsy feet of drunken giants. Faced with such a fate, most peasants flee before the local lord attempts to round them up into a militia band and forces them to fight the invaders armed with little more than pitchforks and foul breath. Often, there is no choice but to fight, for there is rarely anywhere to seek refuge. The woodlands surrounding the farms are overrun with vile creatures and most

communities. The middle to upper range of the country gentry aspire to a life of relative comfort, freed from the drudgery of actual work. Many of them run profitable business ventures and, beyond the management of their own affairs, do not bother themselves with physical labour. If they own modest properties in the towns or cities, they usually retain the services of licensed brokers, practitioners of law, and the like. Although the most successful are sometimes invited to soirées and balls in the city, urban sophisticates generally regard them as country bumpkins.

The countryside being very much the domain of the ruling classes, there is scant room for social advancement. Glowering within their walled country piles and jealously protective of the station their families have maintained for so many centuries, the nobles regard the rise of the merchant class as a very bad thing indeed. Occasionally, a stagnant noble line in need of new blood might stoop to allow a younger son to marry the daughter of a local burgher, so long as the dowry is generous. Noble houses fallen upon hard times as a result of a collapse in trade or the calamities of war might equally condescend to marry lower than its normal station, suffering the cruel jibes of peers and rivals in court for the sake of the line.

CITY-DWELLERS

The city-dwelling middle classes are by far the most socially mobile group in the Empire, and as such the most aspirational. The fortunes of many such families have steadily improved since the Time of Three Emperors and they now form a pseudo-noble class within the Tier of Silver determined to take their place in the Empire's noble courts. Below these families are those of modest, yet comfortable means, working in the administrative, clerical, or academic fields.

Another large grouping within the city-dwelling Tier of Silver are the craftsmen and artists skilled enough to command reasonable sums for their work. The cities are their natural habitats. In this age of war, the skills of all manner of weaponsmiths and armourers are in high demand, as are those of military masons, for the walls of the fortified towns and cities are ever battered by the foes of the Emperor. Many towns and cities are home to growing arms foundries, their continuous output equipping the ranks of the city militias and the state armies. The owners of these foundries, once master craftsmen but now transformed to arms magnates, are among the richest of their class.

As with the paupers' guilds of the Tier of Brass, there are a huge number of professional bodies constituted to protect the interests of particular trades and most of them are based in the larger towns and the cities. Each of the great trades and professions on which the might and wealth of the Empire is founded has its own guild, a confraternity of specialists pledged to protect the secrets of their arts and stand together against outside interests. Some of these guilds have grown as powerful as the largest merchant houses and noble families; without their cooperation, the wheels of commerce might come screeching to a juddering halt. Many regard the guilds with outright suspicion, notably the Cult of Sigmar, which regards the binding oaths made between brother guildsmen as contradictory to due reverence to the Empire's founder and loyalty to the state.

Perhaps the most visible aspect of the existence of the city-dwelling middle classes is the notion of conspicuous consumption. Those relatively new to wealth are compelled to rub their former peers' noses in the fact, to parade through the streets dressed in all manner of outrageous attire and to build expensive architectural follies where everyone else has to look at them every day. They follow,

and indeed hope to set, fashion, employing small armies of dressmakers to ensure that they are never seen in court wearing the same outfit twice. In truth, many of these displays hide the fact that the individuals are desperately in debt but trying hard to deny that fact. By increasing the visibility of their spending, they hope to stave off ill rumour and maintain the confidence of their peers and their backers. All it takes is for the same bejewelled codpiece to be worn out twice, one badly washed wine stain to be glimpsed, or one ragged hem to catch the eye and tongues will start wagging. When that happens, many families are doomed, for unlike the other classes, these have no safety net to catch them should they fall. All too many ambitious merchants have risen to the giddy heights of the Tier of Silver only to have a single ill-judged comment or ill-conceived trade deal send them plummeting back to the miserable depths of the Tier of Brass.

THE TIER OF GOLD

The Tier of Gold is made of money. Some of it is new, the result of merchants and bankers amassing their fortunes over several generations, but much of it is old, hoarded by nobles able to trace their roots to the dawn of the Empire itself. In time, new money becomes old money as merchants are granted noble title. Those already well established despise the interlopers in their midst, though propriety forces them to remain polite. Often, the feeling is mutual.

Those who occupy the Tier of Gold exist at the very top of the Empire's social order and several of them can trace their lineage back many generations to the granting of a noble title and the land associated with it. The very top echelon of this elite can trace their bloodlines all the way back to the time of Sigmar himself, their ancestors the leaders of the ancient tribes and their trusted retainers. Relatively few can claim such an honour, for two and a half thousand years after the event the bloodlines are convoluted, diluted, and in many cases horribly polluted.

While the lesser tiers are subject to the ebb and flow of fortune and wealth, very little can threaten the lot of a house once it is truly established in the Tier of Gold. Wealth flows from their land and they receive income from their peasant tenants. Since the landowners set these fees and leave the common man with precious little recourse to appeal, they are never short of sources of wealth. As communities have developed and markets and trades grown, so their incomes have increased further still. The richest houses of the Tier of Gold are own titles or holdings in the cities, for the wealth is distilled and concentrated there like nowhere else.

While most of the Tier of Gold draw off the bulk of their income and power from a single region, they also have interests spread far and wide. They invest in all manner of concerns, but they rarely become involved in day-to-day management. Instead, they rely on a cadre of professional brokers and factotums who conduct business on their behalf.

While many in the lower tiers are insecure in their station in life, those of the Tier of Gold regard wealth and its many privileges and trappings as their birthright. It would never occur to them that there might not be an army of stooping servants on hand to attend to their every need and a warm, well-defended castle to bed down in each night. Even those only recently elevated to the Tier of Gold are certain in the knowledge that this is the natural order of things, that all have their place and all should remain exactly as it is. Of course, this means that those of the Tier of Gold have a vested interest in maintaining the status quo and anything that threatens it tends to draw a powerful reaction. Workers demanding

pay increases, agitators who claim the common man has inherent rights, and burghers calling for political reform all tend to be met with outrage. Many wealthy patriarchs are served by shadowy counsellors who deal with such things in their master's stead and often without his full knowledge. These 'fixers' quietly ensure that the rabble stays in its place and the master remains in his.

While the upper classes tend not to indulge in the overt displays of consumption of the more aspirational members of the Tier of Silver, they often spend outrageous sums of money on what, to the common man, appears sheer folly. They maintain luxurious town-houses in the cities and palatial, fortified manors in the countryside. Many maintain small, private armies around which the levy is formed in times of war. They patronise the arts, commissioning painters and sculptors to immortalise (and idealise) their features in oil and marble and employing poets and musicians to compose and perform all manner of frivolous spectacles. They take for granted that the food they dine upon each night is of the very finest quality and prepared by the most celebrated cooks in the land.

Despite what these rulers believe, however, their position is not necessarily permanent. Many times throughout the turbulent history of the Empire, invaders have ravaged the very lands from which they derive their power and influence. A house must take every measure, fair and foul, to protect its estates when they are threatened, for to do otherwise is to risk all. Should its lands actually suffer invasion, a house will use every resource at its disposal and call in every favour it can muster to raise an army strong enough to retake the lost territory. On several occasions, a province of the Empire has been so devastated that it ceased to exist, sometimes temporarily, sometimes for good. The province of Solland is a salutary example of the doom that can befall the most powerful houses of a state that falls to invasion. Solland was so disastrously crushed by the invasion of Gorbard Ironclaw that recovery was impossible and its lands were absorbed into those of its neighbour Wissenland. The surviving houses were integrated into those of Wissenland, and while many still consider themselves sons of Solland, in truth that state has long since passed from history. Other provinces have suffered similar, if not quite so permanent tragedies, with wars and uprisings ending numerous ancient bloodlines. When the beast-man war leader Gorthor ravaged Ostland and Hockland, such destruction was wrought that both states took many years to recover and many family estates were lost forever. Some shattered houses still harbour ambitions of reclaiming the ruined and overgrown towns and villages of these and other regions, dreaming of lost fortunes recovered and lost honour restored.

SOCIAL MOBILITY

For most people, it is all but impossible to 'move up in the world': the social order is so rigid that few even consider the possibility of exceeding the constraints of their birth. However, with the rise of the middle classes, a shift has occurred, albeit a gradual one manifested over generations and rarely within the lifetime of one individual. By way of a slow and methodical approach to the continuation of a dynasty, forming alliances, and marrying children to strategic partners, many merchant families have joined the Tier of Gold and taken on the character of the lower ranked noble lines.

While it is extremely hard to rise in status, it is more likely that an individual will fall, though there are many safeguards in place to ensure the fall is not terminal and does not drag others down with it. In the Tier of Brass, relations and community members aid a starving family or an unemployed labourer, knowing full well that

they themselves might be in the same position soon and just as needing of help. Those of the Tier of Gold rarely allow their peers to suffer complete ignominy, for it would not do to show the lower classes that their rulers' positions are not set in stone. As happened when Solland fell and its surviving rulers were integrated into the ruling houses of Wissenland, others will often afford the fallen with a refuge, though usually at a cost. What assets and interests the houses of Solland were forced to surrender may never be known outside of the closed chambers of the factors who brokered the whole affair, but no doubt the rulers of Wissenland did very well indeed out of events.

It is generally through more unconventional methods that individuals raise their status, though their new peers will invariably look upon them with ill-disguised distaste. Adventurers and criminals (often one and the same thing) are an example of such types, and it is not unknown for a lowborn buccaneer to amass such a fortune as a result of some bold adventure that he is propelled from the gutter to the Imperial Court in the blink of an eye. Those who excel in the military arts might rise in similar fashion, especially if their victories are so great and the adoration of the people is so loud that few could object to their presence in the higher echelons of society. Artists and entertainers occasionally reach such lofty heights too, though their station is often entirely at the whim of a wealthy patron who could drop them in favour of another at any moment.

FALLING FROM GRACE

What crimes or misdemeanours might cause an individual to forfeit their social status? Considering the fact that the wealthy really do not want to see, or rather have it seen, any of their kind sink down the social ladder, it is a comparatively rare occurrence. Nonetheless, there are some circumstances in which any individual, not simply one of noble birth, might fall from grace.

A noble failing to discharge the duties imposed upon him by the conditions of his own title would likely be a cause of major disgrace, though usually the higher-ranked lord would see the infraction coming and make some attempt to curtail it. A baron failing to muster an army to serve his Elector Count would incur great wrath, especially if the failure precipitated a military defeat. If the failure was construed as a deliberate ploy rather than a matter of incompetence then heaven help the baron, for that would surely be taken as treachery.

Plotting against an individual of superior rank is also likely to result in disgrace, if the matter is discovered, at least. Numerous crowns and titles have changed hands by way of a well-timed assassination and the outcome of the enterprise generally determines whether or not it results in disgrace. Though not so extreme as the city-states of Tilea, where assassination is viewed as a legitimate tool of governance, the upper echelons of the Empire's ruling classes are riven with intrigue and plot. Sometimes the victor will assume his new office and all around him will know exactly how he attained it, but be unwilling to raise a protest lest they themselves suffer a similar fate.

Another form of disgrace is incurred when a noble fails to act according to the principles of propriety, especially those espoused by the doctrine of noblesse oblige. Perhaps the most common cause of a fall from grace is dramatic military defeat, the noble fleeing the battlefield, or deploying an army incompetently. Other contraventions of propriety include falling in love with a member of a lower

class (and actually marrying said commoner), being caught conspiring with low-born criminals (as opposed to high born ones), cavorting with the lower classes, and of course heresy. Some dubious noble families have been stripped of title or even burned from existence due to just one of their household worshipping the Dark Gods or developing mutations.

While most of these crimes of impropriety apply to those of the Tier of Gold, many of the Tier of Silver impersonate their so-called betters to such a degree that they ape many of their social mores and have taken on many of the same notions of right and wrong. Yet, the middle classes often display a gritty realism rarely found in pampered nobility, for having climbed as far as they have, they have a better understanding of how far a drop awaits them should they fall...

WEALTH AND POWER

As many a noble fallen upon hard times has discovered, wealth and power are not always one and the same. Likewise, many merchants who have exploited, bribed, politicked, and assassinated their way to the top have found that no amount of wealth will ever grant them the influence they crave. The indefinable resource at play is status, and it is bought not in coin, but in blood, and it takes generations to amass.

No matter how much wealth he has accrued, a merchant or burgher will always be considered a commoner by those born into the Tier of Gold. The richer the pretender, the more the trueborn nobles despise him, regarding the upstart as a vulgar interloper in their world. Though he may be entitled to attend court, he will be repeatedly snubbed and gossiped about, an invisible web of intrigue spun around him and threatening to entrap him with fatal consequences. Only the very cleverest of commoners succeeds in such an environment and generally only the ones who have attained the patronage of the highest courts in the land. A common-born general who has led the armies of the Empire to great victories might become the Emperor's favourite or an adventurer returned from the New World might be called upon the regale a countess with tales of his daring exploits.

Despite the entrenchment of the social order, the merchant classes' social mobility is increasing and some among the nobility who have taken note. While court dandies cast withering glances at the low-born upstarts in their midst, grimmer faced men gather in secret to plan a response to this challenge. As the patriarchs or the most trusted counsellors of ancient noble lines, they take whatever actions they deem necessary to protect their house's interests. They lay plans that may take decades to be fully realised and despatch agents across the Old World and beyond in an effort to subtly undermine their enemies. Such men only rarely resort to such crude means as assassination, but will do so when needed. Often, a magnate newly come to court will share drinks with men who are plotting not only his downfall, but also the ruination of every one of his kin. Those who dare challenge the very highest echelons of the Empire's ruling classes move through a hunting ground of predators they cannot see, men who will look them in the eye and engage in polite conversation while shadowy agents move against everything and everyone they hold dear.

SUB-CLASSES AND OUTCASTS

While the Tiers of Brass, Silver, and Gold encompass the vast majority of the people of the Empire, there are a number of other bodies that exist alongside this social structure but are not truly part of it. Many have their own, internal economies, manners, and politics, with little or no contact with wider society. Many are regarded with suspicion or even outright hostility and the feeling is often mutual.

Although comprised of nobles, the Knightly Orders exist as a class apart from the society of the Empire. Upon entering such an organisation, an aspiring knight submits himself to an entirely new order and chain of authority. The rules of comportment and interaction are often totally different behind the walls of the order's cloisters and while a man's family and achievements outside the order are never entirely eliminated, rank within the order takes precedence. When the son of a great and powerful lord submits to the rule of the order, he surrenders himself to the authority of men potentially born to lesser noble houses, but who have superiority nonetheless. Some find such a situation intolerable and do not last long as knights. Others embrace the relative openness of the order, and focus on rising through the ranks based on their own worth and achievements rather than that of their fathers.

Wizards are another class that exists apart from the mainstream of society. More so than any other body, the Colleges of Magic are meritocracies, where power has nothing whatsoever to do with station. Within the glittering, arcing towers of wizardry that rear high above Altdorf, status is determined by an individual's ability to perceive and manipulate the Winds of Magic, and nothing else. The Colleges of Magic enjoy a privileged position in the Imperial hierarchy because they are a vital lynchpin in the defence of the land against the incursions of Chaos. The Battle Wizards accompany the armies of men, unleashing fearsome magical destruction upon the foe while scribes and prognosticators study the ebb and flow of time in search of any shred of wisdom that might curtail disaster. It was not always thus; for a time, some five centuries ago, the practise of wizardry was even outlawed. In other times, wars between mighty wizard lords have split the lands asunder and caused great woe.

Those who serve the many cults of the gods of the Old World are also a class unto themselves. Each cult is different from the next and while some are organised in a highly formal manner, others appear anarchic and random to outsiders. The Cult of Sigmar is the pre-eminent religion in the Empire, but those who serve Ulric, Taal, Myrmidia, and many others also exist. Many young nobles are admitted into such cults for a time, often to gain discipline and wisdom not available elsewhere, or simply to teach a wayward son a useful life lesson.

Other groups existing alongside the main tiers of society include the academics, centred on the great University of Altdorf, as well as the engineers based in the same city. The artillery school of Nuln is so well established and powerful that its members are almost a class unto themselves, as are professional army officers and mercenary companies found across the length and breadth of the Empire. Each has its own customs, hierarchy, and secrets and interacts with the wider world in different ways, from the isolationists to the downright haughty.



CHAPTER FOUR

CRIME & PUNISHMENT

The system by which laws are enacted in the Empire is so incredibly complex that entire scholarly bodies exist to keep a track of it all. There are several reasons for this complexity. Firstly, the laws are rooted in the traditions of each of the ancient tribes, which themselves had been in existence for a millennium or more before Sigmar united them into a coherent Empire. The provinces that were the inheritors of each of these tribes continued many of their traditions and over the centuries formalised them into a body of law. Another reason for the complexity is the fact that each province is autonomous in almost, but not quite, every respect, so there are many laws that apply in one state but not in the others. A traveller might cross the boundary between provinces without realising it and become, by some unknowing crime, an enemy of that state in a single step. Another complicating factor is that the court of the Emperor passes its own laws, though generally only concerning matters that transcend provincial interest. Such laws generally relate to Empire-wide taxation, trade, and matters of mutual defence, but in theory the Emperor can pass laws relating to any subject or sphere he wishes.

All of this is complicated still further by the inherent, rampantly unequal class system of the Empire. A peasant might count himself lucky to be thrown in a gaol overnight and walk away the next

morning with two black eyes and a small fine for a crime that a noble could commit without drawing even the slightest comment. In fact, nobles are often able to commit crimes that would see a common man sent to the gallows, so powerful are they in the social order and the structures that support it.

Each province has its own system of passing and enforcing laws, with different names for its judiciary, legislature, and law enforcement bodies. Despite these differences, there are broadly two forms of law that a man need concern himself with – the Emperor's Law and the Elector's Law.

THE EMPEROR'S LAW

The Imperial Court operates from the seat of power of whichever of the Counts has been elected by his peers as Emperor – when Magnus the Pious was Emperor, for example, the Imperial Court convened in his own city state of Nuln. With Karl-Franz seated on the Imperial Throne, Altdorf is currently host to the Imperial Court, and it is from there that newly passed laws are decreed and communicated across the land. Quite apart from Altdorf's current status as host to the Imperial Court, it is also the pre-eminent administrative centre of the Empire, for it is home to the greatest of its

institutions – the Colleges of Magic, the University of Altdorf, and the Engineers' School. While the Empire has no capital per se, with Altdorf the seat of the current Emperor and host to so many august institutions, it comes closer than any other city to holding that title.

The Emperor is the font of all of the law that binds the Elector Counts, and through them the people, together. Although assisted by numerous counsellors and scholars, it is ultimately on his authority that laws are introduced and enacted. The Emperor's pronouncements on the manner in which the states should be administered are transcribed by an army of scribes and clerks, debated by the scholars in law, and presented back to him in the form of formal text written upon great rolls of parchment. Upon the Emperor setting his seal to the rolls, they become law and enforceable according to the codes and traditions of the lands.

The Emperor's power is not absolute however; ultimately, it is dependent upon the sufferance of the Elector Counts. Depending upon the power and influence any given Emperor is able to wield and exert, he may be able to pass countless laws or none. If an Emperor lacks the support of the Elector Counts, his house is unlikely to sit upon the throne of the Emperor for many successive generations. Of course, some Emperors have no concern for events that will only come to pass after their own death and conduct themselves as virtual tyrants. On numerous occasions, such behaviour has either left the Elector Counts unable to agree upon a successor or led to outright civil war between aggrieved parties. As a consequence, a wise Emperor restricts his lawmaking to issues that affect the Empire as a whole and leaves more mundane details to the rulers of each province.

Laws disseminated from the Imperial Court most often enforce or administrate the feudal obligations of the Electoral Counts. While the Emperor holds no claim or title to the lands of the other Counts, they owe him a debt of honour that stretches back to the earliest days of the Empire, when their ancestors swore allegiance to Sigmar himself. Sigmar had little interest in the administration of land or the imposition of taxes so long as any laws passed were fair and just. He cared only that men's arms were kept strong and that sufficient armies could be gathered when called upon to

defend the land. Two and a half millennia after the time of Sigmar, the Emperor's most important duty is still to muster the states' armies and to lead them against those who would threaten Sigmar's beloved Empire. Every law the Emperor passes flows from that core principle and a wise Emperor keeps this in mind above all else.

Examples of laws passed by the Emperor include the building of forts and watchtowers to guard the borders of the Empire against invasion, and internal threats, such as orcs and beastmen attacking from of the Middle Mountains or any of the dark woodlands that swathe the land. Raising armies is an expensive business and all of



My Lord,

As ordered and requested through the office of the Master of the Imperial Household, I have compiled an attenuated list of the many observances, malfeasances, misdemeanours, delinquencies, and not to mention crimes applicable in the State of Reikland and in other sundry regions of our glorious Empire. Some of these crimes and codes are applicable in your own domains, My Lord, and I would counsel that now your uncle has passed, Sigmar grant him rest, you might decide to revise those of less relevance to the mores of today.

Throughout most lands and domains of the Empire, to spill the blood of a noble is considered a crime punishable by the death by hanging of the guilty party and in many cases of his immediate kin. Should any of the noble's vestments be grievously stained in the spilling of the blood, this wrong must be righted at the expense of the guilty party's executor.

In Averland, to allow the blood of a noble to be spilled and, in so doing, not to make haste to hinder the assailant is considered a crime punishable by the death of the guilty party, he first having suffered the putting out of his eyes by the Count's bonded apothecary.



the provinces must contribute through the imposition of war taxes. Imperial laws also relate to the guarding of the main trade routes through the Empire, both roads and waterways, which must be kept clear of the ever-encroaching forests and of brigands and outlaws. Other laws govern issues of trade and relations with other nations. The Imperial Court dispatches ambassadors to the thrones of nations far and wide, including Bretonnia, the Tilean City States, and the numerous thrones of Estalia. The Emperor might even have course to converse with the more powerful of the robber-lords of the Border Princes. His agents travel eastwards along the ancient Silver Road and those who can win through the Ogre Kingdoms have even appeared in the court of Cathay. Others travel southwards to converse with the snake-tongued rulers of Araby. All these missions require funding and are ultimately for the good of the Empire.

THE ELECTOR'S LAW

Within the borders of his province, the Elector Count is lord and master of all. His word is law, for he sits atop the apex of a pyramid of status that encompasses every noble in the land. Each province is subdivided many times and numerous laws are passed at different levels relating to a staggering range of subjects. The Elector Count, like the Emperor, is concerned mainly with raising armies and taxes, but his court is called upon to settle all manner of disputes and make all manner of pronouncements. Over the long centuries, each province has amassed a huge and impenetrable body of statute governing everything from the settlement of border disputes with neighbouring provinces to the proper compensation to a peasant deprived of access to his chickens by the passage of an invading army (three and a half chickens per day).

While the Elector Count passes laws that apply to the entire state, the nobles below them do likewise within their own domains, passing judgement on those accused of breaking the laws of the land and settling acrimonious disputes. Many nobles deputise this duty, finding it tiresome, overly taxing, or just an unwelcome distraction from other pastimes. In some regions, a class of professional Imperial judges has emerged over the centuries, combining the duties of judge, jury, and executioner. In other domains, such matters are devolved to local worthies, aldermen, retired army officers, and the like.

The reality of law in the Empire, especially the Elector's Law, is that appeals are only possible for the nobility. The common man is subject to whatever law his betters choose to impose upon him and he has precious little recourse against them. This is one of the reasons for the constitution of many of the guilds, for collectively the trades have a chance of defending themselves against grossly unfair taxation and restrictions upon their activities. Only the noble classes or the very wealthy (usually the same people) have any right of appeal against the law. The numerous codes that govern the way nobles interact with one another provide a means of settling disputes between such men and women as well as finding ways in which laws applicable to the bulk of common humanity can be circumvented. It is to the eternal chagrin of the working man that a noble can apparently avoid taxes that he himself can scarce afford to meet. Numerous princes have quite literally gotten away with murder, whereas a commoner would be hung from the village gallows for exactly the same crime. The servants' quarters of countless noble mansions are populated by urchins begat by lordly sires when common men are flogged by dogs for so much as glancing at the daughters of noble lords. Tenant farmers bonded to a plot of land for generations gain not a shilling of compensation when their land is seized by the state, while noble houses are paid handsomely for the use of their estates.

Given these obvious injustices, it can be scant surprise that anyone plotting and preaching against the prevailing social order find common cause with those treated badly by the nobility and their judges. Downtrodden commoners flock to the ragged banners of outlaws and brigands, joining the ranks of the bitter dispossessed who dream of tearing down the ancient structures of the Empire. Some outlaws imagine they can lead a merry life under the eaves of the forest, but most end up in a beastman's belly. Others escape the wrath of the baron's men and flee to the Border Princes, there to join the household of some petty lordling. Most are caught and hanged as an example to those who would challenge an order that has existed as long as the Empire and weathered every threat it has ever faced.

COMMON PUNISHMENTS

While the statute books commonly define the minimum sentence that the law considers appropriate for committing a given crime, the judge hearing the case is free to impose something far worse, or to show leniency (though the former is far more common than the latter). The most common forms of punishment are presented here, but men are nothing if not imaginative in their cruelty and numerous others exist. In some areas, it is common for the mob to administer its own form of rough justice, beating a transgressor or clamping him in stocks for a day before higher authorities become involved. In other places, truly horrific means of punishment including dismemberment and disfigurement are employed.

In many Provinces, to lay hands upon a noble is considered a crime punishable by the severing of the hand in question. Compiler's Note – sadly, this crime was not revised before your uncle's illness, for had it been, his apothecary might have been more willing to intervene.

Laying hands upon the Baroness of Fursthausen is considered a crime punishable by the severing of both hands. This statute was revised three days after its assent by the proviso that the Baron of Fursthausen shall be exempt from said crime.

In Middenheim, it is an offence for a commoner to challenge a noble to a duel. Guilt is established by way of the time-honoured tradition of a trial of arms.

In most regions of the Empire, a servant who misuses His Lord's treasury will be punished by the forfeiture of his liberty for the remainder of the span of his natural life. In Ostland, upon application of the Lord's mercy, this sentence may be commuted to life imprisonment in the Tower of Death.

In the lands surrounding Wolfenburg in the Province of Ostland, the improper dissemination of the Count's secrets is considered a crime of the highest order, punishable by death by scaphism.

In the Riding of Averland, taking the Count's name in vain is a crime of such severity that the guilty party shall be dressed in women's attire and made to enter the Fay Marshes west of Mayby. Should he return, his crime shall be forgiven.

In the former Province of Solland, it was a crime to ride a horse while suffering from the plague. What punishment was applicable is now unknown, the statute rolls having been lost during the devastation wrought upon that sad land by the greenskins.

In Altdorf, an ancient statute proclaims that should the corpse of a dragon be found anywhere in the land, its presence must at once be reported to the authorities. The scales of said beast are by law granted to the Altdorf Guild of Armourers, the claws to the Brotherhood of Bladesmen, the left eyeball to the Colleges of Magic, and the gall bladder to the Sisterhood of Hexenstag. Failure to disclose the discovery of such a corpse invokes a prison sentence of no less than ten years.

In Grissenwald in the Province of Wissenland, eating Ostland Blue-veined cheese in public was outlawed for many centuries. The law was overturned when Baron von Holdeff's personal surgeon declared that a regular diet of the substance provided a miraculous cure for the afflictions of Florid Dropsy, Brewer's Bloat, and Butcher's Gout.

Throughout the lands surrounding Nuln, it is a crime of the very worst kind to name a pig 'Magnus', excepting where said swine is certified and witnessed as belonging to that most noble of breeds, the 'Lop-eyed Winkelhausen.'

Along the waters of the Upper Reik, it is a crime to impede the progress of the Emperor's Counting Boat. To do so carries a punishment of public flogging followed by application of the cucking stool.

The Imperial Court recently passed a law that is applicable across the entire Empire having been ratified in the court of every Elector Count, outlawing 'Ribald and Unruly Sedition at Public Gatherings.' The law was introduced to combat a wave of unrest sweeping the lands following rumours of impending invasion from the north, and was largely successful in quelling the fears of the masses.

A case heard at the court of the Electoral Count of Talabecland in 1810 established the principle that Orcs, Goblins and their kind have no right to legal process within the Empire. The case was brought about when a snotling was discovered ransacking an innkeeper's outhouse and the offended party attempted to sue the diminutive burglar. Having failed in his action, the innkeeper was fined under a previous ordinance requiring him to keep his property free of 'parties inimical to order'. Subsequent cases drawing on the 1810 precedent extended the exemption to toads, stoats, and Bretonnians.

In Nordland, it is illegal to distribute printed matter criticising the honour, laws, judgement, victories, health, sanity, parentage, or personal hygiene of the Electoral Count or any of his family. The punishment for this crime is five years hard labour.

Yours in service,

Sigmund von Ilberdun

IMPRISONMENT

With the Empire beset from within and without by a wide range of bitter enemies, the maintenance of large and expensive prisons is generally considered wasteful. Large cities are host to gaols which make an example of prisoners, but generally the very worst offenders are executed and the less serious crimes punished in other ways. When life imprisonment is imposed, it is generally because the offended party considers 'hanging too good' and wants to make a show of the application of justice and impose a lifetime of suffering on the guilty party. Furthermore, many prisons are symbols of the power of the state to impose its will on the populace, feared places no subject ever wishes to witness from the inside.

CORPORAL PUNISHMENT

Numerous crimes are punishable by public flogging or a variety of similarly degrading and painful methods. Every village has its sadistic constable notorious in the environs for his predilection for punishment, which is frequently meted out on the spot instead of bothering with the time and expense of due process.

CAPITAL PUNISHMENT

Execution is common in the lands of the Empire, and often expedient considering the numerous challenges humanity faces on a daily basis. With countless thousands of beastmen, greenskins, and worse haunting the forests and the mountains, resources cannot be committed to punishing or rehabilitating those who continuously reject their duty to their community. Every village has its gallows, every town its execution tower, and every city its chief headman. During the reign of especially despotic Electoral Counts or Emperors, execution has been used as a blunt instrument to keep an unruly populace in line, sometimes successfully, but on other occasions with disastrous results. In 1923 for example, the Duke of Carroburg executed his entire household guard on suspicion of conspiring to overthrow him, only for his castle to be overrun by a beastman warherd for lack of defenders. The Duke was thrown from the highest tower of his castle, cursing his disloyal retainers until the very moment of his death.

HARD LABOUR

Many sentences of execution are in fact commuted to hard labour, for they are often one and the same thing. The roads and waterways must be continuously kept clear of the ever-encroaching trees, the roots and branches creeping forward almost as fast as they can be hacked back. It is the fate of convicted criminals to undertake this arduous duty and few are expected to survive the term of their sentence. Exposure to the wild elements is the least of the convicts' worries, for the forests they are forced to enter are plagued by wild



You may call my methods harsh, or unfair. You may say that a man should be presumed innocent until proven guilty. A noble fancy, but nothing more than that. We live in an imperfect world, and the stakes are too high to let a guilty man go free just because he might have been innocent."

*- Witch Hunter Captain Leopold
at the Purging of Misthausen*

beasts, brigands, beastmen, and the like, all of which consider the labourers no different from an invading army and prey upon them relentlessly.

MILITARY SERVICE

Occasionally, punishment is delivered in the form of military service, though the true, martial value of compelled troops is generally considered negligible. In times of dire need, however, convict regiments are raised and sent into the fires of battle, though rarely with any more intent than to slow an invader's march. Apart from this mass conscription, it is not uncommon for petty criminals to be given the choice between yet another flogging, or even the gallows and 'taking the Count's coin.' In this way, many state regiments are full of hardened criminals and thugs who, in serving the province, have found a means of living without recourse to crime, and one in which war brings with it numerous opportunities to pursue their love of violence and plunder.

EXILE

Exile is fate normally reserved for disgraced nobles whose crimes are too serious and visible to be allowed to go unpunished. Exiled nobles often take with them a core of retainers just as guilty as themselves, and are ejected from the lands, never to return. Depending on the severity of the crime, a noble may be banished from his city, from his province, or from the Empire itself. Invariably, he assumes a new identity and turns to the life of a recluse, a robber baron in the Border Princes, or occasionally as a mercenary captain selling his services across the Old World, especially in Tilea. Many exiled nobles harbour dreams of returning to their homelands to reap a terrible revenge upon those who exposed and banished them, and some even manage to raise huge armies to reclaim their position.

FINES

The imposition of fines is a much-resented form of punishment, though it is only ever meted out to those who can afford to render up a portion of their wealth. As such, petty criminals are rarely fined, instead being flogged or imprisoned. It tends to be those of the Tier of Silver who are punished in this manner. Because the various systems of justice in place are administered for the benefit of the nobility, there is a wide suspicion that many large fines are

imposed for truly minor infractions as a means of keeping the middle classes in their place. In all likelihood, these suspicions are entirely correct and they are one of the reasons for the rise of such bodies as the guilds.

BRANDING

Branding is a particularly cruel form of punishment generally meted out only by the more sadistic judges, or by those faced with repeated petty criminality and wishing to make a point once and for all. The guilty are branded with a symbol of their crime, such as a clenched fist to indicate battery. Often, the first brand is applied to a part of the body that may be hidden by clothing, but repeated offences often lead to them being placed in visible areas, sometimes even the face. Anyone marked by a brand is effectively an outcast, for their chances of finding gainful employment are poor. Many robbers and brigands have been marked in this way and forced into a life of crime.

"Oh, 'stakes,' sir, very good, sir, right you are sir, very clever. 'Stakes,' 'e says! Ahaha, it is to laff!"

*- Wilhelm Trier, first man burned
at the stake at Misthausen*





CHAPTER FIVE

EXPANDED RULES

In the days of Sigmar, the tribes that would go on to make up the Empire were ruled by families of warrior-chieftains, powerful men and women who led their people in war and peace alike. When the Empire was established, these chieftains became the Elector Counts and their kin the nobility. It has been more than two thousand years since the time of Sigmar, but even today the nobles of the Empire remember that heritage and look to their ancestors as examples. To be a member of the nobility is to be strong, brave, and an unquestioned leader of men.

A noble is born into his position, but he must keep it by proving himself to his superiors. There is always a danger of being disenfranchised by one's liege lord, perhaps to make way for a kinsman or as punishment for a spectacular failure, so canny nobles are always alert to any threats to their position and eager to find ways to increase their own standing.

NOBLE BIRTH

For the vast majority of people – noble or not – in the Empire, their place in society is a matter of birth. Player characters are no different, and, consequently, their social rank is determined during character creation.

A character that has chosen a starting career with the **Noble** trait and invested creation points to begin with **affluent** wealth may choose to be a noble character.



Never wear white after Sigmarzeit.

Swords are to be worn on the right hip if a gentleman; on the left hip if a lady.

To wear the skull of someone whose name you don't know is extremely gauche.

*- Von Güten's Rules of Right & Proper
Behaviour, briefly fashionable in Nuln*



CREATED NOBILITY

Although the greatest noble houses can trace their ancestry back to the time of Sigmar (or at least claim to be able to), it is not unheard of for families of common blood to be elevated to the ranks of the nobility, typically as a reward for an act of great service to the Empire. Depending on the laws and feudal oaths of a given region or noble seat, a noble may be able to elevate anyone he chooses to serve as one of his vassals. The limiting factor is usually land, as a noble lord must grant land to his vassals for them to rule in his name.

A newly-created noble's actions reflect on his liege lord, so most nobles are very careful in who they elevate to nobility. Some unscrupulous nobles are rumoured to grant titles for dubious reasons. Anyone who acquires a reputation for imprudently granting nobility, however, is very likely to ruin his family's prospects and could even be stripped of his own title, so great would be the loss of face.

By and large, nobles are extremely jealous of their status. For a character to be elevated to the nobility would be extremely rare, and can only occur with the consent of the GM.

Once elevated to the nobility, an "upstart" noble is unlikely to reap the full benefits of his new rank. Just because he has a title does not mean that he has mastered the etiquette or has a comprehensive understanding of the standards of behaviour expected of his new rank, and it certainly does not mean that he has earned the respect of his newfound peers. Most newly-created nobles suffer the indignation of their fellows and strive to find good tutors and good marriages for their children in the hope that the next generation will fare better.

ADVANTAGES OF NOBILITY

Noble characters are automatically Gold Tier and can pass for Gold Tier even if temporarily denied access to the wealth normally required to do so. They have what is generally called "good breeding," a comprehensive education in modes of speech, address, style, and behaviour that are extremely difficult for the lower classes to imitate.

Noble characters benefit from the following advantages and disadvantages:

- + Gain ☐ to Charm and Guile checks against anyone in the Gold Tier. Nobles are well versed in socialising with their peers, through either diplomacy or deception.
- + Gain ☐ to Guile and Intimidate checks to anyone in the Silver Tier. Nobles are accustomed to getting their way with merchants, usually through deception or intimidation.
- + Gain ☐ to Intimidate and Leadership checks to anyone in the Brass Tier. Nobles can easily impress the common masses, either through threats or a commanding presence.

- + Suffer 1 additional stress when a social superior (i.e. someone of higher noble rank) causes you to suffer stress.
- + Suffer 1 or more stress when they lose face in front of their peers, including when they show cowardice, immorality, or disloyalty
- + A stipend or income of 1g per month per noble rank (see Benefits of Noble Rank below)

THE NOBLE TRAIT

Several careers included in this set have the **Noble** trait. Characters in these careers fill one of the various roles available to nobility in Imperial society but are not necessarily noble in their own right. Still, the **Noble** trait indicates a familiarity with noble society and a measure of respect from those who move in such circles. Even a common-born ambassador, for example, must still be afforded a degree of respect based on his station (although not quite as much as someone of noble birth, of course!).

NOBLE RANKS

Nobles are extremely conscious of the relative rank of everyone they meet. Rank is ingrained into the codes of behaviour by which nobles live: a gentleman must always greet the highest ranked lady in the room first; the highest ranked guest must sit at the host's right hand, unless he outranks the host or the occasion is in celebration of a third party, in which case... and so on. It is also a survival technique: rank indicates who can help and who can hurt the status of a noble and his family.

THE NOBLE CAREERS

There are several careers included in *Lure of Power* that feature the *Noble* trait:

- + Ambassador
- + Courtier
- + Fop
- + Noble Lord

Other *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay* expansions, particularly *Omens of War*, also feature **Noble** careers that may be of interest to players who want to play a noble character. The **Noble** careers in *Omens of War* are:

- + Captain
- + Duellist
- + Knight
- + Pistolier

In addition, the Dilettante career from the *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay* core product is a good fit conceptually for noble characters. As an optional erratum, you may swap the **Specialist** trait on the Dilettante career for the **Noble** trait.

SLUMMING IT

If careers with the **Noble** trait represent walks of life deemed appropriate for a young man or woman of high birth, then careers with the **Menial** trait represent the exact opposite. Having a scion of a great family embark on a new career as a boatman or, Sigmar forbid, a ratcatcher is bound to set tongues wagging and can damage not only the reputation of the noble himself, but his entire family.

Career ability cards with the **Menial** trait “cancel out” career ability cards for careers with the **Noble** trait for purposes of calculating Noble Rank. However, they cannot reduce a noble character’s Noble Rank below 1 – even the oddest noble is still a noble.

However, noble rank is not always very clear – it can seem utterly opaque to the outside observer! A nobleman is ranked beneath his liege lord, of course, and above any vassals of his own, but where does he stand in relation to his liege’s other vassals? Or to lords whose fealty is to someone else altogether? Or to nobles without any land or titles of their own but come from an influential family? Or to a prestigious knight who has recently won a great victory but whose family is of relatively humble origin? Rank is only partly based on the relative importance or wealth of a noble’s holdings and offices; it also encompasses a host of intangible factors, including reputation, patronage, personal achievements, scandal, piety, family, and marriage connections.

The career system provides a useful mechanical shorthand for noble rank where PCs are concerned. A character’s **Noble Rank** is equal to the number of career ability cards he has belonging to careers with the Noble trait.

*Example: Andrew’s character, Florian, has completed (and received the dedication bonus for) the Fop and Student careers and is currently in the Courtier career. Fop and Courtier are both **Noble** careers, so Florian is a Rank 2 noble.*

Characters who are not noble can still acquire some status in society by dint of their position or their great deeds. Many of the Empire’s common-born captains and generals have earned the respect of their social betters (although they are also often regarded with jealousy and suspicion, as clearly the post of captain or general should have gone to a nobleman instead!).

Characters who are not noble-born calculate their Noble Rank as normal, but must reduce the final total by 1 to a minimum of 0.

*Example: Bridget’s character Helga has completed the Soldier, Captain, and Ambassador careers. Captain and Ambassador are both **Noble** careers, but Helga is not noble. Her noble rank is 1, which affords her some respect in gatherings of high society.*

BENEFITS OF NOBLE RANK

Generally, only other nobles are aware of Noble Rank. To a commoner, one noble is much like another, and there is little point in learning to distinguish between them. However, to other nobles or in noble settings, there are several benefits to Noble Rank.

- ✦ During a Social encounter, characters with Noble Rank can forego rolling for initiative and instead assume they have rolled a number of successes equal to their Noble Rank.
- ✦ Characters receive a stipend of 1g per month per Noble Rank. This wealth represents incomes from lands and titles (minus taxes and other obligations), an allowance from his family, or even gifts from lesser nobles or merchants hoping to curry his favour. If cut off from his wealth, it accumulates during his absence and he receives any monies owed when he returns home.
- ✦ A character adds his Noble Rank to his Willpower to determine his Shame Threshold (see page 36).

THE NOBLE’S OBLIGATIONS

While there are many benefits to nobility, there are also several obligations that nobles must fulfil to continue to reap those benefits. The standards of behaviour that give a noble his social clout and high status have another side, which is that his behaviour must remain within that fairly narrow spectrum, lest he bring shame to

EXAMPLE NPC NOBLE RANKS

While the vagaries of Noble Rank are impossible to pin down and can change from day to day, the following examples place them in context.

Rank 1: Landless nobles, heirs of minor families, cadet branches of more prestigious families with little land or power of their own, newly-made nobility.

Rank 2: Heirs of more important families, heads of minor families with small manors or villages to their name.

Rank 3: Significant nobles with noteworthy holdings including towns and/or a notable castle, heads of families with great wealth, minor nobles made famous by great achievements or prestigious service in war or bureaucracy.

Rank 4: Major nobles sworn directly to an Elector, with many vassals of their own and impressive holdings; significant nobles with impeccable reputations, good pedigrees, or a distinguished record of service; significant nobles connected by marriage or blood to a major noble or royal family; foreign royalty; the most revered Wizard Lords of the Colleges of Magic (such as the Supreme Patriarch) or Arch-Lectors of important and distinguished cults.

Rank 5: The Electors (including non-noble Electors such as the Grand Theogonist), their immediate family, and the highest and most distinguished nobles of Rank 4 who have been exalted for great feats of heroism and nobility.

Rank 6: The Emperor (currently Karl-Franz).

his family. To a certain extent, these standards also extend to a noble's compatriots and certainly to anyone formally part of his household, any of his vassals, and his liege-lord.

Some examples of strictures that may be placed on a noble of the Empire include:

- ✦ Loyalty to the Empire, to the Emperor, and to his liege lord.
- ✦ Keep law and order within one's domain, and continue paying taxes to one's liege lord. This and loyalty are the most fundamental obligations of a noble. While this stricture obviously applies to a noble who actually holds a grant of land, its principles still apply even to landless nobles, who are expected to never contribute to lawlessness and disorder.
- ✦ Piety to the dominant Cult of a noble's homeland first and foremost, while still honouring all the gods of the Empire. In the Reikland, the Cult of Sigmar predominates.
- ✦ Courage and valour in the face of the Empire's foes. The common folk of the Empire look to the nobility to lead them in times of darkness and protect them from the enemies of the Empire.
- ✦ The highest standards of morality and decency, as prescribed by the Imperial Cults and the standards of the province. In most cases this means a noble must be unfailingly honest, law-abiding, chaste, and restrained. Gambling, over-indulgence, and consorting with women of ill-repute are marks of immoral behaviour and a poor example to the common folk.
- ✦ Obedience towards one's betters and especially to one's family.

Clearly, many nobles fail to live up to the ideals they theoretically embody (especially in standards of morality). If they do so in private, or in limited ways, then they can often escape with little more than a few whispers of scandal. However, a noble who fails to live up to his obligations publicly or in the eyes of his lord or family may potentially be stripped of his rank, deprived of any titles he may have acquired, and ostracized by his peers.

In gameplay terms, all the benefits of nobility can be lost if a noble fails to live up to his obligations, and they can only be regained after a long and arduous process of redemption. Each time a PC noble fails in one of his obligations in the eyes of his peers and lord (at the discretion of the GM), he must flip over one of his career ability cards with the **Noble** trait and place a tracking token on it to represent his shame and disgrace. The PC cannot use that ability for as long as the token remains. This penalty lingers until the shame has dissipated (again at the discretion of the GM) – either because the PC has done something impressively noble, or due to the passage of time (about a month). At that point, the token is removed, the card is flipped back over and the ability can be used normally.

If the PC noble fails in one of his obligations and has no additional career ability cards with the **Noble** trait left to flip over, he instead loses all advantages of nobility (see page 27) and benefits of noble rank (see page 28) and depending on the severity of his failure, he may be punished further by his lord.

Game masters are encouraged to use the obligations of a noble character to serve the story. A liege lord's instructions can provide the impetus for an adventure, while the disgrace and subsequent redemption of any noble can form the basis of an entire campaign.

SHAME AND EXILE

It is not at all uncommon, when a noble has been disgraced, for his liege lord to allow him an opportunity to save face by going far away. Nobles thus disgraced leave their liege lord's lands, possibly travelling to another province or even outside the boundaries of the Empire, where their shame is not widely known. There, they attempt to redeem themselves, find a new patron, or simply wait for the scandal to die down before they can return. For some, that day never comes: they die in exile, and can only hope that their shame is not passed on to their heirs.

RETAINERS

As characters grow in wealth and power, they may find themselves in a position to acquire a staff of talented and loyal assistants to attend to the day-to-day business they themselves have neither the time nor interest to manage. These assistants are known as retainers, and they are introduced as an optional new component for the *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay* game.

RETAINERS VS. GENERAL STAFF

Retainers, it is worth noting, differ from general servants. It is fairly inexpensive to hire someone to clean or carry in the Old World, with common labourers or servants earning as little as a silver shilling per day, and the ever-present urchins and poor youths of the cities are always available to run a quick errand for a handful of brass pennies.



ANATOMY OF A RETAINER CARD



Title. The title represents the role the retainer fills in his master's household.

Flavour text. A short passage that provides context for the retainer's role in the setting.

Prerequisites. A list of prerequisites, if any, a PC must meet in order to seek out and acquire the services of such a retainer.

Upkeep. Retainers don't serve for free. They must be paid a salary, and they also accrue any number of incidental expenses for the tools and facilities necessary to do their job.

Effect. The in-game effects of a retainer are explained here.

Set Icon. Each card is marked with a set icon to quickly identify which product the card is from.

Stats. The back side of each card has all of the important statistics so the retainer can be run as an NPC.

However, general servants are not always reliable or competent. The truly skilled and loyal servants are retainers, and they are represented by unique item cards.

Each retainer is a unique individual – one noble's valet may be a wizened old man named Johann, who enjoys sarcastic jokes at his master's expense. Another valet might be a stentorian lady's maid named Elsie, with no sense of humour whatsoever. They are, in short, NPCs like any other – and like any other NPC, the scope of tasks they can attempt or accomplish is effectively unlimited. However, retainers that are represented mechanically within the scope of the WFRP system have certain common traits and the advantages of their service (aside from the lifting, carrying, and various errands NPCs can do) are summarized on their cards.

LOYALTY

Retainers are generally assumed to be loyal to their employer. When given an instruction, the retainer will do his best to carry out the orders and to act in the best interests of his master. When pressured to betray his master by his enemies, a retainer resists to the best of his ability. A retainer, in essence, is the model of an ideal servant.

However, there are limits to what a retainer can be expected to endure. A retainer who is unhappy in his employ will approach his master and explain the situation. Perhaps he feels the duties he is routinely assigned are beneath his station or outside his skill set (a master chef, for example, would rather cook than fetch, carry, or clean; nearly any retainer would be flummoxed when asked to shadow a rival, spy, or go adventuring). Perhaps he is uncomfortable in his work environment (likely for a master who insists on dragging his retainers with him into the sewers, off into the wilderness, or to battle), or has moral qualms about his master's behaviour. What distinguishes a loyal retainer from the average servant is not unquestioning obedience, but rather that a loyal retainer has the decency to voice his concerns to his master, rather than to the Witch Hunters. A loyal valet may quit his master's service – this is not an indication of his disloyalty, but rather should serve as an indication to his master that his recent behaviour has been beyond the pale.

COMPETENCE

Part of what sets retainers apart from average, everyday hirelings is their competence. If a character has acquired a master chef retainer, for instance, then he can rest assured that his chef is one of the finest in the city and is the equal of all but the most heroic of tasks in the kitchen. A herald retainer can be relied upon to report the ancestry and heraldry of any nobles encountered, and to do so accurately.

When performing tasks within his area of expertise, a retainer is not required to make a check. He is simply assumed to be successful. When performing tasks outside his area of expertise, a retainer is no more competent than anyone else, of course, and may in fact be quite discomfited to have his talents so misapplied.

Retainers are best employed performing their normal duties, which are described in brief on the retainer's card. Chefs cook and manage the kitchen, valets act as personal assistants, and so forth. While performing these duties, the retainer supplies his master with the benefits listed on the retainer card. If the retainer is prevented from



performing his duties – perhaps because his employer has required different duties of him – then his normal benefits as a retainer are temporarily ignored.

ACQUIRING A RETAINER

Characters may acquire the services of a retainer in the same way they hire any other service, with a few exceptions. Retainers are subject to availability checks, just as with any acquisition. Word of mouth is the most important factor in finding a good retainer, as a good referral is everything, so checks to locate one generally use the Charm skill. A good retainer may be considered to be a Superior version of whatever service he offers; he is one step more rare than a normal example of his trade.

Once a retainer is located, an interview is essential. The best retainers are choosy about their employers, so the interview is a two-way affair. The interview can be abstracted as part of the check to locate a retainer or can be roleplayed as a full encounter, depending on the interests of the group and what role the GM imagines the retainer might play in the story moving forward.

In addition, each retainer has some prerequisites. A prospective employer must meet these prerequisites to attract the services of a skilled retainer. Some prerequisites have direct, in-game analogues (such as the money counter's requirement for a minimum amount of wealth to invest), whereas others refer to more abstract requirements such as character rank or Noble Rank. In this case, the retainer simply needs to be convinced that the PC in question is of sufficient status to warrant his services – and that status is abstractly represented via Noble Rank.

Once a retainer has been located and persuaded to serve the PC, all that remains is to pay him his first week's salary up front and arrange for him to begin service.

PAYING UPKEEP

Supporting a retainer costs money. Many of them live and eat in their master's home, or wherever he has lodgings, and many of them have additional expenses they may incur in the course of their duties. In game terms, this is all included in the retainer's upkeep cost.

Retainers are paid in advance for the following week's work.

LOSING A RETAINER

Retainers will not serve forever. They may elect to leave their masters' employ for any number of reasons, including being mistreated. The most obvious reason a retainer may leave is because his master can no longer afford his upkeep.

When a player loses a retainer, he must surrender the retainer card immediately.

Assuming the retainer quit his master's service on good terms, he can be re-hired later with no need to make a Charm check to find a suitable candidate. However, if more than a month passes, the retainer has likely found another position – possibly even with one of his former master's rivals! A new Charm check is therefore required.

Of course, in the grim and perilous world of *Warhammer*, it is also possible for a retainer to be killed. If killed, the unfortunate retainer is obviously no longer a candidate for re-hiring. Furthermore, if the retainer's death is apparently the fault of his master, future attempts to hire a retainer treat the retainer as one step more rare.

There's nothing quite like a trusted retainer. Noble birth and good breeding and all the education and wealth and status that comes with it, oh, they're ruddy necessary, all right – I mean, you can't be a noble without the noble birth, wot? And the noble spirit, well, that just comes right with it - can't help but be raised up right, to help the masses and better the Empire. But a loyal man like Vern, here, well, he's what makes it all work. Why, it's like Sigmar without Ghal Maraz – can't have the one without t'other. Hmm. That wasn't blasphemous, was it Vern?

- Lord Rickard Aschaffenberg

SOCIAL ENCOUNTERS

In the halls of power, courtiers and diplomats must constantly struggle with one another in an epic war as intense and fiercely-fought as any ever fought on the battlefield. The weapons are words, knowing looks, and the favour of important men and women.

Over the course of a campaign of *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay*, players will have many opportunities to dip their toes in the stormy waters of court intrigue. Some will even choose to take the plunge and make such encounters a major component of their campaigns.

While the richness and complexity of the *Warhammer* world lends itself very well to this style of play, it can be difficult on both players and GMs to sustain over the long term. It is far easier, truth be told, to construct an encounter in which men strive to kill each other with swords than one in which they duel with words. While it's not necessary for every social interaction in a game of *WFRP* to be structured and fleshed out, a few formalized social encounters can

lend excitement, dramatic weight, and strategic interest to key moments in a story. The following suggestions and guidelines can be useful to PCs and GMs alike.

ESTABLISHING A SOCIAL ENCOUNTER

When preparing for a social encounter, there are a number of elements to consider.

Example: Johann is newly-arrived in Bögenhafen and keen to make a good impression on the von Saponatheims. Unfortunately, his childhood rival Gerhardt has spent the last six months in Bögenhafen in pursuit of a position in Graf von Saponatheim's court. Both are present at the same gathering, where the Graf is rumoured to be about to tender invitations to his next hunting trip – a major coup for anyone looking to advance in the society of Bögenhafen. This framework will serve as a running example throughout this chapter.

“INFLUENCE” DEFINED

Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay action cards, especially those with the *Social* trait, use the term “influence” on some success lines. Influence is a shorthand, indicating that the social action has been used successfully to generate the desired result – but the exact nature of that result is not strictly defined by the game system. Successfully influencing a character can have as mild an effect as encouraging someone to make way in a crowd, or as potent as sending a soldier to his death – it all depends on the context of the social encounter or the situation.

What is important is that the result of influence is defined before dice are rolled. This allows the active player to either accept the terms and roll the dice, or to choose a different action.

The GM is the final arbiter of what successfully influencing a character can do, but here are some suggestions:

- ✦ Advance a progress token in the context of a social encounter.
- ✦ Defuse a potentially explosive situation; prevent violence.
- ✦ Convince someone to forgive or ignore a minor offense or crime.
- ✦ Convince someone to perform a simple task at minimal risk to himself to assist you.
- ✦ Convince someone to do something he wanted to do anyway, but couldn't bring himself to do.
- ✦ Inflict shame on the target (see page 35).
- ✦ Shave 10% off an asking price, or increase an offer by 10%.

Major or more profound changes in a character's behaviour or disposition are generally the realm of formal social encounters, not a single successful check. Alternatively, the GM can simply increase the difficulty of the check to reflect the relative significance of what the PC is asking the character to do.

Note: With the exception of shame in the context of a duel of wits, “influence” should rarely or never be applied to a PC. PCs are controlled by their players, not by the whims of the dice.

PARTICIPANTS

Who are the primary actors in the scene? Are they arranged into teams or factions? Is there a neutral third party or (nominally) impartial observer, such as a judge?

Example: Johann and the rest of the PCs represent one faction. Gerhardt and his manservant Boris represent another. Graf von Saponatheim is the third party. There are numerous other nobles and servants present at the garden party, but none of them have a stake in the outcome of this encounter, so they can be ignored unless brought into play by the actions of one of the characters.

OBJECTIVES

What is the objective of each participant? What represents a clear “win” for him? Do the participants have the same goal? Are their goals mutually exclusive? It is important to establish what precisely the PCs are attempting to accomplish within a social encounter both in and out of character, as this helps set the expectations for what is to follow.

Example: Both Johann and Gerhardt desire an invitation to the Graf’s hunting trip – giving them a full week of “face-time” with the Graf and all but ensuring that they will become the envy of Bögenhafen’s minor nobility. Success, for them, is receiving an invitation. The Graf, for his part, wishes to choose guests on his hunting trip who will be amusing companions, able hunters, and potentially valuable political allies over the long term. None of these objectives are mutually exclusive. Since the Graf’s objective is effectively invisible to the PCs and the Graf isn’t an active character in this encounter, the GM uses those objectives to inform the encounter design in a “behind the scenes” manner.

STAKES

By committing to the scene, what is the character risking? It might not be much – the cost of the gift or bribes necessary to gain access, or the time invested in the gambit. On the other hand, it could be very much indeed! A character who is on trial for his life clearly has his stakes set for him and little choice in the matter, but what about a young adventurer who attempts to convince the court of the existence of skaven? If they don’t believe him, that poor fellow could be the laughingstock of the town – he stakes his reputation.

Once the stakes are explained, PCs should usually have an opportunity to withdraw or reconsider the encounter. The balance of objective and stakes is central to making the encounter exciting. Stakes for NPCs aren’t necessarily relevant, unless the GM rules otherwise.

Example: To attend the garden party, Johann has purchased a new outfit and a hostess gift worth a combined total of 5 gold crowns. That’s money he’s never going to see again. He also stands a risk of being embarrassed in the eyes of the Graf, which will not only prevent him from getting an invitation but might undermine his long-term goal. Still, nothing ventured, nothing gained! Johann is willing to proceed.

SETTING

Not just the physical setting where the social encounter will occur, but the political and historical climate surrounding it. Is the encounter taking place in a count’s audience chamber? In a bustling market square? At a solemn conclave of scholars and priests? Is it

a letter-writing campaign against the backdrop of an ongoing war? Is the mood happy or sad, is time a factor? Just as with a combat encounter, these environmental factors should be considered along with the impact they may have on the encounter.

Example: The gathering, the GM decides, will occur after sundown in the Graf’s summer garden. It features a fountain, a hedge maze, and long trestle tables laden with food. Servants bustle about everywhere, and while the atmosphere is convivial it is also comparatively hushed, with people breaking into semi-private groups constantly. The GM concludes that between the hedge maze and the strictures of high society politeness, there will be plenty of opportunities to block access to a given participant in the encounter or to shield oneself from an “attacker”. The GM also decides that the Graf has a dozen men armed with halberds stationed around the edges of the grounds to eject anyone who goes too far.

STRUCTURE

Once the scene is set, and the objectives known, the GM should spend some time thinking about the actual gameplay of the scene. While such encounters could be played out strictly through talking, with few or even no dice rolls, it is occasionally beneficial to construct a detailed encounter using progress trackers or other mechanics. This can allow even shy players to participate in a meaningful way in a social scene, and can be a refreshing change of pace. It also rewards players who have invested in social skills, talents, and actions.

PROGRESS

The most basic of social encounters are a form of race. One or more participants attempt to move their tracking token down a progress tracker before a time limit expires. Some may feature multiple separate trackers, representing progress in multiple objectives. Others may be a form of binary status, perhaps spread across multiple par-



ASSISTANCE & FURTHER CONSIDERATIONS

In a formalized social encounter, the party rolls for initiative and takes actions individually. The entire group should have the ability to contribute to the success of the encounter and should be engaged and interested for the duration of the entire scene. Depending on the group, there may be some characters who are less adroit in social situations than others. They may be reluctant to engage directly with the main objective or participants, wary of the ill-effects of banes or Chaos Stars.

A well-designed social encounter will have something even for these wallflower characters to do. Perhaps the boring dwarf can put his boring recitation from the Book of Grudges to good use – by trapping a rival lord in a conversation he can't easily escape from. Maybe the wizard with the stammer can apply his powers of Observation and Intuition to suggest good strategies to his fellows.

One way to keep everyone involved is to flesh out the cast of characters – in much the same way that a combat encounter can keep everyone involved by adding more opponents! By placing more active characters into the scene, even if those characters are only tangentially related to the primary objective, more members of the party can find useful (or at least amusing) things to do.

Example: The GM decides that due to the shifting nature of the gathering, the many demands on the Graf's time, and the restricted access of the hedge maze, Johann and Gerhardt (and their friends) will only get 5 chances to speak to the Graf directly. He further decides that each noble will need to Influence the Graf at least 4 times to secure an invitation. The GM builds a progress tracker to monitor this.

To spice things up the GM adds two more characters to the encounter: Olga von Jungfreud, the Graf's formidable wife, and Captain Viktor Hafstadt, the captain of the Graf's personal guard and a longtime companion. The GM rules that each of these characters can, if Influenced, give a character another chance to Influence the Graf (but only once each). Alternately, players can use Olga and Viktor as sources of information or positive word-of-mouth that can give them a sense of strong tactics or bonus dice to use when Influencing the Graf.

The GM further examines each of the characters in play and finds some character hooks to serve as "strong" and "weak" arguments and tactics. For the Graf, the GM decides that flattery regarding his skills as a hunter, sharing hunting stories, and references to the more exotic and exciting trophies on the walls or throughout the gardens are all "strong" arguments, while discussing Bögenhafen politics or mentioning familial connections (the Graf prefers a man to stand on his own merits) are "weak" arguments. Olga is seeking a suitable bride for her son, and any attempt to cater to that need counts as a "strong" argument against her, as does complimenting the food of which she is unjustly proud. "Weak" arguments against Olga include flattering her personal appearance (Olga mourns the lost beauty of her youth) or any mention of hunting (which bores her to tears). Viktor favours tales of martial valour or military service, as well as a family with a long and distinguished history, and would love for his son to be considered for knighthood or another prestigious position. Appealing to any of these facets of Viktor's character are "strong" arguments. Viktor despises men who appear effeminate, concerned with their own appearance, or anything less than plain-spoken – if he judges a character to be guilty of one of these sins, the character's arguments will all be considered "weak." Viktor forgives these vices in women, and instead dismisses women who appear masculine or not very pretty.

Participants or states – for example, there are 5 votes for a council seat, and the 5 voters are "flipped" between two teams or an uncommitted state by the actions of the players.

ARGUMENTS & TACTICS

The GM should consider what skills and strategies the characters are likely to employ, as well as what arguments or facts they may use in their favour. An interesting and exciting social encounter rewards diversity and encourages the PCs to use a variety of different tactics and actions. The GM can do this by creating for himself a "crib sheet" of "strong" or "weak" tactics as relevant to each participant. For example, maybe a priest responds well to shows of piety, but can't abide lewd jokes. When a participant uses a tactic found on the "strong" list, give him an appreciable bonus (either to the check or to its effect), then strike it from the list.

Furthermore, consider the application of skills and characteristics aside from Charm and Guile. Could Leadership represent an inspiring speech to the masses? Does Piety reflect an appeal along religious grounds? Could a character use Folklore or Education to amuse with an interesting anecdote, or Animal Handling to impress the crowd? Might a character use Coordination to navigate an intricate dance pattern? Depending on the circumstances, even unusual skills or combinations can apply – perhaps a Fellowship check modified by Weapon Skill can strike up a good rapport with the guards, or Resilience can be used to match a young lord drink for drink.

Finally, the GM develops an idea of how the evening will unfold, especially what Gerhardt and Boris will do. He decides that Gerhardt will split his time between buttering up the Graf and attacking Johann whenever they should happen to meet, whereas Boris will focus all his attention on Johann and his companions, doing his best to obstruct them and attack them socially.

RUNNING A SOCIAL ENCOUNTER

Once the scene has been set and the social encounter designed, the time has come to actually run the encounter. Roll for initiative and commence encounter mode as normal.

During a social encounter, range and timing are likely to be a little more fluid than in a combat encounter. It's entirely possible that a character's action might involve a slow and stately walk around an entire room while conversing in hushed tones, or a dramatic exchange from balcony to garden below. Still, the use of range bands and engagements have meaning – it can be difficult to “disengage” from one conversational partner in order to engage another, after all!

ENOUGH OF THIS!

Characters in *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay* are frequently heavily-armed and occasionally highly-skilled in the use of those arms. Indeed, many characters and sometimes entire groups are much more comfortable and competent in the swirling melee of combat than in an intricately-complex social setting.

It is therefore entirely possible (and in some cases inevitable) that a social encounter will devolve into a murderous rampage or pitched battle. Usually the best thing to do in this situation is to allow the character triggering the outbreak of violence to complete his action, then have a rally step and begin a new act of the encounter – one whose objective has likely changed to “escape alive”!

In any case, the GM should prepare for the possibility that a fight might break out. Armed guards are common throughout the Empire in nearly all contexts and social tiers, because the *Warhammer* world is a dangerous place. Social encounters are no exception, and public violence is likely to bring rough, armed men running. Furthermore, even gentlemen of leisure and ladies dressed in their finest clothes are usually armed. Anyone who draws steel in the midst of a fancy ball is likely to find himself surrounded by two dozen men (and a few women!) with swords in hand, many of them guests still dressed to the nines.

Hopefully, players will keep a realistic sense of the risks of combat and most social encounters will progress as planned. That way, the times communications do break down and violence does erupt, it's an exciting change of pace!

THE DUEL OF WITS

When two courtiers meet on the field of “battle”, they may have more options than simply pursuing their objective. Verbal sparring has a long and worthy tradition, not just in the Empire but far beyond. Men and women can become renowned for their vicious words, just as a swordsman may gain fame for the strength of his sword arm.

PLAYER BUY-IN

Note that using a duel of wits can, for some groups, violate the social contract of the gaming table: in essence, one player is telling another player how his character feels about a situation. This is a removal of control from the player, placing partial control of his character in the hands of another. For some groups, this is an acceptable tradeoff to enable these sorts of “social combat” encounters. For others, this is a dealbreaker. Using *Duel of Wits* rules requires buy-in from every player at the table, even more so than standard social encounters.

However, the addition of duel of wits rules to a social encounter enables an alternate strategy to success, which makes social encounters more interesting. Rather than simply attempting to achieve his own goals, a character can now choose to “attack” his rivals. The extent to which players pursue each strategy is up to them, but the addition of extra choices can enrich any game experience.

Duels of wits are an optional rules addition for *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay*, lending some mechanical support to the often cruel and insulting wordplay that can surround any intrigue. A duel of wits may be added in to an existing social encounter, providing multiple paths to victory or viable strategies within the context of running that encounter. Alternately, two or more characters may engage in a near-literal “duel”, exchanging verbal barbs for the sole purpose of being cruel to one another. However, without the context of a social encounter to give their duel context, there's little purpose to slung abuse. At a bare minimum, the presence of an audience is required so that someone can be impressed at the victory.

In essence, during a duel of wits, characters may “attack” one another with *Social* actions and *Guile* and *Intimidate* checks in an effort to “deal damage” to a character's self-esteem or public reputation, in the form of shame.

Shame behaves rather like wounds, and is represented by dealing insanity cards facedown to the victim. Shame can take many forms – a hot flush of humiliation spreading across one's cheeks, that momentary confusion when things don't work out the way a character had envisioned, the slow spread of mocking laughter through the crowd. Whatever form it takes, shame is as much an involuntary response as suffering a wound in a combat encounter, and suffering too much shame can incapacitate a character as surely as being KO'd.

SOCIAL ATTACKS

A successful social attack requires just as much skill and deftness as a wounding blow in battle. A simple insult will not do – most characters are well able to shrug off the petty jeers of rivals, and have been well-practiced in this art since childhood. No, a true social attack must be aimed at a weak spot in the character or at a weakness in his public perception.

Does a character have a secret that he is ashamed of? A casual off-hand reference to his youthful indiscretion – the merest whisper of a possibility of blackmail – can be more vicious than a knife in the

right hands. Has a character's heart been broken? Parading his former paramour on one's arm – this is the path to victory. Does a character have an exotic accent? Mocking it publicly, before the very people he must impress, can cripple him socially for weeks. Gifted social duellists identify a character's weakness and exploit it, ruthlessly.

Mechanically, a social attack can take the form of an application of **Perform a Stunt** or another action card that fits the situation. In general, such attacks would utilize Guile or Intimidate as the goal is to discomfit or fluster the target, not to improve his disposition. These checks will presumably be opposed by the target's Discipline, but might also be opposed by his Charm or Leadership if the attack takes the form of an appeal to the crowd. If the check results in the target being Influenced, then the active character can choose to express that influence as inflicting a single point of shame on the target.

SHAME THRESHOLD

A character has a shame threshold that indicates how much shame he can endure before he must withdraw. This threshold is equal to a character's Willpower score plus his Noble Rank. When a character has more shame than his shame threshold, he must withdraw from the encounter.

WITHDRAWAL

When a character suffers too much shame, he is forced to withdraw from the social encounter. This may or may not involve actually leaving the scene (probably in a huff), but in any case that character has been "defeated" in the eyes of those present (potentially including himself) and no longer has the necessary composure to advance his agenda or stake his claim. Withdrawal scenes may be punctuated by hysterics, apoplectic fits of rage, moments of tongue-tied stuttering, or whatever other loss of composure is appropriate to the characters and the scene.

CONSEQUENCES OF WITHDRAWAL

A character who withdraws from a social encounter forfeits his stake in the encounter – he can no longer advance his agenda or take direct action towards the principle characters. He also can't respond in kind to his enemies, attempting to attack them socially. Depending on circumstances, he may still be able to observe and offer assistance to his compatriots, if they are still engaged in the encounter. He may also be able to approach peripheral characters, such as advisors to the principal characters in the scene, and attempt to Influence them.

It is possible for a character to withdraw from an encounter and his faction to still achieve their goals. However, being publicly defeated in a duel of wits is normally damaging to one's agenda. The extent of damage such a defeat deals to a character's cause is dependent on the nature of the social encounter and the circumstances surrounding the withdrawal, but can range from something as mild as a misfortune die ■ on the next check to as major as a progress tracker moving in an unfavourable direction.

Mercifully, once a character withdraws he is no longer a suitable target for future social attacks until the end of the encounter.

If a character's continued presence in a scene is key to one or more characters completing their objectives, then that character's withdrawal can scupper those objectives completely. For example, if

both sides are petitioning a Duke for lucrative trading rights, but the Duke is forced to withdraw, then the encounter will end with the matter unresolved (perhaps a good thing for the team currently losing the encounter). Alternately, an assistant or ally to the character can step forward to resolve matters in the withdrawn character's stead, allowing the scene to continue with a new (and presumably less able) principal character.

RECOVERING SHAME

Shame is, fortunately, not permanent. The passage of time and a change of scene is all that is necessary to eliminate the sting of ridicule and humiliation. At the end of a social encounter, a character recovers shame equal to his Willpower. Any remaining shame will dissipate over a good night's rest or comparable period of recovery.

SHAME AND INSANITY

Shame is represented as face-down insanity cards, in the same way that wounds are represented by face-down critical wound cards. Insanity cards that are face-up for whatever reason also count as shame – anyone who has a reputation for madness will find himself forced to withdraw from social encounters quite easily!

In the unlikely event that a character has permanent insanities in excess of his shame threshold but has not been reduced to madness and eliminated as a player character, the first point of shame suffered is sufficient to force him to withdraw from an encounter – such characters are tightly-wound indeed!





CHAPTER SIX

SOCIAL EPISODE TEMPLATES

When adventuring in the Warhammer setting, it is very easy for both PCs and GMs to fall back on swords and spells to solve every problem. One piece of GM advice is “if things are starting to drag, orcs kick in the door!” While such advice should not always be taken literally, it can help contribute to a fast-paced, action-packed adventure story. However, it also exposes a larger challenge for GMs because it is usually easy to create exciting and perilous adventures with violence as the central element.

While some groups may prefer a straightforward, “hack and slash” adventure, part of the richness of the Warhammer setting is found in challenges, encounters, and episodes that may never feature drawn steel – the sneering noble who ruins reputations, the criminal gang that vanishes at the first hint of violence, the highly-ranked heretic who cannot be touched without sufficient evidence. What follows is a series of episode templates that focus on using creative roleplaying, investigation, and problem solving (even if some of them still feature a little bit of mayhem – this is Warhammer, after all!). Any of these templates can be adapted for use in an ongoing campaign or serve as inspiration for stand-alone, socially-oriented adventures.

Episode templates were first introduced in the *Game Master's Toolkit*. The episode template structure for encounters provides the GM with flexibility, and a means to introduce a variety of different scenes for his players in an easy to manage format.

The Basic Episode, on the following page, serves as the simplest example of a three-act episode and is intended to serve as a primer for the three act concept. The episodes following are variations on the basic story structure, showing the breadth and flexibility of three-act storytelling.

The *Lure of Power* episodes presented herein can serve as models for single encounters presented entirely in encounter mode or even for a series of linked encounters; the needs of the plot and pacing of each individual game may differ in that regard.

Alternatively, the GM may decide to develop an entire campaign story arc based on these episode templates, selecting location cards to help flesh out the scenes. By changing a few details here and there – such as enemies encountered or the environment in which the episode takes place – these episode templates can be used again and again.

THE BASIC EPISODE

Overview: Three-act storytelling follows some basic rules of structure, and three-act episodes in *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay* are no exception. This basic episode is included to serve as a model for any three-act story element you choose to include in your game.

For our model episode, the PCs need the assistance of a merchant in Ubersreik, but must first assist him attain an innocent verdict in a mockery of a trial laid against him by a cowardly rival.

ACT 1: THE SETUP

The most important goal for Act 1 is to communicate to the PCs what their goal is and how to achieve it. Act 1 sets the stakes for the episode and outlines both the consequences of failure and the benefits of success.

Even in highly-structured encounters, Act 1 may often play out in story mode. Act 1 ends when the goals are identified and the PCs set out to accomplish them (or when the bad guys kick in the door and the PCs have no choice but to accomplish them!).

In our model episode, Act 1 details the initial meeting with the merchant. He would be happy to assist the PCs but he can do no such thing until after he clears himself of the ridiculous charges against him. A rival's shipments have been going missing and some of the stolen merchandise was found in the accused merchant's warehouse. The PCs need to uncover evidence proving his innocence before the trial and the PCs set off to accomplish it.

ACT 2: RISING ACTION

Often the bulk of the action occurs during this act. During Act 2, the PCs overcome various obstacles between them and their goal. In a dangerous and violent world such as the Old World, these obstacles often take the form of deadly foes or other hazards, but can just as easily be high-risk social encounters.

This act often provides a good opportunity to use a progress tracker, to monitor how close the PCs are to achieving their goal.

Gauging the length and complexity of Act 2 is not always easy. If Act 2 is too long, the story feels flat, and probably should have been broken into more acts. If Act 2 is too short, the climax feels abrupt. However, so long as the story has momentum and energy, and continues to build towards Act 3 in an exciting manner, you're probably doing it right. Act 2 ends when the goal is in sight, with just one final most-challenging-yet obstacle. Alternately, Act 2 can end when the goal is achieved.

In our model episode, Act 2 details the PCs locating exonerating evidence. They discover that one of the warehouse workers is on the payroll of the rival, they fast-talk their way past the guards at the rivals office, and uncover correspondence implicating the rival's involvement in the disappearance of his own shipments.

ACT 3: THE CLIMAX

This may be the shortest act, but it should also be the most exciting. The climax is the most intense challenge yet, the final obstacle, the big finish. The rising action of Act 2 has been leading to this the entire time. Often, this is the "boss fight" or final confrontation.

In our model episode, this climax could be the final showdown with the cowardly rival himself. They need to convince him to confess to stealing his own shipments and framing his competition.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Sometimes the payoff to Act 3 is not just a long-expected showdown. Sometimes the excitement and intensity revolves around the unexpected. This unexpected twist can be a supposed ally turning on the PCs, the desired goal having the opposite effect of what was expected, or a hidden threat not seen until too late. The very best twists could be predicted based on information presented earlier in the story, but weren't. Twists that are too far out of left field may be unexpected, but they can also feel arbitrary. Use them sparingly.

With the twist, Act 2 generally ends when the goal is apparently achieved. The PCs have a moment to bask in success...and then gasp at the sudden, shocking twist!

In our model episode, the twist comes when the PCs get the rival's signed confession only to find out that the trial was conducted early and the merchant was found guilty. He is to be executed in mere minutes. The PCs must race to the gallows and save him.

WRAPPING UP

After the climactic Act 3, there's usually some clean-up that needs to happen in the story. This "downtime" lets the characters (and the players) recover from the intensity of the previous action and also lets you advance the story in a natural way. The consequences of the success or failure of the PCs in previous acts is explored during this time.

And when you're ready, a new Act 1 can begin...

ENCOUNTERS WITHIN ENCOUNTERS

The Basic Episode is a good overarching structure that can encompass numerous other episodes. The same three-act story structure that works for an encounter can also work for an adventure or even a campaign.

Any given act of this basic format can encapsulate a distinct three-act episode or even an entire adventure. It's also possible to add additional acts, either with slowly escalating rising action, or multiple "peaks and valleys" of climaxes, falling action, and rising action.

Here is an example combining other elements from other episode templates in this book:

- ✦ **Act 1:** The party is hired by a local magistrate to solve a particularly gruesome murder (such as *The Investigation* on page 43).
- ✦ **Act 2:** As part of their investigation, the PCs encounter a raving madman who they believe has insight into the murders. They must make sense of his raving to find out what he knows (such as *The Madman* on page 40).
- ✦ **Act 3:** Uncovering the murderer, the party is shocked to discover he plans to strike again at the magistrate's party in his honour. They must stop the murder and save the party (such as *Assassin's Banquet* on page 41).

SWORDS, NOT WORDS!

Even with the most well-crafted “social” episode, GMs should always be prepared for the PCs to draw steel. This is Warhammer, after all! But even when negotiations break down and blood is spilled, all is not lost. When the dust settles, a simple clue can easily draw the PCs back into the intrigue of the episode. Perhaps they find a note on one of the bodies, perhaps their showing of strength draws out a helpful NPC that would otherwise have stayed in hiding, or perhaps, in the end, the overwhelming might of the PCs is all the motivation required to finally incite cooperation.

THE PICKPOCKET

Overview: An important item or document is stolen from the PCs at exactly the wrong moment. The PCs must quickly navigate the criminal underworld to recover their stolen property before it is fenced back to exactly the wrong person!

ACT 1: THE THEFT

The PCs are carrying an important item, such as a provincial seal that had lately been used by a gang of thieves to forge important documents. On their way to deliver the item to its rightful owner, the PCs pass through a crowded marketstrasse haunted by a gang of pickpockets. Two of the thieves begin to scuffle and brawl in the midst of the crowd to create a distraction, and the pickpockets set to work while everyone watches the fight.

Make an Observation check for the character holding the seal, and give him a bonus to the check if he specified extra wariness in response to the (perhaps obvious) distraction. If he passes the check, he notices immediately that he has been robbed and sees a young man with a distinctive thatch of red hair vanishing into the crowd. If he scores boons, he loses no coin, but only the seal. If he scores banes, he loses not only his purse but also something else of value, such as a piece of jewellery. Even if he fails the check, the PCs should soon notice they have been robbed. The two scuffling thieves stop fighting and vanish into the crowd as soon as anyone notices the theft.

ACT 2: AFTER HIM!

When the PCs realize they have been robbed, they will presumably set off in search of the culprits and their missing items. Depending on how Act 1 transpired, they may have several leads: a rough description of the thief (red hair, young), a suspicion of his accomplices' identities (the fighting thieves), or eyewitness accounts from merchants, townsfolk, or watchmen (the thieves use the same scheme routinely). The trick is to track down not just the thief but also the items he stole, since the pickpocket reports to a local crime boss.

By asking around and making a series of Charm, Guile, and Intimidate checks, the PCs should be able to pick up the trail. They must be careful, however, that they neither run afoul of the law themselves nor scare their quarry away. Any use of violence whatsoever results in all the local criminals, vagabonds, and derelicts falling silent or fleeing.

A progress tracker during this act can track the location of the item, with one event space marking when the thief hands the item to his boss and a second marking when the boss sells it to the PCs' worst enemy.

ACT 3: THE CONFRONTATION

Ultimately, the PCs catch up either with the thief or the seal, depending on how their investigation has progressed. The final confrontation might be as simple as surprising the thief at his favourite tavern and using a little charm and intimidation to get the truth (or even the seal) out of him. Or, if the item has already changed hands, it might feature a regrettably bloody exchange within a gang's hideout.

Of course, if the PCs have taken too long in their search, the best they might hope to extract from the criminals is the name of the person to whom the seal was sold.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

The thief is employed by a powerful nobleman or a very dangerous criminal gang. The PCs are not the only ones seeking the item. The item is dangerous to its bearer (made from warpstone, incriminating evidence). The thief has stolen it quite by accident and has no idea what he's done.

ALTERNATE USES

The PCs are themselves the thieves and are seeking a fence before time runs out and they are caught in possession of stolen goods. Rather than a theft, it is a kidnapping. The crime is burglary, highway robbery, or some other offence with a different suite of clues.



THE MADMAN

Overview: The PCs encounter a raving madman and dismiss his ramblings as gibberish. Later events force them to conclude that the madman knows something important and they must struggle to make sense of the madman's ravings.

ACT 1: THE RAVINGS

As they go about their business, the PCs come across a broken-down, old, wreck of a man named Pieter von Gunnar. He grabs one of the PCs at random and shouts a cryptic message into his face that goes something like this:

They come up from beneath her bones. Always nighttime, I should be sleeping – shhhh. Shhhh. Did you know the moon is made from cheese? I hid it. I hid it! The rats can't have it, no cheese.

Presumably, the PCs quickly dismiss the man as a lunatic and move on. However, later that night they find themselves embroiled in a brief battle with rat-like enemies: skaven! It seems the madman's ravings had a kernel of truth and may contain the key to defeating the skaven menace. When the PCs recognize the connection (or when an insightful NPC points it out), Act 2 begins.

ACT 2: PIECES OF A PUZZLE

The PCs, having concluded that the old man's ravings contain valuable information, must do their best to interpret them. This requires learning more about the old man and his situation. For example, the old man mentioned "her bones": whose bones? Who is "she?" His dead wife? Where is she buried?

PROPHECY AND YOU

Prophecy is a dangerous and difficult aspect to incorporate into any game or story where the characters may make decisions the GM does not anticipate. However, it is a common trope of fantasy fiction and myth, and there are several *Warhammer* character types for whom it is a natural fit.

One trick to making prophecy work is to make the prophecy a warning, not a prediction. In this case, the PCs strive to prevent the prophecy from coming true, perhaps receiving revised prophecies as they progress.

Another method is to keep the prophecy deliberately vague. It might refer to themes or elements of the story ahead, rather than specific events, and perhaps do so in metaphor or allegory. A vision of a sparrow slaying an eagle could be interpreted many ways, and any instance of a relatively humble creature laying low a great threat might therefore constitute the prophecy coming true – but who is the sparrow, and who is the eagle? If using this method, GM's should pay careful attention to the PCs and how they interpret the prophecy. Sometimes their ideas are better than what the GM had planned!

Pshaw! Skaven are a myth propagated by the ratcatchers to drum up business. No, the real threat to the Empire? There's these mushrooms, right, they come down from the sky, flown all the way from the moons on their eerie wings. Them's what I fear.

- Old Clem, on one of the rare days he's allowed outside the Shallyan Hospice

The PCs may be able to get some of this information out of the old man himself if they can find him again; otherwise, they must ask around town and reconstruct his life from the testimony of others. Ultimately, the PCs learn the following: the skaven lair is accessed from beneath the crypt in which von Gunnar's wife is interred ("beneath her bones"), the skaven are seeking a warpstone shard that von Gunnar happened across before his madness ("moon-cheese", referring to Morrslieb the Chaos Moon), and von Gunnar has hidden the warpstone shard in the Shallyan hospice he sometimes visits when his madness permits him.

ACT 3: THE PUZZLE SOLVED

Now that they have all the pieces, the PCs set about solving the puzzle. This may feature a desperate last-minute race to beat the skaven to the hospice or a daring raid into the skaven lair.

Of course, the PCs may also take their evidence to the authorities and try to get their help in thwarting the skaven threat. Sadly, the authorities are unlikely to believe that a madman's ramblings contain any relevant information whatsoever and, of course, everyone knows that skaven are a myth. The PCs must use creative thinking and every bit of trickery they possess to get anyone else to deal with the skaven for them – a challenge probably at least as hard as sorting the skaven out themselves.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Shortly after his pronouncement, von Gunnar is incarcerated or murdered, rendering him unable to clarify his ravings. The PCs are suspected of madness themselves – perhaps the entire scenario plays out within an asylum.

ALTERNATE USES

The madman's ravings could also be genuine prophecy, perhaps taking the form of a dream from Morr or a Celestial Wizard's visions. The investigation, then, focuses less on unravelling the thoughts of one man and more on finding references for the prophecy – if a dream showed an image of a door, finding the door could reveal a great deal. Perhaps research in a library could shed some light on the esoteric parts of a vision. In this case, the "madman" might even be a PC.

THE ASSASSIN'S BANQUET

Overview: An assassin will soon strike at a banquet or other grand formal occasion. The PCs must prevent the assassin from murdering his target, but there's a catch...the target must never learn that he was in danger!

ACT 1: AN INVITATION

Balthasar Schasser is an important priest of the Cult of Sigmar, and thus one of the most important religious figures within the Empire. However, whenever someone of such importance travels to Middenheim, there can be discontent and protest from the more staunch Ulricans. A formal dinner has been laid on where Schasser will make a speech to various priests of Ulric and the nobles and dignitaries of Middenheim. The feast is lavish and over two hundred people will be present.

A minor noble of Middenheim contacts the PCs after learning that an unknown malefactor has resolved to murder Schasser at the banquet – but he doesn't know the assassin's identity. Relations between the Cults of Sigmar and Ulric are already strained; even acknowledging that Schasser's life is in danger could result in punitive tariffs or other problems from Altdorf. In short, the PCs must thwart the assassin without ever letting on that Schasser's life was in danger, and certainly without committing any acts of violence at the banquet themselves.

Security is tight and it will not be easy to get inside, but there are several options available. The party can bluff guards at the rear entrance (persuading them they are servants or suppliers), or find a way to steal or obtain invitations – their noble contact has one, of course, but will need convincing to part with it. Either way, once the group is inside the building, transition to Act 2.

ACT 2: ONCE, TWICE, THREE TIMES A KILLER

Between main course and dessert, Schasser makes a toast. However, the assassin seizes several opportunities throughout the evening to make his move. Attempts to kill Schasser become more desperate as the subtler efforts are thwarted. First, the assassin tries to poison Schasser's meal or perhaps his goblet of wine as he makes his toast. Quick-thinking PCs can ensure that the priest does not consume the poison, or use medicine, magic, blessings, or an antidote to cure the priest should he become ill. If the first attempt fails, the assassin approaches Schasser directly and tries to shake his hand, pricking him with a poisoned needle concealed in a garish ring. The PCs can intercept the assassin even with so simple a manoeuvre as engaging him in conversation and leading the priest away. Finally, the assassin attempts to strike directly – a simple dagger to the ribs. The PCs must be creative to keep the priest safe without revealing the assassin's presence.

Odds are good that despite the efforts of the PCs, the assassin will become frustrated and make a spectacle of himself. While not much of a threat in combat, his last desperate rush with a dagger is likely to attract attention. When the PCs apprehend the assassin or their cover is blown, Act 3 begins.

ACT 3: UNMASKED

Despite their best efforts, the PCs cannot simply vanish the assassin out of the banquet without anyone noticing. Whether it is a stodgy servant, a suspicious watchman, or even the bulk of the guests and Schasser himself, someone is going to come across the PCs and the assassin and wonder what, precisely, is going on. The PCs must now manage the situation – lie about the assassin (“he’s had a bit too much, just taking him home to sleep it off”), bluff and intimidate the spectators into silence (“official business from the Elector; go away!”), or find some other solution. In short, with their immediate goal accomplished, the PCs spend Act 3 cleaning up after themselves and dealing with the fallout.

Of course, if they’ve failed in Act 2, then Act 3 will play out very differently indeed...

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

There are multiple assassins. The target has his own agenda, which makes guarding him much harder. There's no assassin, and the PCs have been set up.

ALTERNATE USES

A similar structure could be used for practically any shady business at a formal occasion – the PCs could be the assassins themselves, or thieves, or could be trying to thwart a thief, or arranging an exchange with a spy.



HABEAS CORPUS

Overview: The party is involved in a trial with a hardened criminal who has information they need. They must get the information from the accused while working within the bounds of the law, but it might all be for naught when a surprise witness arrives.

ACT 1: TELL ME EVERYTHING!

Dagmar Lang is a notorious criminal, running rackets throughout the Empire and always managing to elude the authorities. He has never been caught before, and someone else is always there to take the blame on his behalf. However, he has finally been apprehended in Kemperbad, but Lang is keeping his mouth firmly shut.

Lang knows something the party needs to know – the location of a kidnapped ally, the password for a secret society; the exact details can be fit to the PCs current agenda. The local law invites the PCs to help prosecute Lang, hoping the PCs can secure a conviction or evidence to indict Lang's friends where their own efforts have failed. Alternatively, Lang may ask the PCs to assist in his defence in the hopes of negotiating a lesser sentence or freedom in return for the information they require. Once the stakes are established and the PCs agree to take charge of the trial, transition to Act 2.

ACT 2: DO YOU SWEAR IT?

Whichever side the party chooses to take, they must formulate some convincing arguments and have enough solid evidence to get a watertight verdict.

The PCs will need to secure at least three pieces of evidence from either Lang or a broader investigation of the case. If they wish to secure the conviction and force him to reveal his information as part of a plea-bargain, this evidence will prove invaluable. If the PCs are trying to get him in the clear, once obtained, the evidence can be doctored or even destroyed. This evidence can be obtained by interrogating Lang or his associates (see Social Encounters on page 32), investigating his safe-houses, travelling to the scene of one of Lang's supposed misdeeds, or anything similar that the PCs come up with.

Once the party is certain that they have everything they need, then they should progress to Act 3, ready for the trial.

ACT 3: A SHOCKING REVELATION

At the last minute, just as the trial is ready to get underway, there is an uproar in the court, street, or wherever the party will be conducting their questioning. An important witness has arrived to testify for (or against) the suspect. As a double shock, this could be someone that has come back supposedly from the dead. His evidence likely contradicts much of what the PCs have dug up so far, and the pantomime of this sudden appearance will have likely won over anyone else in attendance.

To represent the outcome of the trial, build a five space progress tracker and place tokens on it for both the prosecution and defence – one side may have a head start, based on the progress of the case thus far. Each side makes its arguments in turn, using Charm, Leadership, Guile, or other skills and actions as appropriate. The three pieces of damning (or exonerating) evidence the PCs uncovered in

I can see it in your eyes. You don't understand why I'm here. After all, your guilt is clear - what could I possibly gain from interrogating you? It's not for me, of course. I do this for you. Confess your crimes and die with your conscience clear. You'll thank me from Morr's Realm.

- Captain Leopold

Act 2 will help them here, adding fortune dice to checks when referenced. Successful checks advance the progress token for that side. When both sides have concluded their arguments, whichever token is highest convinces the official standing in as judge, or if there is a tie Lang will try and cut a deal.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Lang could escape custody. If the PCs are working to prosecute Lang, they will need to hunt him down before the trial. If they were working to exonerate Lang, the PCs still need the information that he alone possesses. Perhaps the PCs prove so incompetent that they too fall under suspicion and are investigated themselves.

ALTERNATE USES

It could be that the situations are reversed and that one or more of the players have been captured for questioning. The facts demanded could also never even come to light, and the GM could even use them as an excuse to involve the PCs in the trial.

The GM could also use this scenario for any situation where intense questioning is needed, especially where two contradictory sides are involved. This could include negotiations in a courtly situation, or even trying to get the best price at a crowded market. The person in question could even be a follower of Chaos.

THE INVESTIGATION

Overview: A crime has been committed and it is up to the PCs to determine the identity of the perpetrator.

ACT 1: THE SCENE OF THE CRIME

Misthausen is a small town, and Walther Meyer is a busy man. As watch captain, he is responsible for law and order, not to mention some of the local defences. So when a new group arrives in town, they are greeted with warm suspicion, for there was a murder in town last night. Fraulein Carla Altmann, daughter of the town's bailiff, was found by the well with her throat cut at first light.

Carla was a pretty, well-liked lass, although her father was obviously far less popular due to his line of work. Still, there seems to be no real motive for the crime. Carla's father has accused Meyer of murdering her, which makes it difficult for the captain to investigate. The PCs, who clearly couldn't have been responsible, are recruited by Meyer to resolve the matter.

ACT 2: GET A CLUE

The PCs must examine the body, the scene of the crime, and the testimony of as many eye- or ear-witnesses as can be found to find the killer. They can make Observation and Intuition checks to find clues and Charm, Guile, or Intimidate checks to get the distrustful townsfolk to talk. Their investigation reveals the following clues:

- ✦ Carla, an incorrigible flirt, had promised herself to three separate men: Herr Hauptmann the blacksmith, "Doktor" Sauer the barber-chirurgian, and Captain Meyer himself (suggesting that a jealous suitor is the killer).

ALTERNATE CAREER SELECTION OPTIONS

The episode template here includes five clues of varying importance which all point, directly or indirectly, to Herr Hauptmann. It is important to put abundant evidence pointing the PCs in the right direction into any mystery, because there are two very challenging barriers between the PCs and the right answer: the PCs may miss the clue, and the PCs may draw the wrong conclusion from the clue.

As a general rule, the GM should always include at least three clues pointing the PCs towards any conclusion he wants them to reach. More is better, but three is a good minimum.

- ✦ Carla's throat was cut with a very sharp blade. Sauer keeps his instruments very sharp and Captain Meyer's weapons are made by Hauptmann, who is well-known for his very fine swords and knives (further implicating all 3 suitors).
- ✦ Viktor Schmidt, a young boy sneaking back into his house, heard Carla speaking to someone by the well; she didn't seem upset (so the killer was someone she knew).
- ✦ Captain Meyer and Sauer have alibis: the Captain was on duty in the guardhouse and Sauer stayed up all night with a patient
- ✦ Carla's forearm and/or ribs are broken but there's no evidence she put up a struggle (someone very strong pinned her and cut her throat, which suggests the blacksmith)

When they are ready to make an accusation, the PCs gather up the principles and level their charge.

ACT 3: ACCUSATION

Depending on whether the PCs have accused an innocent or guilty man, things progress very differently. An innocent man professes his innocence while others second the accusation, turning Act 3 into a trial of sorts (although it is more of a lynch mob, really). If the guilty party is accused (Herr Hauptmann, in this case), he immediately flees, if he has not already done so, and must be caught.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Some of the clues are red herrings or even planted to implicate an innocent man. The PCs have limited time in which to act before a Witch Hunter arrives. A rival group of investigators fouls up the case. An innocent man looks guilty and well-meaning friends are lying to protect him, creating false alibis and other conflicting evidence that makes the poor sod look even more guilty!

ALTERNATE USES

The same broad outline can be used for any investigation – establish what needs to be investigated, search out clues, then make a conclusion and deal with the consequences. For a twist, the PCs are the culprits and attempt to lead the investigation off-track by manufacturing evidence for one reason or another.



THE INSPIRATION

Overview: Scouts report that a daemonic host marches towards the small village of Brohofen and it is up to the PCs to band the disheartened community together to face this threat head on.

ACT 1 — STAND OR FALL

The party reaches the village of Brohofen, which is in a sad state of affairs. Most of the local inhabitants have packed up their most precious belongings and are preparing to flee into the countryside. Residents the PCs speak with are overwhelmed with despair at having to leave the only home they know, but believe they have little choice. Even the local militia has given the town up for lost. Eventually the PCs meet Karla Hendrick, the second in command of the town's militia. She has single-handedly tried to lift the spirits of the community and her comrades in order to stand against the incoming threat, but a strong force is working against her.

Klaus Hassner, the local militia captain and a coward, has holed himself up in the local inn. Drunk, he is busy demoralising anyone who cares to listen, including the majority of his troops.

Karla has a plan to deal with the Chaos threat, but she cannot succeed without the help of Hassner and his men. The act ends once the party meets with Hassner, sees his negative effect on the populace, and Karla asks for their assistance in breaking the militia from their despair in order to mount a proper defence.



ACT 2 — INSPIRING WORDS

During this act, the PCs can make Leadership checks to win over some of the troops that are not in the tavern and use Charm, Guile, Folklore, or Intuition checks to win over other villagers as appropriate. Eventually, they attract the attention of the militia captain, who emerges from the inn with his entourage of inebriated troops.

Hassner may be drunk, but he is not past being able to speak. Indeed, he tries to work against the PCs, sowing fear and dread in the populace. Use a progress tracker to track the arguments and counter arguments that occur between the party and the captain. Klaus starts in the middle of the tracker, representing the negative influence he already has on the community. The PCs can make a variety of rolls and use good roleplaying to progress their tracker forward while Klaus moves his tracker forward automatically at the end of each turn as he sows panic and cowardice. The first to fall off the end of the track is the victor. If the PCs succeed, they convince enough of the militia to sober up and man Karla's makeshift barricade. Failure will probably doom the village, and possibly the PCs, should they attempt to stay and defend Brohofen themselves. Either way, when the argument is over, Klaus curses at the PCs, drunkenly mounts his horse, and rides out of the village forever.

ACT 3 — THE TIME HAS COME

Providing everyone has not run away, the community has a plan, made some defences, and hopefully has a reasonable force at their disposal for when the daemonic army arrives. The battle plays out in encounter mode. While some of the PCs no doubt need to use physical actions against the daemons, others can use social skills to keep the militia from breaking and running for their lives.

Such a force causes fear or terror; many of the villagers may become distressed or gain temporary insanities, either of which adds to the panic and confusion. The GM could use a progress tracker to mark the overall progress of the daemons through the village as well as the sanity of the militia. If the PCs cannot continue to inspire those with them, then the inhabitants of Brohofen are quickly run down and the numbers of daemons overwhelms the party. The episode ends when the incursion or the defenders have been routed.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

The PCs may not succeed in motivating everyone. Perhaps Hassner returns during the battle to derail the party, trying to turn people around, or dissuade them from following the PCs. Perhaps he is even an agent of the enemy or of the Ruinous Powers. The emerging threat could be so great that the NPCs flee anyway, causing havoc, panic, and confusion.

ALTERNATE USES

The threat or event need not be related to Chaos. Perhaps the PCs lead a mercenary or regular unit into a larger battle, or the enemy is orcish or Norse in origin. Potentially, one of the PCs has lost his mind with a temporary insanity and the rest of the party must persuade the character to snap out of it.

CHARMED I'M SURE

Overview: Countess Veronica ("Ronnie" to her friends) Hoefstadler, widowed six years gone, is a permanent fixture in Altdorf's social scene. She is also a flirt, a gossip, and, from time-to-time, a blackmailer. One of her blackmail victims is Witch Hunter Gregor Thulme, who dallied unwisely with the Countess some time ago. Thulme believes that Countess Hoefstadler has kept evidence of their tryst in her diary, which is always kept in her boudoir. Whoever recovers that diary will be armed with a great deal of leverage against the great and good of Ubersreik. Fortunately, it's time for the Countess's 10th annual 30th birthday celebration!

ACT 1: DRINKS & HORS-D'OEUVRES

The PCs are either working on behalf of Thulme or on their own initiative to recover the Countess's diary, and have either secured an invitation or bluffed or sneaked their way into the party. The house will be literally swarming with guests and servants, which will make sneaking about almost impossible. During Act 1, the Countess will mingle with all of her guests, drinking, talking, and flirting shamelessly. Noticing the interest of the PCs, a young rake by the name of Piet Boest takes a moment to share a bit of salacious gossip: the Countess makes a habit of inviting one lucky guest back to her boudoir for a nightcap at the end of the party (which would give any intrepid PC the chance to pilfer or read her diary). Piet intends to be the lucky gentleman tonight, but the PCs have all of Act 1 to attract the favour of the Countess.

Use either a progress tracker or simply various different tracking tokens to determine the favour of the Countess. Each time a character successfully influences the Countess, he gains 1 favour. Each PC (and Piet) should have three chances to chat with the Countess and make a good impression over the course of Act 1. (If you wish, you can use Encounter Mode for this act and treat it as 3 rounds long.) Once it is time for dinner, the Countess will invite the two characters with the most favour to sit on either side of her, and Act 2 begins.

ACT 2: DINNER IS SERVED

During Act 2, the guests are all seated at the long table in the dining hall. The two characters who have gained the most favour with the Countess so far are seated on her left and right (the Countess is, of course, at the head of the table), and only these characters will have any opportunity to influence the Countess during dinner. Everyone else will have to amuse themselves some other way – perhaps by engaging nearby rivals in a duel of wits? Piet will aggressively attack anyone he perceives as a rival for the Countess's affections during this time.

ACT 3: DANCE THE NIGHT AWAY

After dinner, the dancing begins! Anyone who has earned at least 2 favour with the Countess thus far will be permitted to dance with her. Anyone who has earned at least 4 favour will be *required* to dance with her. The Countess will spend all her time dancing, so inviting her to dance is the only chance a character is likely to get to influence her during Act 3. (The Countess will not dance with the same person twice in a row.)

At the conclusion of Act 3, the Countess will invite the single character with the highest favour to her boudoir for a nightcap (and it really is just a nightcap, unless the character in question has other ideas and a high Fellowship score). After another hour or so of pleasant conversation (during which time the Countess's guest may be able to secure her diary), the interview, and the party, will be over.

POSSIBLE COMPLICATIONS

Unable to make up her mind, the Countess invites both the most favoured PC and Piet to her boudoir...and both characters make a play for the journal. The journal does not exist or is nowhere to be found. The Countess is actually a Cultist of Slaanesh and the person selected to accompany her to her boudoir will be sacrificed to the Ruinous Powers. The party is interrupted by Witch Hunters or Chaos mutants.

ALTERNATE USES

Rather than drinks, dinner, and dancing, a similar episode could cover a hunting trip – preparations, the trip itself (only two invitations), and a viewing-party for the trophies collected. Or the party could feature a race or some other spectacle in lieu of dinner.





UBERSREIK

Ubersreik is a free town of medium size, situated on the River Teufel a little downstream from the Grey Mountains. The town sits astride an important bridge where the road from Bögenhafen to Dunkelburg crosses the river, and trade flows along the road as well as downriver to Auerwald, Grünburg, Kemperbad, and Altdorf. In the mountains to the south-west of the town sits the infamous Castle Drachenfels, and to the south-east is the small dwarf hold of Karak Azgaraz.

Over the centuries, Ubersreik has gone through many changes. Some minor, others more significant. New districts and businesses have grown and prospered, while just as many have failed. Assaults by greenskin and beastmen forces have taken its toll on the outer defences and outlying lands, though the guilds do what they can to ensure the town's defence – and thus their own profits and trade.

Maps for Ubersreik vary greatly, based on a combination of factors: the skill of the cartographer, his vantage, the period during which the map was commissioned, and of course who commissioned the map in the first place. The map on the facing page, while slightly dated, remains one of the more reliable and detailed maps for a large portion of Ubersreik.

Some of the locations on the map play an important role in the adventure, *Mirror of Desire*, which starts on page 26 in the *Book of Pleasure*. More information on many of the locations can be found in *Edge of Night*, starting on page 10.

MAP LEGEND

1. Bridge
2. Customs House
3. Red Moon Inn
4. Rugger's Boarding House
5. Boatmen's Guild
6. The Dockers' Arms
7. Guild of Boatbuilders
8. Temple of Ranald
9. Butchers' Guild
10. Metalworkers' Guild
11. Carpenters' Guild
12. Axe and Hammer Inn
13. Borgun's Brewery
14. Market Square
15. Town Hall
16. Temple of Sigmar
17. Temple of Verena
18. Temple of Shallya
19. The Physicians' Guild
20. Merchants' Guild
21. The Waterfall
22. Magnus's Tower (Ubersreik Garrison)
23. Watch Barrack Stations (multiple locations)
24. The Emperor's Rest Hostel
25. Morr's Field
26. Baron Manfred's Mansion
27. Aschaffenberg Mansion
28. Von Bruner Mansion
29. The North River Tower
30. Madame Beaumartean's Costume Shoppe
31. The Bridge House
32. Fenstermacher Manor
33. Karstadt Townhouse

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