Lords of Titania

A Role Playing Game

For 3-5 players

In Five Acts

By

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Game Chef Draft

Design notes at http://anarchangel23.livejournal.com/tag/lords%20of%20titania

PROLOGUE

Our household rent by base and bloody strife,
On fair Titania, where we set our stage,
This vagrant home now scene to waning life,
No ancient grudge but fault of nature's cage.

Propell'd by fate and fusion torch alike,
Adrift among the least auspicious stars,
By common nature driv'n within and out,
No golden age amidst the spiral's bar.

While greed and death o'ercome the bonds of blood,
The many-turning exile finds return,
To seek what's just in her eyes at the last,
Amongst her squabbling kin, their oaths forsworn.

Daughters of nature red in claw and tooth,
Lords of Titania 'ware fates fickle truth!

I.

INTRODUCTION

Lords of Titania is a Tragedy for 3-5 players (and no GM). To play you'll need a few friends, a pile of six-sided dice and some index cards to write details about your character.

The game is set on *Titania*, a huge colony ship drifting through deep space towards... somewhere. A central biosphere generates food, oxygen and recycles water for hundreds of habitation pods floating at the end of trailing umbilical connections. Each habitation pod is ruled by a family, lords of their domain. This game is the story of the downfall of one such family.

You will play the flawed rulers of a habitation pod; a family enclosed by Nature and divided by their own natures. Each of you will control a particular component of the pod and you will use that control to gain power over your family members. This will not go smoothly. There will be oath-breaking, betrayal and murder, and an exile will return to seek vengeance. But if you survive... How sweet will your victory be then.

II.

CAST

In *Lords of Titania*, each player will create one of a small group of Lords. Each Lord rules over one aspect of the family habitation pod in which they all live. Each Lord is a member of the same ruling family, either by birth, by marriage, or perhaps by both. *Lords of Titania* is about a family tearing themselves apart.

Before you start, discuss the kind of characters and relationships you think would be interesting to see in the game. *Lords of Titania* is a tragedy: your Lords will all have authority to abuse, a network of relationships to exploit, flaws to drag you down and during play oaths will be revealled and broken.

But first, your Lord will need a name. Take an index card and write this at the top. If you need inspiration, here's a list:

> Claudius, Gertrude, Polonius, Horatio, Ophelia, Laertes, Fortinbras, Rosencrantz,
> Guildenstern, Osric, Voltimand, Cornelia, Marcella, Bernardo, Francisco, Reynaldo.

For more ideas, grab or google one of Shakespeare's or Plautus' plays and scan the cast list (Wikipedia has a pair of pages named "List of Shakespearean Characters").

> **EXAMPLE:** *Adrian, Kate and Sam are going to create a set of Lords.*
> *They name them Thurio, Olivia and Snare respectively.*

Next, you will assign four Characteristics to your Lord:

- Each Lord has a Component of the habitation pod over which she rules.

- Each Lord has a Flaw that may lead to her downfall.

- Each Lord has a Relationship to each other Lord.

- Each Lord has Forsworn an Oath involving other Lords.

The sections below discuss each of these Characteristics in turn.

Components

Each Lord rules over a different Component of the habitation pod. The five Components are: Oxygen, Power, Food, Contact and the Mind.

- The Lord of Oxygen controls the umbilical system which connects the habitation pod to Titania herself, the central biosphere. If this connection, is interrupted for more than an hour or so, everyone in the habitation pod will die.

- The Lord of Power controls the habitation pod's power generators. She can cut power to any of the other Components.

- The Lord of Food is in charge of the living quarters of the habitation pod, including the ubiquitous service staff. The staff are always watching, ready to serve.

- The Lord of Contact oversees the command centre of the habitation pod. From here she can control the pod's movement to some degree, allow docking and monitor the pod's sensors.

- The Lord of the Mind administers the complex rituals of the pod's computer and sees to the physical and psychological well-being of the entire population of the habitation pod.

Each player rolls a dice and, in descending order, chooses one Component for your Lord to rule.

> **EXAMPLE:** *Kate rolls a 6 and picks the Lord of Contact, Adrian rolls 4*
> *and chooses the Lord of Food, and Sam rolls a 1 and takes the Lord of*
> *the Mind. They write these down on their cards.*

Each Component has value of 3. If your Lord controls all of the available components at the end of an act, she wins. For the mechanical effects of Components, see section IV. ACTION

Flaws

Each of yours Lords has a Flaw, a character trait which, unless overcome, will pull them inexorably to their doom. Every tragedy has a tragic hero who fails to overcome their Flaw.

However, while everyone knows that Hamlet will meet a sticky end, in *Lords of Titania* you won't know who the hero is until the final act.

There is no set list of Flaws, but examples include: indecision, arrogance, distrust, cowardice, anger, lust. Emotions, emotional states or attitudes are good. Each player chooses their Lord's Flaw.

> ***EXAMPLE:*** *Sam decides that Snare's Flaw as Lord of the Mind will be "arrogance". Kate chose Lord of Contact because she wants to play a socialite so she chooses "fickleness" as Olivia's Flaw. Adrian goes with "sense of honour" for Thurio, Lord of Food.*

Relationships

Each Lord has a blood or marriage Relationship to each other Lord. Write down the name of each other player's Lord then talk to the other players about how they are all related. You will also help describe each other's Lords at this point. By now every Lord has a Component and a tragic Flaw, so you should have a rough idea of about each of them. Think about how your Lord sees the other Lords and pick an adjective to describe those Lords (you can discuss this with the other players). When you have decided, write down next to each Lord's name how your Lord is related to the others and write down one characteristic of each other Lord (not your own). Show each other what you've written.

> ***EXAMPLE:*** *Adrian writes down "Olivia" and "Snare" on his index card. He discusses with Kate and Sam and they agree that Thurio and Olivia will be cousins and Snare will be Olivia's father. Next to "Olivia", he writes "beautiful cousin" and next to "Snare" he writes "scheming uncle". Kate describes Thurio as "pompous cousin" and Snare as "noble father". Sam writes that Oliva is a "resourceful daughter" and "fawning nephew".*

Each of these relationships has a Trust value. This starts at 2 and indicates the degree to which you trust your relative. The higher the number, the higher the trust. For the mechanical effects of Relationships and Trust, see section IV. ACTION

Foresworn Oath

The final step in creating your Lord is to reserve space on your card for your broken oath. Write a the following sentence on your card: "I swore an oath to _____ and I broke it when I _____". These two blank spaces will be filled in as a result of conflicts (section IV. ACTION).

Your Lord is ready to enter the stage, but beware, by the end of the second act, one of your Lords will be dead.

III.

PLAY

In *Lords of Titania,* play is structured in five acts. You begin with Act I and proceeds through the five acts as described below. The description of the act structure contains a number of terms in bold. These are discussed further in the next section (IV. ACTION).

If your Lord controls all of the available components at the end of an act, she wins. Your Lord has managed to wrest control of the habitation pod and survive.

> *But shall we wear these honours for a day?*
> *Or shall they last, and we rejoice in them?*

Act I

In Act I, each player **frames a scene** to showcase their Lord and her Flaw. The character of the player who **frames the scene** is called the **acting Lord**. Play begins with the last player to attend the theatre and proceeds clockwise until each player has **framed one scene**.

There are no **conflicts** in Act I.

Act II

In Act II, players take turns **framing scenes** beginning with the player who began Act I and proceeding clockwise. Act II ends at the end of the first scene in which a Lord dies. The player of the dead Lord now prepares the **Exile**.

If there is a **conflict** in a scene, the **acting Lord** gets one extra die.

Act III

In Act III, each Lord **frames one scene** beginning with the next player who would have framed a scene in Act II. In each scene in this act, the **Exile**'s player will play **another cast member** and will foreshadow the character of the **Exile**.

If there is a **conflict** in a scene, the **acting Lord** gets one extra die.

Act IV

The first scene in Act IV, is framed by the **Exile**, thereafter play continues clockwise.

The **Exile** may appear in any scene in Act IV, overtly or in disguise at the discretion of the **Exile**'s player. Play ends when the **Exile** has appeared in one **scene framed** by each Lord. At the end of Act IV it should be clear who the **Hero** is.

If there is a **conflict** in a scene, the **non-acting Lord** gets one fewer die.

Act V

The centrepiece of the final act, is the final conflict between the **Hero** and the **Exile**. The **Hero frames the scene**. If the other Lords have unresolved conflicts between themselves or with the **Hero** or the **Exile** that they wish to play out, they should resolve these in separate scenes before the final conflict scene, or during the final conflict scene itself.

IV.

ACTION

Acting and Non-Acting Lords

The acting Lord is the character of whichever player framed the current scene. Every other Lord in the scene is a non-acting Lord.

Note that for the purposes of dice modifiers, the Exile is not a Lord.

Other Cast Members

As well as being home to your dysfunctional family of Lords, the habitation pods are filled with your subjects. If needed, these characters will be played by players whose Lords are not in the scene. It is possible that some other cast members will be acting as proxies for Lords; these other cast members should be played by the player of that Lord. Otherwise, they should be played by a player not otherwise engaged in the scene.

Framing Scenes

Scene framing simply means describing the context in which some action takes place. In other words, setting the initial parameters of the scene.

- Who is present? Which Lords? Which other cast members?
- Where does the scene take place?
- What else is happening in the scene?

Once the acting Lord has framed the scene, the players describe what their Lords do and say until either a **conflict** occurs or the scene ends naturally without conflict.

Conflict

A conflict occurs when one Lord attempts to do something in the fiction and another Lord opposes her. When this happens, you will roll dice to determine who gets their way. A conflict always involves two Lords. If no-one opposes the Lord, she gets her way. If there are more than two Lords involved, the extra Lords may support either side in the conflict with their Trust dice only.

If a Lord is acting through a proxy in a scene, she can also initiate a conflict by acting or opposing another Lord (or *her* proxy). Proxies can only take dice from Components.

As well as the fictional outcome, conflicts can have a number of specific mechanical effects. After a conflict is declared, but before dice are calculated, each player declares which of the following outcomes she seeks. A player can change her desired outcome after she hears the desired outcome of the other player. But once a player has chosen Murder, she cannot change her desired outcome.

- Declare an Oath. See Foresworn Oaths.

- Declare an Oath Broken. See Foresworn Oaths.

- Steal Influence. Decrease the value of one of the losers' Components and increase the value of one of the victor's Components

- Gain Trust. Increase the Trust value of any one of the losers Trust scores.

- Murder. Gain control of all of the loser's Components at their current values. The loser is dead.

To resolve a conflict, each Lord rolls a number of dice.

- Take 1 die for each relevant relationship on the card of any Lord present in the scene. Only 1 die can be taken for each relationship and each player has first option on relationships on her own card.

- Take dice up to the current value of one of your Components.

- Take 2 dice if your Flaw lead to this conflict.

- Take dice equal to the Trust value the other Lord in the conflict has for your Lord.

- Take dice equal to the Trust value you have for each Lord helping you.

- Take 1 die if you are the acting Lord in Act II or III.

- Put down 1 die if you are the non-acting Lord in Act IV.

- The player of each Lord not in the scene can give the Lord she favours a sympathy die.

The victor of the conflict is the player who rolled the highest score on a single die, or, if there is a tie, the greatest number of the highest score. If there is still a tie, the victor is the player who rolled the fewest dice. If there is still a tie, both players exile a die to the Exile Pool and re-roll the new dice pools.

A player not in the scene should narrate the outcome as it appears to the audience. If all the players are in the scene, a player not helping with Trust dice should narrate. If all players are involved in this way, a player helping should narrate. If there are multiple eligible players, roll a dice to decide between them.

During this narration, each player in the scene may contribute a soliloquy from their Lord if they wish.

After every conflict, the victor either decreases her trust value towards the loser, or decreases one of her Component values (neither value can drop below zero). She exiles this die to the Exile Pool.

Foresworn Oath

When you created your Lord, you wrote a sentence in the following pattern:

"I swore an oath to _____ and I broke it when I _____".

If a victor in a conflict selected Declare an Oath, they write any Lord's name in the first space of either of the participants in the conflict and increase that Lord's trust of them by 3.

If a victor in a conflict selected Declare an Oath Broken, they write how that happened in the second space of either of the participants in the conflict and decrease the trust that the Lord in the first space has for the Lord who broke the oath to zero.

The Exile

The player of the first Lord to die takes the role of the Exile who returns to dispense poetic justice. Or vengeance. Or she might fail and further accentuate the house's disintegration.

She takes a card, picks a name as if she were creating a new Lord, and takes control of the Exile Pool. The Exile Pool is used by the Exile in the same way as Lords use Components. The Exile never takes or removes dice based on the current act. When the Exile exiles a die, it is removed from the game. The Exile cannot act by proxy.

In each scene of Act III, the player of the Exile takes the role of another cast member. This cast member cannot initiate or oppose conflict, but through actions and speech foreshadows the character of the Exile by assigning relationships to the Exile's card, one per scene.

The Exile frames the first scene of Act IV and may appear in any scene of Act IV, overtly or in disguise at the discretion of the **Exile**'s player. Over the course of the act, the exile should investigate the situation (in the fiction) and decide with whom her major conflict lies. That Lord is the **Hero**. Act IV ends when the **Exile** has appeared in a **scene framed** by each Lord.

The Hero

At the end of Act IV it should be clear which Lord is the Exile's main opponent. That Lord is the **Hero.** In the final act, the **Hero** and the **Exile** face off in some way appropriate to the fiction. The **Hero** frames this scene. There need not be a conflict, but only one of the Hero or the Exile can remain alive on the habitation pod when the curtain falls on Act V.

V.

DENOUEMENT

A few final notes.

On Narration.

There are several occasions in the rules where I discuss which player gets to do something or in what order players get to choose something (narration of conflict outcomes, selection order of Components, choosing desired outcomes). In each of these cases, and any others like them, the group as a whole may come to a consensus to overrides the rules as written here. If someone has a great idea in one of these cases, let her go with it.

On *Lords of Titania* as a sci-fi game.

A personal bugbear of mine is when I pick up some media labelled as "sci-fi" and I don't know how "hard" or "soft" it is right off the bat. Before you play, the group may want to decide what kind of sci-fi game you want to play. The level and realism of technology in *Lords of Titania* is only important to the fictional colour of your game.

On Contact, Feedback and Criticism.

Comments or questions about the game are welcome by email (hamish@ardens.org) or at http://anarchangel23.livejournal.com/tag/lords%20of%20titania.