

Appendix: Lordly Duties & Dueling

Swearing Fealty

Or, Why One is Not Beholden to Every Noble in One's House

Nobles swear fealty to lords higher up the chain of rank than themselves. A noble who has no lord is not only untrustworthy, he's not really a noble. Rank is only conferred by those who have the right to give it (a noble of baronet rank or above) upon those who have the right to receive it (a person of noble lineage, or in extreme circumstances, one who has earned the right by great deeds performed for the house).

Upon reaching the age of majority, or upon the death of her parents, the would-be noble elects to swear fealty to a lord in return for a title and its host of expected responsibilities (the lord also has responsibilities to his vassal) or inherits her deceased parent's title. Until this time, a scion of a noble house is still considered a noble, but without title or duty, and thus with no right to command anyone but his immediate family's servants. Most nobles swear fealty to a high-ranking member of their family, thus keeping the family's greatest treasure — its blood lineage — in command of the family's holdings. Nobles are considered to owe two vows of fealty: one to the lord they swear to (and from whom they gain title and land) and another to the direct head of their family. Sometimes, these vows can come into conflict, with no clear means of resolution; such tragic divisions of loyalty — often brought about through ancient blood feuds — form the basis of many a troubadours' tale.

The highest rank of nobility within a given royal house is that of "prince" (minor houses do not have princes, only dukes at best). In theory, the prince owns all of his house's holdings, and all nobles within that house owe fealty to him. In practice, a prince does not always retain the loyalty of every housemember, and he might spark rebellion should he call upon full due from his vassals; in

other words, princes can rarely enforce their ownership in full.

The prince awards titles and land management rights to a number of dukes, a rank that usually confers rulership of a continent, moon or outer planet. Dukes in turn award titles and fief management rights to counts (a county or capital city), who themselves lay claim to earls or marquises (cities, provinces), who award baronies to barons (keeps or shires), who collect vassalage from baronets (keeps and fortifications), who finally claim knights (the lowest level of nobility, often with no land management duties).

A noble's fealty ties (the number of lords one owes fealty to above one's own) do not extend to all higher ranking nobles in the house. While all nobles owe fealty to their prince, they don't necessarily owe it to all the house's dukes, counts, etc. — only those to whom they trace a direct line back to the prince. For example, Sir Darkon Emilio Hawkwood of Jyväskylä (on Leminkainen) owes fealty to Count Baltor (the lord who knighted him), who in turn owes fealty to Duchess Catherine, and from her to Princess Victoria Hawkwood (who resides on Ravenna, thus showing how fealty ties stretch across the stars). Sir Darkon does not owe fealty to Duke Redoran (or any of his lesser nobles) on the continent of Grikkor, even though both Darkon and Redoran owe fealty to Princess Victoria. Note that, even though Darkon swore his oath to Count Baltor, he also owes dues to all of Baltor's lords of greater rank than he, but not to those baronets, barons or earls who owe no fealty to Count Baltor (i.e. another count's vassals).

However, regardless of greater or lesser fealty ties, the lord who first accepted a noble's vassalage is the most important and the one to whom that noble must pay special heed, unless the noble later rises in rank above him (promoted by his lord's lords), severing his initial fealty bond. Even then, though, one's first lord is always due honor and respect.

Rising in Rank

Once a noble gains a noble title, she often spends much of her time devising ways to gain higher levels of it. This is mainly done by impressing one's lord (or his lord, or his lord's lord, etc.) with one's loyalty, value (in scheming, tactics, morale, etc.) or by a debt of favor (if you save his life, he's got to give you something). Nobles can also rise in rank by inheriting a title from a deceased relative or gaining it through marriage rights.

For players, this means getting to know the lords to whom their characters owe fealty ties, and discovering what deeds these lords deem worthy of advancement. It might be something as simple as collecting the most taxes that season or as hard as exorcising a demon said to be possessing the count's mother.

For gamemasters, this means knowing the lords who control a character's destiny (those to whom she has fealty ties) and using them as NPCs in situations designed to bring notice to any characters that take advantage of them. Devise what possible events or outcomes would be necessary for a lord to raise the character in rank, and wait to see if the character achieves them.

For example, an ailing marquis needs a rare alien plant to stave off the poison that wracks his body (administered by an unscrupulous rival), but there is none to be had in the fief or on the planet. Any player character who can

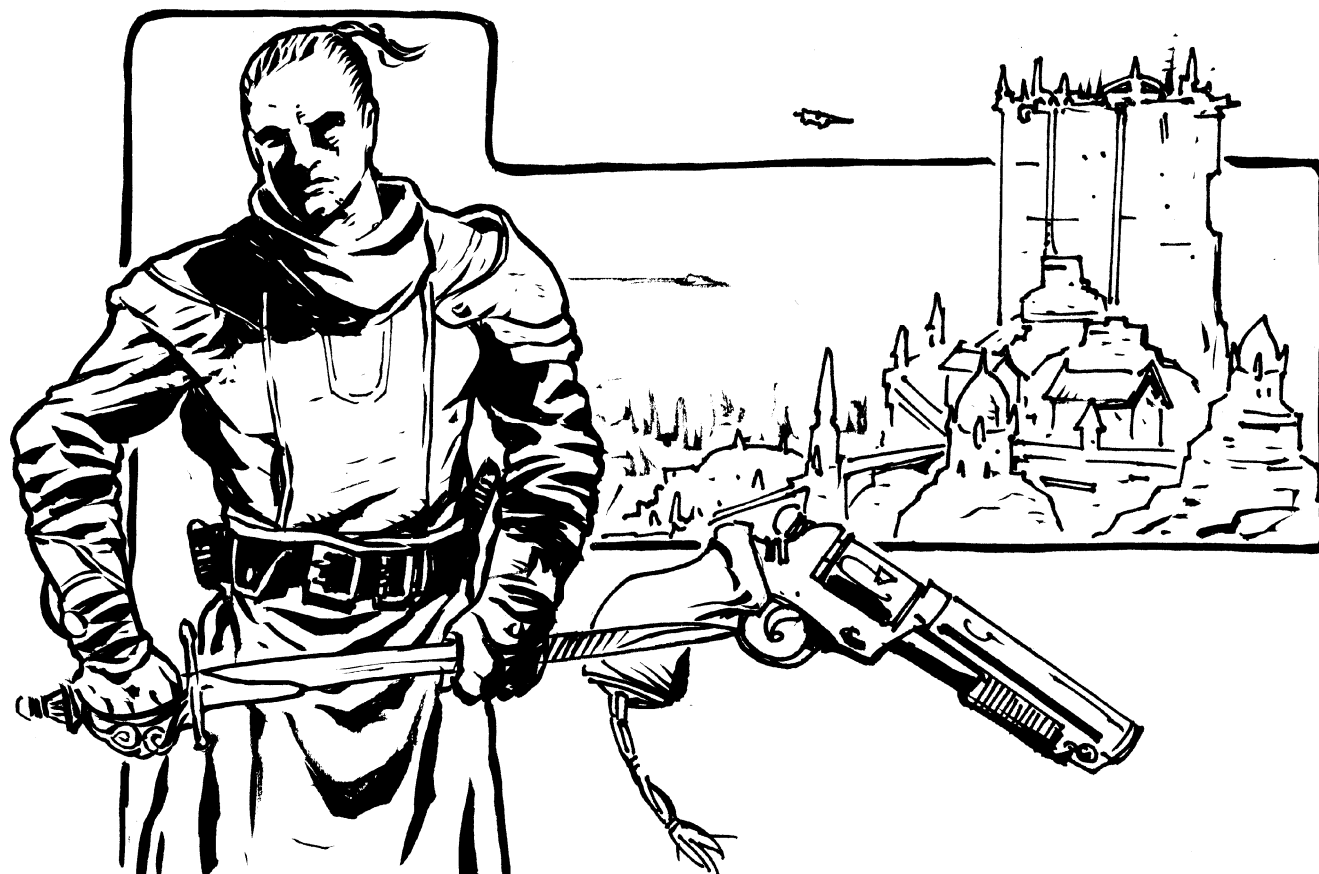
quest for and return with this plant (thus saving the marquis' life) may be rewarded with higher rank (as long as his existing rank is lower than marquis). Of course, the only specimens of this plant are found exclusively within the fief of the marquis' alleged poisoner...

Usually, rank above that of knight confers land. That is, duty to manage land (in actuality, the land is owned by the house). Landed nobles are more rightly called "lords." Fiefs are rewarded for lifeterms (which revert back to the awarding lord when the vassal dies) or as heritages (the receiver's heirs inherit the land).

Rank can be stripped by a lord (or his superiors), but this is usually only done in extreme cases, such as treachery which caused the house great loss. However, in the post-Emperor Wars royal theatre of intrigue, hampering a powerful superior's plots might be enough to cause him to strip rank from a character (although such displays of petulance don't usually gain such lords loyalty from their other vassals — unless they are the kind to rule their nobles with fear).

Vassalage Duties

Various ranks confer different duties. The most typical land grants for each rank were listed above, but they don't always necessarily apply, especially in the case of lords now bereft of land due to losses during the Emperor Wars but who still retain their titles (and thus the right to con-



Fief Garrison

Level	Troops	Complement
1	Mustered serfs	Depends on population
2	Householders	5-15
3	Mercenaries	5-25
4	Knights	1-10 (can more effectively command lesser levels of troops)
5	Platoon	50
6	Company	100-250
7	Battalion	2-3 companies
8	Regiment	1000-2000
9	Legion	10,000
10	Multiple legions	20,000+

fer lesser titles on other nobles, regardless of land). By strict rule, once a noble loses his lands, he should lose the rank they conferred, but the practice during the Emperor Wars was to assume that lost land would eventually be reclaimed, and thus titles were rarely stripped. Now that an Emperor sits the throne, the royal houses wish to assert their privileges all the more, and are loathe to strip titles even though they may not have sufficient land to maintain them. They argue that old lands will still be reclaimed (and there are indeed many legal disputes clogging the Emperor's courts) or that new lands shall be had (perhaps in barbarian space).

While there are many details to the responsibilities a vassal owes her lord, they can best be summed up as: serve the house in the best way known, increase its holdings, obey your lord, and manage his lands well (collect taxes, tariffs and other money rights, and arm the citizenry in times of need). Of course, the manner in which these duties are performed vary from fief to fief and house to house.

As player characters rise in rank, they'll also rise in duty-load — things they have to attend to besides adventuring. For this reason, many declare "errantry," to become Knights Errant, spurning greater title and land grants in return for small cash bonuses and the ability to roam at will (although still in their lord's service). Also, nobles whose lords die can adopt errantry rather than swear fealty to another lord.

However, Knights Errant are looked upon as wild cards, and rarely rise to the highest levels except through sheer glory. They are socially inferior to nobles of similar rank, although their deeds may make them popular nonetheless (or shunned). In the post-Emperor Wars era, many now-landless lords have declared errantry. It is a lord's option whether to accept a vassal's request for errantry.

Lordly Duties

In return for a noble vassal's duties, a lord owes his vassal the following: honorable treatment befitting his

rank, arms and armor (this could be fulfilled by something as basic as a short sword and leather jerkin or something as grand as a blaster rifle and an energy shield), and upkeep (food and shelter in his holdings).

Two things prevent a lord from too commonly knighting others into her service: noble tradition maintains that only blood right creates a true noble (non-nobles who receive title rarely have the training and attitude to rule, much less the poise not to embarrass their lords), and the costs to upkeep a knight are often better spent elsewhere, unless war threatens the fief. A lord who liberally hands out knighthoods may suffer the ire of his own lords.

A lord also has duties to his freemen and serf vassals, but they are simpler: protection from enemy assault and fair rule (often ignored until the Church forces action; see *Appendix: Good Works in Priests of the Celestial Sun*).

Fief Management

Not all fiefs are created equal. Some are larger than others of the same kind (a barony on pastoral Grail may be bigger than one on crowded Criticorum). Fiefs can be judged by the traits listed below. These traits are considered relative to other fiefs of the same type: a barony with a Large population is still smaller than a county with a Small population (at least, on most worlds — barren worlds such as Nowhere may provide exceptions to this rule).

Name: The fief's name, followed by its location. In parentheses, put the name of its planet.

Type: Barony, earldom, county, etc. Generally, the traits for a duchy concern an entire continent or moon, a county examines a portion of a continent or capital city, an earldom a smaller portion of the county (a prominent city or province), a barony a shire, borough or major fortification.

Ruler: The lord who rules the fief. In parentheses, list the quality of rule: Just, Generous, Neutral, Harsh, Tyrannical. This helps determine the population's morale.

Manor: The ruler maintains a manor house, or demesne, as the seat of rule for that fief. Its name and location (in parentheses or as part of the name) should be listed here. While there may be other noble manors and fortifications throughout the fief, the main house is the political and oftentimes social center of a fief, around which prominent villages, towns or cities are raised.

Garrison: The fief's military might. The more important a fief is tactically or strategically, the higher its garrison (often bolstered by troops from a greater lord's armies). See the *Fief Garrison* sidebar chart. Generally, it takes a duke to muster a legion, a count or earl to maintain a regiment, and a baron to hold a company.

Population: The fief's known population, consisting of its serf vassals, freemen renters, and even freemen land owners (usually only small plots at best). A fief's population determines how many taxes the lord can collect (see *Affluence*, below).

Instead of hard numbers, this can be broken down

into three categories: Minimal (0), Small (1), Medium (2), Large (3). (The numerical values in parentheses are explained in *Affluence*, below.) Also list the population's morale: High, Good, Neutral, Low, Oppressed. The better a population's morale, the more effectively they will fight when called upon to defend their homes against enemy attack and the easier they will accept high tax burdens.

The lord's quality of rule is often directly mirrored by his population's morale (i.e. Just rule causes High morale). However, the Church can often work to bolster morale during bad rule, or lower it during good rule, depending on its own behavior (Avestites rarely bolster morale) or its relations with the lord (priests can intentionally sermonize against the lord).

Resources: The resources the fief produces, adding to its wealth and importance (see *Affluence*, below). This could be food, minerals, crafts, trained troops (its people are its exportable resource), and even tariffs collected by others traveling through the realm. List the type(s) of resource, and in parentheses list its value: Scarce (0), Fruitful (1), Prosperous (2), Thriving (3).

If a fief's resources are too dependent on the population's happy labor (crafts, trade, tourism, etc.), then the fief's morale can effect the resource output. Fiefs that rely on physical labor (mining, crops, etc.) can usually maintain output even under conditions of bad morale (for a time, at least).

Affluence: The combination of a fief's taxes and the money it makes selling its resources provides a quick measure of its affluence, and thus its lord's standard of living. Although a lord can strip her fief's wealth to bolster her own standard of living, this is often considered Harsh or Tyrannical rule, and eventually causes poor morale and lower resource output; if kept up, it can lead to revolts.

Rank affluence as: Destitute (0), Poor (1), Good (2), Well-off (3), Wealthy (4), Rich (5), Filthy Rich (6). (The last five traits are the same as for a character's assets.) Determine this by adding the fief's population value (the number given in parentheses above) to its resources value. For instance, a fief with a Small population but with Thriving resources creates a Wealthy fief.

Political Ties: This covers the most important alliances or rivalries the fief has with its neighbors or foreign but interested parties. List important people, fiefs or factions and put their ranking in parentheses: Strong, Good, Neutral, Rival, Enemy.

The most prominent categories are: the fief's ruling house, neighboring noble houses, the Church and the Merchant League. Embargoes and boycotts declared on one's fief are tactics often employed by spurned guilds. Likewise, priests can ignite (or even lead) uprisings and strikes (see **Priests of the Celestial Sun**); officially sanctioned strikes, while rare, risk the ire of upper levels of the Church should military force be used too harshly in retaliation.

Landscape: A description of the fief's geography: Is it a

jungle island or a wide-open plain in the heartlands of a temperate continent?

Sample Fief: County Ilini, Northern Jyväskylä (Leminkainen)

Type: County

Ruler: Count Baltor (Generous)

Manor: Manse Myrven (northeastern tip of Credia Bay)

Garrison: 7

Population: Large (Good)

Resources: Prosperous (red wheat)

Affluence: Rich

Political Ties: House Hawkwood (Strong), Church (Neutral), Valdalla barbarians (Rival)

Landscape: County Ilini dominates the northern portion of the Jyväskylä continent, facing southwestern Grikkor across the Credia Ocean. Cool temperatures and good rainfall ensure strong crop yields in its many farmlands, spread out over the region and separated by dense forests. It is divided into various baronies and shires.

Specialized Fencing

While fencing is an ancient art, with dueling masters teaching the same basic lessons to students from all backgrounds, certain groups (especially houses) have developed their own maneuvers. Anyone can learn these maneuvers, but members of other houses need to be able to justify their training. These maneuvers stem from both need and dueling philosophy. For instance, the Hazat tend to be the most aggressive duelists, constantly pressing forward. House Hawkwood prefers a slow, deliberate process that inevitably overwhelms an enemy. The al-Malik follow the most contemplative style, letting their opponents overextend themselves. The Li Halan tend to focus on defense, waiting for the right moment to strike. And the Decados... they just like to win.

Al-Malik Second Strike: An al-Malik never makes a plan without a backup one prepared. She hopes this attack scores, but if it doesn't, she's got another one ready. A fencer who takes this Second Strike can do nothing else in the turn, not even dodge. The first attack is a normal one, though it suffers a -1 penalty to the goal number. If it hits, then the character is done for the turn. If it misses, she can make a second attack at -5 to hit.

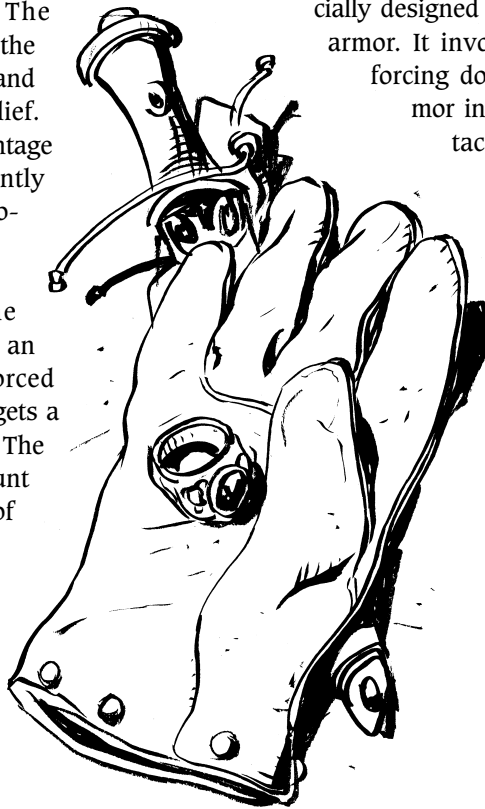
Decados Diversion: Some Decados have mastered the art of the subtle suggestion. This maneuver involves nothing so blatant as yelling, "Look behind you!" or throwing sand in someone's eyes. Instead it involves a series of glances, head twitches, body language and facial expressions that slowly register with one's foe through the course of the duel. The foe becomes distracted, constantly looking around for other foes and problems. The duelist makes an Extrovert + Knavery roll on the turn AFTER he announces he is starting the diversion. Every victory die subtracts one from the foe's attack goal rolls. This penalty only lasts for the next turn. The Decados Diversion does not

House Specialized Fencing Actions

Action	LVL	Roll	Init	Goal	DMG	Effect
Al-Malik Second Strike	6	Dx+Melee		-1/-5		Character may make a second attack if the first fails
Decados Diversion	4	Extro+Knavery				Subtract victory pts from opponent's attack rolls
Hawkwood Advance	5	End+Vigor				Character advances (and enemy retreats) by one meter per victory die
Hazat Hammer	6	Dx+Melee				Every victory pt reduces target's parry or armor dice by one
Li Halan Holy Parry	5	Dx+Melee		+4		No bonus against a Thrust action

count as an action, but the Decados can only take one other action in any turn in which he attempts a diversion.

Hawkwood Advance: The Hawkwood have long believed in the inexorable advance of the house, and this maneuver embodies that belief. The Hawkwood presses her advantage slowly and methodically, constantly advancing and pushing her opponent backwards. Every victory die on a contested Endurance + Vigor roll allows her to advance one meter, and her opponent retreats an equal amount. If someone is forced over a cliff by this maneuver, he gets a Dexterity + Vigor roll to hang on. The Hawkwood advance does not count as its own action for the purpose of multiple action penalties. It is actually part of whatever other action the Hawkwood is taking.



Hazat Hammer: While other houses may snicker at a lack of subtlety, the Hazat have found that brute force is an excellent way to achieve their goals. This attack is especially designed to knock down parries and batter through armor. It involves constant attacks against one point, forcing down an opposing sword or weakening armor in that point. Every victory point on this attack reduces the number of dice the opponent can roll for either parries or armor. It has no effect on shields.

Li Halan Holy Parry: Legends tracing this maneuver to Halvor, "Sword of the Pancreator," may be apocryphal, but the Li Halan like to believe them. The Li Halan devised a parrying form that takes the shape of the jumpgate cross. It provides an exceptional barrier against most attacks, but is an inadequate defense against mere thrusts (it provides no bonus against thrusts).

Credits

Writing: Bill Bridges and Andrew Greenberg

Art: John Bridges

Development and layout: Bill Bridges