

MOST TRUSTED ADVISORS



a comic game of feudal intrigue

by W.S. Healed & Citizen Abel

CREDITS

*this Folio was composed by the miraculous
providence of the incredible Horizon Machine*

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INTRODUCTION

THE GAME

In *Most Trusted Advisors*, you'll play as a profoundly incompetent monarch's eponymous privy council. As lords and ladies of the realm, you'll be tasked with keeping your liege safe from foreign agents, court conspiracies, and their most dangerous enemy: their own incompetence.

One player will take the role of your *liege*, responsible for telling you about the disasters your characters must deal with as well as the *Misfortunes* that befall them when they fail. The rest of you will pick up one of six *playbooks* and play scheming, petty, self-interested nobles. You'll try desperately to keep your liege alive, stay in their good graces, and keep the story unpredictable by introducing *Twists*.

Together, you'll tell a story of self-interested aristocrats getting themselves into trouble by being selfish, malevolent, incompetent, or all of the above. Play to find out if your lords and ladies can keep their liege in good health and their heads on their bodies, or if they'll be crushed under the weight of their own schemes.

PLAYING UPPER CLASS TWITS

It's easy, as a result of centuries of cultural inertia, to make the mistake of valorizing lords and kings as elegant, refined individuals leading idyllic lives of romance and chivalry. However, in reality, the institutions of nobility and royalty were cruel, extractive, and inevitably elevated laughable dolts to the highest echelons of power.

That reality, played up to the point of absurd madcap comedy, is what this game is about: *Most Trusted Advisors* is designed to be played as farce. A plan to assassinate a rival noble might, through a series of *Twists* and *Misfortunes*, end with the characters performing a musical stage play on pain of death, or pretending to be bears as part of an elaborate tax scam.

Player characters in *Most Trusted Advisors* are callous, petty tyrants born into immense wealth and power who constantly cause problems for themselves and for other people. Lean into that! Don't make the best choices for your character, but the funniest ones: the short-sighted, selfish choices that will inevitably make things worse.

Your character should be a larger-than-life personality, someone you enjoy telling stories about, but the game will work best if you treat them with the emotion all aristocrats deserve: disdain. Laughing at their failures is half the fun!

PLAYING THE LIEGE

Playing the *Liege* makes you the equivalent of what other systems call a ‘Game Master’. You’re responsible for the actions of the royal dipshit that the other players serve as advisors to, as well as describing the Realm of Dulcinea and its residents. When the other players fail, it’s your solemn and very funny duty to describe the *Misfortunes* that befall them.

You’ll also get to select a *Playbook*: each contains unique Misfortunes and suggestions for terrible situations to inflict on the other players. Being the master of the world and all it contains might seem like a heavy responsibility, but there’s really nothing to it as long as you follow three simple rules:

I. HOLD ON LIGHTLY

Don’t make plans; you’ve heard the thing about mice and men. You and the other players are working together to tell a fun and interesting story. If someone wants to take the session in an entirely unexpected direction, or pull out a Twist that upends everything about how you thought the evening would go, lean into it.

II. SHARE THE WORLD

You don’t have to come up with everything. You might be taking a lead role in the story you and the other players are telling, but they’re still co-authors. If the players decide they want to bribe a bishop, try turning to the *Hierophant* and saying “Well, you’re from the church, what’s the bishop like?”

III. LET YOURSELF BE INSPIRED

In case you’re ever stuck for a name, exotic pet, or worrying medical diagnosis, *Most Trusted Advisors* contains several tables, which can be found on *Pages 50-54*. Feel free to roll on them, or to skim them and pick out whatever seems the funniest. You could also check out some of the media that inspired the game itself, which we’ll conveniently list for you here:

TOUCHSTONES

- ♣ BBC One’s *Blackadder*, particularly the second and third seasons.
- ♣ BBC Four’s *The Thick of It* and the spinoff film *In The Loop*.
- ♣ FX’s *It’s Always Sunny in Philadelphia* and Fox’s *Arrested Development*
- ♣ Terry Pratchett’s *Discworld* novels, particularly the ones that focus on the characters of Moist von Lipwig and Lord Vetinari.

The ideal Trusted Advisors should be as scheming and venal as Lord Blackadder, as petty and self-centred as the Bluths or the Gang, hate the people around them as much as Malcolm Tucker, and, like Pratchett’s Discworld characters, should use an absurd setting to highlight some of the absurdities of the real world.

THE REALM

Most Trusted Advisors takes place in the city of *Valdrada*, the capital of the feudal realm of *Dulcinea*. Valdrada is a broad pastiche of feudal urban life: it's 15th-century Florence, 13th-century London, and 11th-century Paris all rolled into one. It's a pre-modern city, with everything that entails: not all castles and gardens, but also slums, sprawling streets, busy markets, theatres, taverns and brothels.

Dulcinea isn't located in any specific place, nor does it live in any particular century. It's a kitchen sink of medieval and early modern history, home to any aspect of the feudal world that would make for a funny or interesting story. In Dulcinea, the Black Death is spreading, witches are being burned in the town square, and the printing press is being invented all at once.

When you play *Most Trusted Advisors*, you should draw inspiration from history, use it as a canvas on which to scrawl an outrageous high-stakes farce, and never, ever, worry about anachronisms or being historically accurate.

There are a few things that are always true about Dulcinea:

- ♣ It's ruled by a *Liege*, a blithering royal shit with immense political power.
- ♣ Their *Most Trusted Advisors* are the ones actually running the realm.
- ♣ The *Nobility* occupy most positions of political, social, and economic power.
- ♣ They are all to the last man either useless or malevolent, often both.
- ♣ The *Burghers*, city-dwelling merchants, occupy the rest.
- ♣ They're equally useless and malevolent, but usually better at hiding it.
- ♣ The *Church* is a powerful institution that demands belief in their god or gods.
- ♣ Some people believe in *witches* and *sorcery*, which may or may not be real.
- ♣ It's neighbored by the *Duchy of Zobia*, a bitter historical enemy.
- ♣ A *Great War* has been fought, and the ink is still drying on the treaty.
- ♣ Thousands of *peasants* slave away thanklessly to keep the realm running.

There are a few things that certain players get to tell the table:

- ♣ The *Treasurer* tells you about Valdrada's landmarks, architecture, and history.
- ♣ The *Lover* tells you about your liege's redeeming qualities, few as they may be.
- ♣ The *Alchemist* tells you about magic, whether it's real, and what it can do.
- ♣ The *Hierophant* tells you about the gods and moral norms of the realm.
- ♣ The *Marshal* tells you about the great war, who won, and what it changed.
- ♣ The *Blackguard* tells you about the royal family's dark, dreadful secret.

MAKING VALDRADA YOURS

Now that you know what's always true about Valdrada, let's talk about some things that may or may not be true. Any player can introduce new elements to the city with a *Twist* or a *Misfortune*: if the introduction of a pretentious arts college or a thriving community of chess grandmasters would make a scene funnier, then go for it!

If you want to establish some additional facts about the city before you play, you can pick one or more items from these lists:

VALDRADA'S MOST FAMOUS LANDMARK IS A...

- | | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|-----------------------|
| ♣ Glass palace | ♣ Ancient temple | ♣ Inescapable dungeon |
| ♣ Bustling flea market | ♣ World-famous bakery | ♣ Towering statue |
| ♣ Holy mountain | ♣ Novelty hat shop | ♣ Haunted forest |
| ♣ Prestigious theater | ♣ Lowlife dive bar | ♣ Something else |

VALDRADA WAS BUILT ON...

- | | | |
|-------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| ♣ White seaside cliffs | ♣ A fertile river delta | ♣ Hallowed ground |
| ♣ Shifting golden dunes | ♣ Unstable marshland | ♣ Rushing rapids |
| ♣ Shadowy forests | ♣ Long-forgotten ruins | ♣ Conquered land |
| ♣ A lonely island | ♣ A peaceful lagoon | ♣ Something else |

A DIFFERENT REALM

Dulcinea is a pastiche of the medieval and early modern period of Western European history: it has some influences, in the titles and suggested names given in the playbooks, from nearby parts of the world that played important roles in this history.

If you want to stage your game of *Most Trusted Advisors* somewhere other than ersatz Europe, that's great! You might invent your own *Realm* to play as scholar-bureaucrats serving the whims of a pernicious emperor, or put-upon strategists advising a great Khan. While some alterations might be needed to the *Titles* your characters receive, there's a place in every culture's history for powerful clowns struggling to solve the problems caused by even more powerful, much sillier clowns.

Be careful, though, to do your research and approach other people's cultures with respect. Yes, *Most Trusted Advisors* is pastiche and not history. But to satirise something, you first need to understand it: without a base of knowledge and passion for the history in question, your pastiche will be built on ignorant stereotypes.

There's humour to be found in the misfortunes of rich, pompous fools all around the world, but there's nothing funny or clever about pointing and laughing at someone else's culture; it's just boring and cruel. Do your homework.

HOW TO PLAY

ROLEPLAYING GAMES *or*: ALCHEMY

Roleplaying is a conversation. There is no ‘story’ planned out ahead of time: the story arises when the Liege Player describes a situation, and the other players describe how their characters react to it. This should happen before any rules come in.

In this rulebook, you will often read a sentence like ‘when you overcomplicate a simple plan...’ or ‘when you use someone’s words against them..’ These aren’t complex theoretical rules terms that you need a referee to adjudicate, but just refer to what’s happening in the story. To do something, you don’t roll dice: you *say you do it*. The rolling comes afterwards, to see how well doing it goes.

That die roll tells you something about the new situation that the Liege Player gets to describe, and which the other players react to, starting the cycle over again. Like an alchemist, you transmute an initial situation and the actions of the players into the game’s mechanics, and then resolve those mechanics into a new situation to repeat the cycle.

Remember that the game’s rules exist only as a philosopher’s stone that turns your existing story into more story. Treat them as a co-author and invite them to tell a story with you.

YES, YOU’RE VERY CLEVER, NOW SHUT UP AND TELL ME HOW TO ROLL DICE.

Fair enough. When your character attempts something *risky or uncertain*, you roll one or more *six-sided dice* and read *the highest result* to determine how it goes.

- ♣ If the highest result is a 6, it’s a *success*. You get what you want. If you roll more than one 6, it’s a *critical success* and you gain an extra advantage.
- ♣ If the highest result is a 4 or 5, it’s a *partial success*. You get what you want, but suffer a *Misfortune*: you’re hurt, humiliated, the situation gets worse, or so on.
- ♣ If the highest result is a 1, 2, or 3, it’s a *tragedy*. You probably don’t get what you want, and you suffer one or more *Misfortunes*.

When you play *Most Trusted Advisors*, you’ll find that most actions wind up as partial successes. Your characters tend to succeed, but they’ll usually create new problems in the process—they’re living in a cynical comedy of errors.

ACTION ROLLS

There are two types of roll in *Most Trusted Advisors*. The most common type of roll is an **action roll**: you make one when your character is attempting something dangerous. When you make one, you roll dice equal to one of your character's **action ratings**, traits representing their proficiency in various treacherous fields.

To make an action roll, declare your goal and how you're planning to achieve it, then choose a fitting action rating. You can't roll a rating unless your character is taking that particular action: for example, if you want to roll to **Duel**, you have to start a fight. If you want to roll **Shadow**, you have to sneak up on someone.

The goal matters too: make sure you tell the table what you're trying to achieve, so the Liege Player knows how to describe your success or failure. If you're using your sword to intimidate someone, or impress a maiden with your duelling talent, that's not **Duelling**, but **Disdaining** or **Appeasing** respectively.

Action ratings can range from 0 to 4. You get the opportunity to increase them at the end of every session. If you ever find yourself rolling an action rating that's at 0, roll two dice and keep the **lowest** result. Some mechanics let you 'take +1d' on a roll: this means you roll one additional six-sided die.

FLOURISHES

When you make an action roll, you can declare a **Flourish** to achieve something above and beyond what you usually could. You might flourish to **Duel** two men at once, or **Bewitch** someone wearing a protective amulet. If a player gives a particularly outlandish or implausible goal on an action roll, the Liege Player may tell them they must Flourish to achieve it.

To Flourish, describe what your character does and how it's uniquely impressive, stylish, or over-the-top. If you **succeed**, you achieve an extraordinary effect. If you roll a **tragedy**, your Liege inflicts an additional **misfortune** on you. If you roll a **partial success**, both of these things happen.

NPCs & DOUBLE DUTY

Rolls in *Most Trusted Advisors* play double duty, meaning that the result of a roll also tells you how things went for any non-player character involved in a scene. As the Liege, you never have to roll on behalf of an NPC (although **fortune rolls** let you eschew responsibility and put matters in the hands of fate when appropriate).

For example, if a player rolls a 6 when they **Duel** a rival noble, that means that their rival was quite soundly beaten. However, if they roll a 3, the Liege might describe the rival noble getting the upper hand and cutting off their nose: this is the **Misfortune** that results from rolling a **tragedy**.

FORTUNE ROLLS

When the Liege Player doesn't want to make a decision about the world, or the table wants to inject a little extra uncertainty into how things turn out, you can make a *fortune roll*. You can use fortune rolls to answer questions like 'Does the royal army win the battle?' or 'How good is the feast's dessert?'. Build a dice pool between 1 and 4 by adding and subtracting dice for major advantages and disadvantages, then read the results as you would an action roll.

TWISTS

When you roll a tragedy or a partial success, your Liege tells you which *Misfortune* you suffer. You can avoid this misfortune, however, by spending a *Twist* and describing the ridiculous contrivance or convoluted plot that saves your bacon.

Let's say you've just lost a duel to a noble. Your Liege describes how they stab you in the chest, leaving you wounded. 'Ah,' you say, smugly, 'But I woke up today wearing my collection of extremely durable jousting medallions, and his sword bounces harmlessly off!' You spend a Twist, and so it is. The more outlandish and laughable, the better!

You can spend a Twist at any time to introduce a useful detail to the scene. You might spend a Twist to declare that a prison guard is actually your cousin Geoff, or that the bridge you're fleeing over spontaneously collapses once you're across it.

Every player starts each session with three Twists. If you run out of Twists, you can spend a *ducat* to declare one instead. Additionally, you can always introduce a Twist for free by saying 'Wouldn't it be funny if...' and then suggesting it. If everyone agrees that it would be, the Twist happens. It might be tempting to use your Twists all at once, but make sure to think ahead: when a game session is ending, everyone will be piling up last-minute Twists to try and come out on top!

DUCATS

Ducats are tokens that you get by playing to your *playbook's* tropes, falling for other players' schemes, and causing problems for yourself and others. At the table, you might represent them with pocket change, snacks, or anything else similarly small and numerous.

Each playbook has a list of things you can accomplish without rolling any dice, just by spending a ducat. Ducats can also be spent for +1d on any action roll. By describing what your character does to help, you can instead apply this +1d to another player's action roll. Finally, as mentioned above, you can spend a ducat to declare a *Twist*.

Ducats encourage you lean into your character's flaws and let them drive the story forward. Some games are about playing clever and competent heroes, but not *Most Trusted Advisors*; it's a game about doing the funny thing, not the smart thing.

CONDITIONS

When the Liege Player inflicts a *Misfortune* that directly affects your character, it's a *Condition*. Conditions are marked on your playbook until you can clear them. Every condition has an *Out*, a way you can clear it during a session, and a *Consequence*, something unpleasant that happens to your character if you end a misadventure still bearing it. On the flipside, clearing a condition rewards you with a *ducat*.

For your first few outings as a Liege Player, you should stick to inflicting the conditions marked below, but if you feel like you've got a handle on the game, feel free to make up your own to fit what's happening in the story: all you need is a name, an Out, and a Consequence.

ANGRY

Your temper got the best of you, and you're ready to bite the head off the next person to talk to you.

- ♣ Out: Lash out at somebody important.
- ♣ Consequence: You are stripped of one your titles after a rash outburst.

BANKRUPT

You've spent every last penny you had, and then a fair few more that you didn't.

- ♣ Out: Successfully pull off a nefarious get-rich-quick scheme.
- ♣ Consequence: Pick a player character: you're now in inescapable debt to them.

CURSED

An evil spell's been cast on you, and now your life is nothing but malaise and misfortune.

- ♣ Out: Convince a sorcerer to lift the curse.
- ♣ Consequence: Pick an area of your life (love, politics, war, money, etc.): you can never again succeed in it.

DEAD

Everyone's pretty sure you're dead and buried.

- ♣ Out: Spend a Twist to suddenly reappear and explain how you faked your own death.
- ♣ Consequence: You remain dead as a doornail. You are mourned only by any pets you had.

DISOWNED

You're an unwanted stain on your family name.

- ♣ Out: Marry into another noble house, or find some other way to restore your noble status.
- ♣ Consequence: You must leave court to live as a peasant.

ENEMY OF THE CROWN

Oh, you've really done it now! Your liege wants your head on a plate, with scallops!

- ♣ Out: Make a pathetic, grovelling apology to your liege for a chance to earn a pardon.
- ♣ Consequence: You are summarily executed.

HUMILIATED

Your name is mud. You're the castle laughing-stock. At least jesters get paid to live like this.

- ♣ Out: Do something flashy and impressive in front of everyone.
- ♣ Consequence: Your nickname changes to 'The Fool'.

SCANDALOUS

Your secret's out! You know the one. Tut, tut.

- ♣ Out: Reveal someone else's bigger, much more embarrassing scandal.
- ♣ Consequence: You can no longer appear in public without a good disguise, lest you be set upon by a bloodthirsty mob of the public.

TIRED

You're totally spent. Limp as a boiled cabbage.

- ♣ Out: Collapse from exhaustion at an inopportune moment.
- ♣ Consequence: You become a sickly waif who must Flourish in order to achieve any physical feat.

WOUNDED

Oof! Ouch! Yikes. Wouldn't want to be you.

- ♣ Out: Be treated by a physician, or collapse from blood loss at an inopportune moment.
- ♣ Consequence: Your wound becomes infected, and you must amputate a limb or facial feature.

ARMS

Some things are too tangled and complex to resolve them with a single roll. To track ongoing situations, you can use *Arms*: drawn shields split into *divisions* that help you track the progress of diabolical schemes, the approach of oncoming danger, or the wearing down of an obstacle.

To use a coat of Arms, draw a shield and name it after what it represents: ‘Getting Declared Innocent in Court’, or ‘Brewing A Deadly Tincture’. Split it into 3 divisions to represent a relatively simple situation, 4 divisions for a rather tangled situation, and 6 divisions for a truly fiendish situation. When something happens that advances the situation, *fill a division*. If the situation was advanced by a player pulling off a Flourish, fill two. Conversely, if something happens that sets the situation back or undoes progress, *empty a division*.

Remember that Arms exist to help track things that are happening in the story: they should reflect, rather than dictate, the progress of events. If something happens that would reasonably resolve an entire situation one way or another at once, feel free to adjust or discard any relevant Arms to reflect that. There are two common types of Arms you might find yourself using a lot in *Most Trusted Advisors*: Arms of Advancement, and Arms of Adversity.

♣ Arms of Advancement

These arms track a player’s complex or ambitious goal. Say that you want to create the Philosopher’s Stone, prove that you’re innocent of treason charges, or convince your liege to declare war on Zobia: these might all call for Arms of Advancement.

Name them after their goal, not after a method: i.e. ‘Foil Castle Security’ rather than ‘Sneak Past Castle Security’. Arms of Advancement can be progressed by doing all sorts of things, as long as they would reasonably bring you closer to that goal.

♣ Arms of Adversity

These arms track looming disaster. Say that one of your rivals is plotting against you, or your liege is starting to suspect that you’ve lied to them: the Liege Player might draw up some Arms of Adversity to keep track of these dangers.

Arms of Adversity can be created by the Liege Player when they *forecast trouble* and have their divisions filled when they *make things worse*.



MISHAPS & MISFORTUNES

While they get a bigger share of control over the narrative, the Liege Player is still a player, and has their own rules to follow. *Mishaps & Misfortunes* are the tools you get to move the story forward and show the other players how the world reacts to them.

A *mishap* can happen at any time; use one to kick off a session, when there's a lull in the action, or simply where it would make sense in the story. Mishaps prompt responses from the players and create opportunities for action. After you describe a mishap, you should always ask the players: what do you do?

A *misfortune* can only happen when a player rolls a *tragedy* or *partial success*: you can then inflict one or more misfortunes, depending on what makes sense in the story. You should tell a player what kind of misfortune might happen before they make the roll, or make it clear in your description of a scene. For example, if you say "Lord Jon walks towards you with his sword raised", it's pretty fair to assume that a possible misfortune here is for the character in question to be *Wounded*.

You should never use the name of a misfortune or mishap when it happens: instead, describe how it happens in the story. For example, if a player rolls a 3 to *Appease* the judge at their treason trial, don't say "I'm inflicting a condition and forcing a dilemma," but instead say "The judge rejects your argument, leaving you *Humiliated*, and tells you that you must give up either your mansion or your daughter as bail."

MISHAPS

Forecast Trouble

Suggest oncoming trouble, either in the immediate scene: "You see the duke's guards approaching you," or elsewhere: "Meanwhile, Lady Gwen is surely brewing a deadly poison and plotting your demise." You might draw up *Arms of Adversity* to represent it.

Offer a Risky Opportunity...

Dangle something the players want in front of them: riches, fame, a coveted title. Make it risky, and encourage them to go for it anyway.

...Or a Chance to Earn a Ducat

Each playbook has a list of ways they can get into trouble and earn a ducat. Offer these up: put the Blackguard in a position to betray people, or the Lover in a position where their naivete will lead them into trouble.

Make Matters Worse

Escalate existing trouble into an immediate, pressing issue: "The duke's guards muscle through the crowd and demand you come with them" or reveal a new Twist on the situation: "You thought she was unarmed, but the duchess is now brandishing a sabre!" You might fill divisions on a set of *Arms of Adversity*, if you've already drawn them.

Make a Frivolous Demand

Summon the players and have their liege (or some other figure of authority) make a ridiculous, but theoretically achievable, demand. Tell them to recapture an escaped goose, bring the Queen a fresh cherry pie, or make a foreign advisor feel welcome. This is a good mishap to introduce at the start of a session to kick off a misadventure!

MISFORTUNES

Inflict a Condition

Pick a condition from the list on *Page 8*, or invent one of your own. A condition should come from something you've already established as part of the scene: for example, a PC should only be *Wounded* if physical harm was already clearly on the table.

Introduce Trouble

A new problem enters the scene: a fire breaks out during a bar fight, your Liege walks in on you plotting treason, the boat you're on starts sinking. The problem should be high-stakes and require immediate reaction: something that could threaten to inflict yet another misfortune.

Force a Difficult Dilemma

Force a player to make a difficult choice: "The duke's guards will arrest you, unless you pay a bail sum that'll surely bankrupt you." Both options should be painful, or even misfortunes in their own right.

Hoist by Their Own Petard

Turn what a player was trying to do back on them. If they were trying to hurt an enemy, the enemy hurts them instead. If they were trying to lay low, an old friend recognizes them and immediately draws them into interminable small talk. If they were telling a lie, it works too well: "Well, since you're such good friends with Duke Headchopper, I'll seat you together at the opera!" The more improbably convoluted and karmically justified the hoisting is, the better.

Make an Outrageous Demand

Similar to 'Make a Frivolous Demand', the players characters' liege summons them to the throne room in order to demand something completely impossible. They might be declaring war on the sea, demanding an exploratory voyage to claim the moon as royal land, or outlawing beards. Whatever it is, it's impossible, they want you to do it, and they will never take "no" for an answer.

WHEN TO ROLL

Most Trusted Advisors operates on the paradigm that 'every roll matters'. What this means is that every dice roll should result in the story advancing somehow, whether things get worse or better for the protagonists. Before any dice hit the table, both the player rolling and the Liege Player should establish what's at stake, what will be achieved on a success, and what potential *misfortunes* may arise. If you can't think of a fitting *misfortune*, then maybe this doesn't call for a roll: if the consequence of failure would be 'nothing', the situation's probably not interesting or dangerous enough to be making an action roll.

If you feel like there definitely should be a consequence or danger involved, but just can't figure out what it should be, remember rules II and III on *Page 2*. Ask the other players, 'What do you think would be a fun misfortune here?' or 'What do you all think would be funny?' and run with that!

In general, as the Liege Player, it's always better to say 'yes' than 'no'. If a player wants to accomplish something outlandish that you don't think is feasible, demand a *flourish*, or offer a path to getting what they want. For example, if Lord Morvoren wants to *Duel* the entire Zobian army, you might say, 'Well, you can't do that alone, but if you're able to recruit a squadron of knights, then you'd have a chance.' Don't just say 'no' when you can say 'no, *but...*'

ACTION RATINGS

Characters in *Most Trusted Advisors* can use twelve different *actions* to overcome their trials and tribulations. Each character has an *action rating* in each of these actions, ranging from 0 to 4 and representing their proficiency at doing that particular thing. There are different ways to be good at things: if two characters have an *Appease* rating of 3, one might be a slimy bootlicker while the other might be an endearingly sweet ingenue.

Remember that you choose which action rating you roll by describing what your character does. If you're faced with a sword-wielding rival, you can't "fight her with *Shadow*." If you're fighting her, that means you're *Duelling*. You could, however, say "I duck behind my friend, and while she's chasing me, I want to try and lose her in the chaos so I can stab her in the back." Then you would be *Shadowing*, although here the Liege player might demand a *flourish* if your chosen *action rating* is an inefficient or roundabout way of achieving your goal.

*When you **Appease**, you tell someone what they want to hear.*

You might make a grovelling apology to your Liege. You might make the Duchess feel important so that she'll come to your dinner party. You might bribe an angry town guard. You could try to impress a blushing maiden, although *Blustering* might work better.

*When you **Balance**, you act with social or physical grace.*

You might make an excellent impression at a formal event. You might juggle the court jester's clubs. You could try to carefully climb across the rooftops, although *Skulking* might work better.

*When you **Bewitch**, you do magic, or what other people believe to be magic.*

You might perform an exorcism. You might turn lead into gold. You might draw an elaborate magic circle, chant in a dead language, and let the placebo effect do the rest. You could try to magically heal a sick man, although *Concocting* might work better.

*When you **Bluster**, you lie, bluff, or make yourself seem impressive.*

You might pretend to be a tax collector to 'confiscate' goods. You might tell a bandit that your bodyguards are just around the corner. You might awe peasants by displaying your finery. You could improvise a convincing prophecy, although *Bewitching* might work better.

*When you **Concoct**, you brew alchemical potions or assemble odd contraptions.*

You might brew a medical poultice. You might invent a novelty steam-powered automaton. You might extract snake venom for later use. You could try to manually fine-tune a device, although *Balancing* might work better.

*When you **Disdain**, you assert your superiority with demands and insults.*

You might intimidate a servant into doing your bidding. You might make a cutting remark to emotionally destroy a rival. You might command silence so that you can make a speech. You could try to argue a duke out of a bad idea, although *Appeasing* might work better.

*When you **Duel**, you take on an enemy in a fair fight.*

You might defeat your ambitious brother in a swordfight. You might lead an army to war against Zobian mercenaries. You might start and win a drunken tavern brawl. You could try to fell a stag in single combat, although *Shadowing* might work better.

*When you **Ruin**, you destroy something and show no mercy.*

You might savagely wound a defeated enemy. You might burn down a tavern. You might break down a locked door. You could try to destroy a rival's reputation, although *Disdaining* might work better.

*When you **Shadow**, you ambush the unwary and trail your enemies.*

You might follow a priest to his home. You might rob your Liege under a false identity. You might stab a Lord in the confusion of a riot. You could defeat someone in combat through guile and underhanded tactics, although *Dueling* might work better.

*When you **Skulk**, you hide from danger and move quickly and quietly.*

You might sneak into the dungeons at midnight. You might dart into a wardrobe with your illicit lover. You might keep your head down at a ball to avoid your annoying uncle. You could try to make a stealthy rooftop escape, although *Balancing* might work better.

*When you **Study**, you scrutinize information in detail.*

You might consult history books to determine the rightful owner of a castle. You might check the royal ledgers for irregularities. You might search for a famous relic. You could painstakingly search a room inch by inch, although *Surveying* might work better.

*When you **Survey**, you observe the world around you in the moment.*

You might spot a way out of a dangerous situation. You might spy a weak spot in the castle walls. You might single out a particularly gullible-looking noble at a feast. You could skim-read a book to find information, although *Studying* might work better.

TITLES & PRIVILEGES

As well as their *action ratings*, characters in *Most Trusted Advisors* have two kinds of special ability, marked on their *playbooks*. *Privileges* are listed under the heading 'You can always...' and are the things you can always declare your character to be doing, with no rolls. *Privileges* are the archetypal behaviours of the playbook, the bread and butter of that particular sort of noble bastard.

Meanwhile, the abilities granted by *Titles* are more specific, often offering bonuses to specific types of action roll or costing a ducat to activate. Since you pick your own *Titles*, and can take them from a variety of different sources, they're what'll make your character unique.

CHARACTERS & MISADVENTURES

STRUCTURING YOUR STORY

Most Trusted Advisors isn't a system designed for long-term play. It's best played as a *one-shot*, a single session that works as a self-contained story, or as a shorter campaign of 3-6 sessions. The latter allows long-term schemes to breathe a little, and lets some truly impressive pile-ups occur. Every session of a campaign should still have its own individual standalone story, even if you weave in ongoing elements. Think of them as episodes of a television show.

There's not a big difference in how you play between a one-shot or a campaign. The main difference is that at the end of a one-shot session you'll use the *epilogue rules* to find out what happens to your characters, while if your game is ongoing you'll use the *advancement rules* to progress your character for their next misadventure.

Whether it's a one-shot or the beginning of a campaign, the first thing you have to do is create your characters. The Liege Player creates a Liege, while the other players each create an advisor in their service. There are eight steps to creating an advisor, which this chapter explains in detail. You must:

1. Pick one of six *playbooks*.
2. Name your character, and bestow them with a nickname, a House, and a visage.
3. Put four points into your *action ratings*.
4. Pick a friend and a rival from a list of notable individuals.
5. Pick a *secret society* to be a member of.
6. Pick three Titles.
7. Tell the table something about the world, based on your *playbook*.
8. Ask two other players a question, based on your *playbook*.

I. PICKING A PLAYBOOK

Every character in *Most Trusted Advisors* is capable of engaging in the same antics. They are, to the last, rich and powerful selfish fuckers. However, each of them will have a personal preference for which type of rich and powerful selfish fuckery they tend to indulge in.

Each of the game's six *playbooks* has its own way of getting into and out of trouble. The greedy *Treasurer* earns ducats when they embark on an ill-advised get-rich scheme, the treacherous *Blackguard* can earn ducats for backstabbing the people around them, and so on. Every *playbook* also gets the final say on a different detail about the Realm.

Picking a playbook can be daunting, so here's a helpful cheat sheet to help you decide:

*You should play a **Treasurer** if...*

- ♣ You want to solve problems using your wealth and political power.
- ♣ You want to play a fastidious, rules-abiding bureaucrat.
- ♣ You want to tell the table about Valdrada's architecture and landscape.

*You should play a **Lover** if...*

- ♣ You want to solve problems using your charm and good looks.
- ♣ You want to play a young, carefree idealist.
- ♣ You want to tell the table about your Liege's personality.

*You should play an **Alchemist** if...*

- ♣ You want to solve problems using your intelligence and innovation.
- ♣ You want to play an oddball intellectual with a few screws loose.
- ♣ You want to tell the table about the mysteries and secrets of witchcraft.

*You should play a **Hierophant** if...*

- ♣ You want to solve problems using your social position and moral authority.
- ♣ You want to play a haughty, above-it-all religious figure.
- ♣ You want to tell the table about the gods and moral standards of your society.

*You should play a **Marshal** if...*

- ♣ You want to solve problems using chivalry and violence.
- ♣ You want to play a fearless general with more swords than sense.
- ♣ You want to tell the table about the recent great war and its consequences.

*You should play a **Blackguard** if...*

- ♣ You want to solve problems using deception and skulduggery.
- ♣ You want to play an underhanded, backstabbing bastard.
- ♣ You want to tell the table about the royal family's darkest secret.

You can make two characters that use the same playbook very different by picking different Titles and investing in different Action Ratings. However, you'll probably have the most fun if everyone at your table picks a different playbook.

2. NAMING YOUR CHARACTER

You can't make a good upper-class twit without a good upper-class twit name. Your character's name should consist of a first name, a nickname, and the venerable and esteemed House of inbred freaks they're a member of. Each *playbook* has a few suggested names and nicknames, but feel free to stray from the beaten path. Your playbook will also prompt you to pick some traits to describe your character's appearance, or *visage*.

Picking a nickname is a great opportunity for characterization. These epithets, frequently applied to monarchs and more rarely to nobility, can tell you a lot about the character you're creating. They usually play on some notable aspect of the bearer's physical appearance (the Red, the Bald, the Fat), their personality (the Mad, the Bold, the Pious), or their achievements (the Conqueror, the Reformer, the Navigator).

Finally, your House is your character's noble family. Family, kin, and bloodline are everything to feudal nobility. When you name your House, think a little about what your character's family are like, and share any funny or interesting ideas you have with the table.

Contrary to what some morons might have you believe, people of colour weren't suddenly invented in the 19th century. Both hiring foreign advisors and administrating foreign conquered lands by elevating local elites are techniques as old as feudalism: even if playing in the default pseudo-European Dulcinea, feel free to have your character's name and ethnic background come from somewhere outside Western Europe.

If you're stuck for any of these, you can roll on the noble generation tables on *Pages 53-54* to get a name, nickname, and House. Before starting play, each player *must* begin the session by reading their character's full name, including all *Titles*, aloud, because it's funny.

3. IMPROVING ACTION RATINGS

Every playbook starts with three points distributed between two action ratings. For example, the Blackguard starts with two points in *Shadow* and one point in *Ruin*. When creating a character, you can add four more points distributed among whichever action ratings you like. The only restriction on investing these points is that you can't raise any action rating above 3.

4. PICKING A FRIEND & A RIVAL

Your playbook comes with a list of notable individuals you might know. Mark one of them as a friend and the other as a rival (by, say, ticking one and crossing the other). Think of how your character might know these people, and float some ideas with the table: perhaps your rival is a jilted ex-lover, or your friend is your begrudging political fiancée.

This step helps open doors to new plotlines: the Liege player might now bring your rival into a situation as a Misfortune, or have you go to your friend for help. If your friend can help you with something, take +1d to any relevant roll. Look out: their help might have strings attached!

5. PICKING A SECRET SOCIETY

If there's one thing that the rich and powerful love, it's being part of a special members-only club. Secret societies in *Most Trusted Advisors* are there to throw a wrench into things by introducing ulterior goals. It's one thing if the king wants his advisors to arrange a dinner for his cousin, but quite another if one of them has been secretly tasked to assassinate that cousin.

At the beginning of each misadventure, your secret society will deliver you an Agenda: a simple task or a condition to the problem you're already faced with. If you fulfil your Agenda for a session, you get a *ducat* and may gain a society-specific *Title* at the end of it.

While your character has every reason to keep their affiliation a secret (anyone found out to be part of a secret society will immediately find themselves an *Enemy of the Crown*), players ought to be transparent to each other about their characters' schemes. It's fun to keep secrets, but it's also fun being able to toy with dramatic irony and watch each other's gambits build on each other into a convoluted Gordian knot of schemes. Each society and their unique Titles are covered in detail at the end of this chapter, on *Pages 33-40*.

A QUICK GUIDE TO SECRET SOCIETIES

The Hermetic Order

Members of the Hermetic Order would describe them as 'a noble order of magi in search of the higher truths of the world'. Their detractors would describe them as 'a bunch of know-it-alls constantly getting high on their own alchemical tinctures'. Jury's out.

The Inquisition

The Inquisition is the only thing standing between the nobles of the realm and total moral depravity, according to the Inquisition. Members must have exhaustive mental catalogs of both obscure religious laws and the appropriate orifice-to-hot-poker ratio for any given sin.

The Sky Chamber

Information about the Sky Chamber has been removed from this publication by decree of the Sky Chamber. For further information, reread this paragraph.

Zobian Traitors

The Duke of Zobia's agents have infiltrated every level of high society, exploiting grudges, ambition, and good old-fashioned bribery to build a network of loyal (?) spies.

The Chamber of Commerce

A coalition of merchant and urban political interests, the Chamber of Commerce work hard every day to dispel the stereotype that burghers and merchants are any less wretched than hereditary nobles.

The Karian Loyalists

Everything was better under the Karian dynasty, you know? Men were real men, women were real women, the youth weren't all into fornication and fauxbourdon music. Fortunately, once these plotters install the Karians back on the throne and go back to the good old days, it will instantly fix all of everyone's problems forever. Presumably.

While we've written this book assuming each player will be under the sway of a different society, you can have fun mixing this up. Try splitting the party in two as agents of rival societies, or making everyone be part of the same society with the exception of one secret mole. As the Liege Player, secret societies are a tool for you to complicate things when you think they're getting too straightforward, and to pitch players against each other. It's an easy conflict generator: if one player is told by the Inquisition to steal and burn a heretical book that another one is being instructed to steal and deliver to the Hermetic Order, you can sit back and watch the sparks fly!

6. PICKING THREE TITLES

You didn't get to be your liege's *Most Trusted Advisors* without a long list of vaunted hereditary positions. The very thought is absurd! Titles come in a few different flavors, and can provide narrative permissions: 'you can do so-and-so', bonuses to rolls: 'you get +1d when rolling such-and-such', or new uses for *Twists* and *Ducats*. You can pick any three Titles when you create a character, including Titles from different playbooks: for your first few times playing, however, it's probably easier to stick to the Titles in the playbook you've chosen.

7. TELLING THE TABLE ABOUT THE WORLD

There are a few things (enumerated on *Page 3*) about the realm of Dulcinea that are always true. Everything else is a blank tapestry waiting to be woven at the table. If you decide, halfway through a session that you want to visit your brother who's a whaler, you've just introduced whales into the world. Congratulations! Enjoy your whales.

To help put you in this tapestry-weaving mindset, each playbook is given the duty of describing one aspect of the world to the table at the beginning of the game. Use this as an opportunity to inject the tone and content that interests you into the game. The things you decide about the world communicate what you want to see.

For instance, as the *Treasurer*, you get to define what's special about the city of Valdrada: if you say that it's built on a city razed in a brutal civil war, you're communicating that you want this session or campaign to be a little darker and more cynical. If you say that every building has recently been painted hot pink by royal decree, you're encouraging a goofier and more whimsical tone.

8. ASKING QUESTIONS

As well as an area of Dulcinea to define, each playbook also comes with a list of questions. When everyone's finished the first seven steps of character creation, take turns asking one of these questions each to the players on your right and left. They're intentionally leading, designed to imply a certain set of relationships your characters might have with each other. Like defining a part of the world, picking which questions to ask is a way of conveying what kind of person your character is and what kind of connections you want to other characters.

Each question and corresponding answer provides a new hook for a potential conflict or plotline: the Liege player is encouraged to carefully listen to the answers given in this part of character creation for their own later use. You never know when one Trusted Advisor knowing another's dark family secret or owing them a small fortune could throw a powder bomb into their ability to co-operate at a critical moment with the 'help' of a well-chosen *Misfortune!*

Always be mindful of your fellow players' comfort when you do this. If you're going to, for example, imply that your character had a sordid liaison with someone else's character, make sure the other player is comfortable with it first. *Most Trusted Advisors* is meant to be a comical game, and people feeling genuinely unsafe or unhappy isn't funny.

QUEER IDENTITY & HISTORICAL STRUCTURES OF OPPRESSION

If you're nonbinary, transgender, or otherwise someone who (like us) thinks of themselves as queer, you might note that the playbooks you're about to read have little to nothing in terms of gender-neutral options or language available to you. This is a choice, not an oversight, and one that some thought was put into while designing and writing this game.

Most Trusted Advisors is not a 'historically accurate' game, but it *is* a game about power, and about systems of power. The system of power that the game is *specifically* about is feudalism, a way of structuring society that centred entirely around lineages of parents and children. This form of organizing society was innately heteronormative and led to rigidly enforced gender roles. These prejudices are crucial to the idea that a hereditary landholding class deserves, by dint of their lineage, to pass on their lands and power over generations.

Certainly, it's well documented that there were gay, lesbian and bisexual aristocrats throughout history: queer people have existed as long as humans have existed. In various cultures, particularly outside Europe, specific religious or spiritually important communities held long-standing practices of gender expression and identity outside of the conventional binary. The lack of explicitly nonbinary player options in *Most Trusted Advisors* is not intended to imply that nonbinary people (or any kind of queer person) didn't exist in the centuries that we've cherry-picked from to create the game's theme-park caricature of history.

However, the central conceit of the game is that the player characters are wealthy and powerful, the ultimate beneficiaries and enforcers of feudalism. In many roleplaying games, playing a queer or nonbinary character can feel liberating and empowering. To be blunt, there is (and should be) nothing liberatory about *Most Trusted Advisors*. Your characters' societal and economic power rely on their buying into and actively perpetuating feudalism, and everything oppressive about it. Your character should be someone you're in the moral clear to laugh at, even if they're nice and sympathetic interpersonally.

That's not to say that you can't create a queer or nonbinary character. However, you should do so with the awareness that your character is born into a position of privilege predicated on a system that oppresses people like them, in the same way that many queer people throughout history (and in the modern day) have hypocritically benefited from the societal structures that brutally oppress queer people who aren't astronomically wealthy and privileged.

Most Trusted Advisors is a game about nasty, power-hungry bastard fighting for status in a system that rewards being nasty, power-hungry, and bowing to the status quo. It's our sincere hope that this game can also, obliquely, help you express something about the nasty, power-hungry bastards fighting for status in the system we live in now. It's for this reason that making character creation more outwardly inclusive would feel dishonest and disingenuous. To find queer liberation in our game, take these steps: 1. be queer, 2. create a character that's part of an oppressive and unjust system of feudalism, 3. laugh as their evil little schemes backfire.

SAFETY & COMFORT

Life in the medieval world was often, as a noted philosopher and stuffed tiger once remarked, nasty, brutish, and short. There are a great many ubiquities of feudal high society—incest, torture, religious persecution—that provide ample opportunity for satire and black comedy. Dark comedy is a proud tradition, and inherent to the appeal of *Most Trusted Advisors*, a game about nasty people doing nasty things to each other for power and status.

However, before you get *too* excited to bust out your top-shelf infant botulism material, you should make sure that everyone else you're playing with is comfortable with it. Dark comedy that your friends aren't laughing at is just called 'being unpleasant'.

Before you start play, the Liege player should say "*By Royal Decree, there shall be no talk of...*" and look to each player at the table in turn to prompt them to answer. Anything someone brings up here should be ruled out as a topic, theme, or situation to come up in the game.

Once the game has started, if something is happening that you're uncomfortable with, say "*Actually, recent historians have disputed that.*" If a player says this, the table should retract whatever just happened and anyone can jump in to provide a more comfortable alternative — as usual, the funnier, the better. Nobody should feel under any obligation to elaborate or justify using either of these rules: when they're invoked, they're invoked, and that's that.

If these systems feel a little too silly for you (fair), there are simpler third-party tools available online, such as *Lines & Veils* and *X-cards* which might serve your table better.

BEGINNING YOUR JOURNEY

When you've established what everybody is comfortable with and everyone's made their characters, it's time to start the game. The Liege Player should pick a *Liege playbook* from the selection on *Pages 44-48*. Each one is a different flavour of royal dipshit: after picking a playbook, the Liege player should quickly name the Liege they play and begin play with an inciting event — something that makes the day uniquely exciting to the gathered Advisors. A *Mishap* is a solid foundation for a session, particularly a *Frivolous Demand* or a *Risky Opportunity*. Ideally, whatever happens should put an instant goal in front of the players, whether by threatening disaster or by offering a chance to get rich, powerful and/or famous.

If you're stuck for ideas or just putting together a session in a hurry, you can roll on the *inciting incident table* on one of the two *demand tables* on *Page 51* to decide what'll kick off the day's misadventure. If all you want is a little inspiration, feel free to roll on these tables and adjust whatever you get to your heart's content. Make it your own!

That said, it doesn't always have to be the Liege Player coming up with ideas. As in the rest of the game, the Liege Player is encouraged to throw to the table. They can always look around and ask this game's magic question: "*What do you guys think would be funny?*"

TREASURER

A persnickety, long-suffering bean counter

Duke • Dame • Earl •
Viceroy • Duchess

Fatima • Robert • Isabela • Douglas •
Katherine • Mikolas • Gunhild • Cesare

The Candid • The Old •
The Just • The Diplomat

of House...

Choose 2-4 that describe
your visage

- a stern face
- a kind face
- a weary face
- a neat bun
- a carefully groomed beard
- a heavy gold necklace
- a finely decorated cane
- a well-used reading stone
- a thick ledger
- a heavy purse
- a colourfully feathered cap
- a tall turban
- a set of opulent rings
- an extremely pompous hat
- a luxurious ermine cloak
- a small dog

Conditions

- ✦
- ✦
- ✦
- ✦

Humiliated • Bankrupt •
Cursed • Angry • Tired •
Wounded • Scandalous •
Dead • Disowned •
Enemy of the Crown

At the beginning of the session, tell the table about the realm's capital city and what makes it unique.

Whenever the table needs to know something about its history or architecture, it's your job to answer.

You can always...

- ✦ Make an action roll
- ✦ Cite an obscure historical event
- ✦ Roll your eyes at tomfoolery
- ✦ Think of a way to cut corners
- ✦ Know about a secret shortcut
- ✦ Say, "I can do it... but it'll cost you."
- ✦ Spend a ducat, and cite an obscure legal code in your favour
- ✦ Spend a ducat, and pay any fee
- ✦ Bribe a PC with promises of riches: if they accept, give them a ducat

Get a ducat when you...

- ✦ Run into someone who drives you insane, and tell the table why
- ✦ Find a way to make a profit out of something you probably shouldn't
- ✦ Personally suffer as the result of another player's scheming
- ✦ Overcomplicate a simple plan by being obsessed with minutiae
- ✦ Make a fuss about a meaningless technical or semantic detail

Choose a friend and a rival

- Polina, a royal clerk
- Strauss, a judge
- Jansen, a bureaucrat
- Giovanni, a merchant
- Lynne, an architect

Treachery

- ○ ○ ○ Skulk
- ○ ○ ○ Duel
- ○ ○ ○ Ruin
- ○ ○ ○ Shadow

Cunning

- ○ ○ ○ Concoct
- ● ○ ○ Study
- ○ ○ ○ Survey
- ○ ○ ○ Balance

Deceit

- ○ ○ ○ Bluster
- ○ ○ ○ Appear
- ○ ○ ○ Disdain
- ○ ○ ○ Bewitch

Ask the players next to you I each:

- ✦ What legal trouble have I bailed you out of?
- ✦ Why do you owe me a large sum of money?
- ✦ What scheme are you determined to get me to fund?
- ✦ What scam have you pulled on me, and why am I bound to find out?

TITLES

Choose 3 to start with

♣ Chief Architect

♣ You designed every castle in the realm: As a Twist, you can introduce a trap, secret passage, or something similar.

♣ Lord Chancellor

♣ When you Appease your liege, take +1d.

♣ High Justiciar

♣ You can spend a ducat to procure a death warrant or a royal pardon

♣ Lord Keeper of the Royal Seal

♣ You can approve decisions on your liege's behalf (they may not be happy!)

♣ Imperial Dragoman

♣ You can speak every language spoken on the continent.

♣ Clerk of the Realm

♣ When you use someone's words against them, give them a ducat: they must do as you say.

♣ Seneschal to the Royal Household

♣ You get +1 Twist at the start of every session.

♣ Knight Marischal

♣ You can always win fights against opponents with no combat experience.

♣ Sheriff of the City

♣ You are legally empowered to arrest commoners of the realm.

♣ Prince of the Blood

♣ You're distantly related to the royal family, and spilling your blood is high treason (other forms of violence are fine!)

♣ Member of the Equestrian Order

♣ You have a horse, and it's two of: strong • fast • bloodthirsty • tough • majestic • noble • smart

♣ Seigneur Manorial

♣ Your vast family estate provides an unlimited supply of: jewels • wine • flowers • livestock • silk • coal • something else

♣ Noblesse Oblige

♣ Pick a title from another playbook.

♣ Climbing the Ranks

♣ Pick a title from your Secret Society.

TWISTS

Start each session with 3

♣ Avoid a misfortune and describe how you evade consequences

♣ Introduce something to the scene

♣ Say "This was part of my plan all along..." and describe how.

♣ Say "Actually, I prepared for this..." and describe how.

Circle 1 that you're secretly an agent of:

- The Hermetic Order
- The Inquisition
- The Sky Chamber
- The Zobian Traitors
- The Chamber of Commerce
- The Karian Loyalists

Tools of the Trade

You always have...	Spend a ducat to have...
♣ A badge of office	♣ A priceless gemstone.
♣ A financial ledger	♣ An arrest warrant
♣ A winter cloak	♣ A property deed
♣ A stamp of approval	♣ A dead nobleman's will
♣ A jingling coin-purse	♣ A decadent dessert
♣ A penknife	



LOVER

A charming, naïve consort to the monarch

Miss • Sir • Lady •
Lord • Prince-Consort

Juliet • Philip • Emma • Lucentio •
Annabel • Fyodor • Francois • Hatice

The Fair • The Merry •
The Handsome • The Vain

of House...

Choose 2-4 that describe
your visage

- a cherubic smile and voice
- an elegant smile and voice
- long and flaxen hair
- short and auburn hair
- a loose gown
- a silk tunic
- a rose over your breast
- an item of foreign fashion
- a keepsake from home
- a locket depicting your loved one
- a stunning ruby necklace
- full red lips
- a pet mouse or songbird

Conditions

- ✦
- ✦
- ✦
- ✦

Humiliated • Bankrupt •
Cursed • Angry • Tired •
Wounded • Scandalous •
Dead • Disowned •
Enemy of the Crown

At the beginning of the session, tell the table about your liege and lover and what you see in them.

Whenever the table needs to know something humanising about them, it's your job to answer.

You can always...

- ✦ Make an action roll
- ✦ Hum a bittersweet folk song
- ✦ Coquettishly bat your eyelashes
- ✦ Offer a unique perspective
- ✦ See beauty in the world around you
- ✦ Ask "But why must it be that way?"
- ✦ Spend a ducat, and be listened to
- ✦ Spend a ducat, and be forgiven for something
- ✦ Flirt with a PC: if they fall for your charms, give them a ducat

Get a ducat when you...

- ✦ Run into someone who's jealous of your love, and tell the table why
- ✦ Let your idealistic view of the world lead you into trouble
- ✦ Share a moment of physical or emotional intimacy with someone
- ✦ Overcomplicate a simple plan with misplaced confidence
- ✦ Say something insensitive without meaning it to be

Choose a friend and a rival

- Alis, a rose gardener
- Blau, a painter
- John, a traveling bard
- Arturo, an ex-lover
- Mercuria, a governess

Treachery

- ○ ○ ○ Skulk
- ○ ○ ○ Duel
- ○ ○ ○ Ruin
- ○ ○ ○ Shadow

Cunning

- ○ ○ ○ Concoct
- ○ ○ ○ Study
- ○ ○ ○ Survey
- ○ ○ ○ Balance

Deceit

- ○ ○ ○ Bluster
- ● ○ ○ Appease
- ○ ○ ○ Disdain
- ○ ○ ○ Bewitch

Ask the players next to you I each:

- ✦ How did you introduce me to my lover?
- ✦ Why are you scheming to get me out of the way?
- ✦ What vulnerable side of yourself have you shared with me?
- ✦ What work of art have I dedicated to you, and why?

TITLES

Choose 3 to start with

✦ Painter-in-Ordinary

✦ You can gain access to any location under the pretense of painting it.

✦ Keeper of the Swans

✦ As a Twist, you can unleash angry, escaped swans wherever you please.

✦ Royal Harpist

✦ When you play a song for someone, pay a ducat: they're helplessly overcome with an emotion of your choice.

✦ Secretary of the Royal Wardrobe

✦ You can dress up as your liege, fooling anyone who hasn't met them.

✦ Lady-in-Waiting

✦ You always know where your liege is, and can be at their side in a moment.

✦ Poet Laureate

✦ When you Bluster your way into someone's good graces, take +1d.

✦ Court Florist

✦ You can spend a ducat to retreat to the Royal Gardens: nobody can hurt you there.

✦ Knight Marischal

✦ You can always win fights against opponents with no combat experience.

✦ Sheriff of the City

✦ You are legally empowered to arrest commoners of the realm.

✦ Prince of the Blood

✦ You're distantly related to the royal family, and spilling your blood is high treason (other forms of violence are fine!)

✦ Member of the Equestrian Order

✦ You have a horse, and it's two of: strong • fast • bloodthirsty • tough • majestic • noble • smart

✦ Seigneur Manorial

✦ Your vast family estate provides an unlimited supply of: jewels • wine • flowers • livestock • silk • coal • something else

✦ Noblesse Oblige

✦ Pick a title from another playbook.

✦ Climbing the Ranks

✦ Pick a title from your Secret Society.

TWISTS

Start each session with 3

✦ Avoid a misfortune and describe how you evade consequences

✦ Introduce something to the scene

✦ Say "This was part of my plan all along..." and describe how.

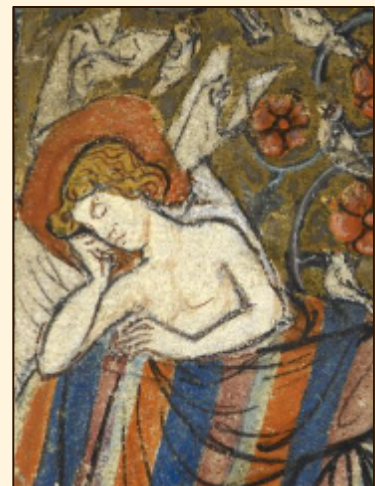
✦ Say "Actually, I prepared for this..." and describe how.

Circle 1 that you're secretly an agent of:

- The Hermetic Order
- The Inquisition
- The Sky Chamber
- The Zobian Traitors
- The Chamber of Commerce
- The Karian Loyalists

Tools of the Trade

You always have...	Spend a ducat to have...
✦ A bouquet of flowers	✦ A scandalous undergarment
✦ A musical instrument	✦ A damning love letter
✦ An easel and paints	✦ A gift from your love
✦ A token of affection	✦ A delicacy from your hometown
✦ A calligraphy pen	✦ A beautiful painting
✦ A silk scarf	



ALCHEMIST

A brilliant but unhinged occultist

Viscount • Lady • Dr. •
Baroness • Madame

Abigail • Zosimos • Marie • Alistair •
Cleopatra • Jabir • Anton • Miriam

The Mage • The Wise •
The Accursed • The Mad

of House...

Choose 2-4 that describe
your visage

- wise eyes
- curious eyes
- mad eyes
- carefully combed hair
- wild and unkempt hair
- ostentatiously coloured robes
- a metal nose, eye, or ear
- burn scars
- an ominously billowing cape
- a high collar
- leather gloves
- a crystal ball
- a staff topped with a sapphire
- a delicate ivory wand
- a long beard
- a tall hat
- a heavy tome

Conditions

- ✦
- ✦
- ✦
- ✦

Humiliated • Bankrupt •
Cursed • Angry • Tired •
Wounded • Scandalous •
Dead • Disowned •
Enemy of the Crown

At the beginning of the session, tell the table about magic, and whether it's real or just clever showmanship.

Whenever the table needs to know something about the occult, it's your job to answer.

You can always...

- ✦ Make an action roll
- ✦ Posit an occult hypothesis
- ✦ Spout obscure technical jargon
- ✦ Set something on fire
- ✦ Conduct a bizarre ritual
- ✦ Proclaim "Magic is afoot here!"
- ✦ Spend a ducat, and have a vision
- ✦ Spend a ducat, and transmute one substance into another
- ✦ Cast a curse on a PC: if they suffer ill fortune, give them a ducat

Get a ducat when you...

- ✦ Run into someone who wants you executed, and tell the table why
- ✦ Endanger yourself or others to advance your research
- ✦ Make someone believe in your sorcery, whether or not it's real
- ✦ Overcomplicate a simple plan with strange occult practices
- ✦ Egregiously violate a moral, religious, or cultural taboo

Choose a friend and a rival

- Stefan, an astrologer
- Sayyida, a mathematician
- Simeon, a medical doctor
- Christina, a heretic
- Edvard, an apprentice

Treachery

- ○ ○ ○ Skulk
- ○ ○ ○ Duel
- ○ ○ ○ Ruin
- ○ ○ ○ Shadow

Cunning

- ● ○ ○ Concoct
- ○ ○ ○ Study
- ○ ○ ○ Survey
- ○ ○ ○ Balance

Deceit

- ○ ○ ○ Bluster
- ○ ○ ○ Appease
- ○ ○ ○ Disdain
- ○ ○ ○ Bewitch

Ask the players next to you 1 each:

- ✦ What have you come to me for help with that nobody else can fix?
- ✦ Do you believe I'm a real sorcerer?
- ✦ Why haven't you told our liege about my twisted experiments?
- ✦ What future did I see for you in the stars?

TITLES

Choose 3 to start with

♣ Master of the Castle Ravens

- ♣ You have trained a raven to spy on your enemies and repeat what it hears.

♣ Astrologer Royal

- ♣ You can spend a ducat and introduce an eclipse, storm, or fog to a scene.

♣ Physician to the Royal Family

- ♣ You can Concoct medical salves and sleeping potions.

♣ Queen's Chemist

- ♣ You can Concoct smoke bombs, hallucinogens, and improvised explosives.

♣ Royal Librarian

- ♣ You can spend a ducat and know of a book that can tell you exactly what you need to know.

♣ Archsorcerer

- ♣ When you Bewitch someone who believes in the occult, take +1d.

♣ Palace Oracle

- ♣ When you foretell the future, people will always believe you until you're proven wrong.

♣ Knight Marischal

- ♣ You can always win fights against opponents with no combat experience.

♣ Sheriff of the City

- ♣ You are legally empowered to arrest commoners of the realm.

♣ Prince of the Blood

- ♣ You're distantly related to the royal family, and spilling your blood is high treason (other forms of violence are fine!)

♣ Member of the Equestrian Order

- ♣ You have a horse, and it's two of: strong • fast • bloodthirsty • tough • majestic • noble • smart

♣ Seigneur Manorial

- ♣ Your vast family estate provides an unlimited supply of: jewels • wine • flowers • livestock • silk • coal • something else

♣ Noblesse Oblige

- ♣ Pick a title from another playbook.

♣ Climbing the Ranks

- ♣ Pick a title from your Secret Society.

TWISTS

Start each session with 3

- ♣ Avoid a misfortune and describe how you evade consequences
- ♣ Introduce something to the scene
- ♣ Say "This was part of my plan all along..." and describe how.
- ♣ Say "Actually, I prepared for this..." and describe how.

Circle 1 that you're secretly an agent of:

- The Hermetic Order
- The Inquisition
- The Sky Chamber
- The Zobian Traitors
- The Chamber of Commerce
- The Karian Loyalists

Tools of the Trade

You always have...	Spend a ducat to have...
♣ A silver chalice	♣ A strange light source
♣ Quill & ink	♣ A complex contraption
♣ Thick leather gloves	♣ A curious arrangement of mirrors
♣ A carved wooden toy	♣ A vial of acid
♣ A secret laboratory	♣ Some esoteric knowledge
♣ A familiar	



HIEROPHANT

A pompous, self-righteous priest

Abess • Cardinal •
Pontifex • High Priestess

Margaret • Thomas • Sara • Diego •
Faisal • Diana • Octavian • Irina

The Holy • The Chaste •
The Apostle • The Maiden

of House...

Choose 2-4 that describe
your visage

- a thoughtful expression
- a humourless expression
- a loud voice
- a shy voice
- ceremonial headgear
- extremely old
- heavy robes
- a white and blood-red cloak
- elaborate holy tattoos
- a crown of leaves
- the powerful smell of incense
- robes that reach the floor
- barefoot
- a youthful, innocent face
- faded scars

Conditions

- ✦
- ✦
- ✦
- ✦

Humiliated • Bankrupt •
Cursed • Angry • Tired •
Wounded • Scandalous •
Dead • Disowned •
Enemy of the Crown

At the beginning of the session, tell the table about the realm's god or gods and the religious and moral norms the church enforces.

Whenever the table needs to know about the church or religion, it's your job to tell them.

You can always...

- ✦ Make an action roll
- ✦ Pass a moral judgement
- ✦ Recite an obscure verse of scripture
- ✦ Brandish a holy symbol
- ✦ Find a church and be welcomed
- ✦ Say "I think the moral of that is..."
- ✦ Spend a ducat, and scare someone
- ✦ Spend a ducat, and declare something a mortal sin
- ✦ Condemn a PC's morality: if they show penitence, give them a ducat

Get a ducat when you...

- ✦ Run into a heretic preacher, and tell the table what they believe
- ✦ Prioritize your ego over common sense or self-preservation
- ✦ Strike the fear of your god (or gods) into the unrighteous
- ✦ Overcomplicate a simple plan by sticking to an esoteric tradition
- ✦ Scrupulously enforce a moral, religious, or cultural taboo

Choose a friend and a rival

- Padraig, a zealot
- Farah, an inquisitor
- Martin, a reformist
- Lillian, a great artist
- Valentino, a monk

Treachery

- ○ ○ ○ Skulk
- ○ ○ ○ Duel
- ○ ○ ○ Ruin
- ○ ○ ○ Shadow

Cunning

- ○ ○ ○ Concoct
- ○ ○ ○ Study
- ○ ○ ○ Survey
- ○ ○ ○ Balance

Deceit

- ○ ○ ○ Bluster
- ○ ○ ○ Appease
- ● ○ ○ Disdain
- ○ ○ ○ Bewitch

Ask the players next to you I each:

- ✦ What did you confess to me in a drunken panic one late night?
- ✦ How did I help you dispose of an enemy?
- ✦ What rare religious artefact do I want that your family owns?
- ✦ What heretical belief do you secretly hold?

TITLES

Choose 3 to start with

♣ Rex Sacrorum

♣ When you Disdain someone with threats of damnation, take +1d.

♣ Archprelate

♣ As a Twist, you can call a squadron of armed church guards to your aid for a scene.

♣ Tender of the Sacred Flame

♣ You can always gather a small group of faithful and loyal peasants.

♣ Royal Diviner

♣ You can pay a ducat to declare something an omen: everyone will believe you

♣ His or Her Holiness

♣ If you have proof that someone committed a sin, you can spend a ducat to banish them from the realm.

♣ Great Mystagogue

♣ Whenever you enter a room, everyone must bow.

♣ Vestal Virgin

♣ Acts of direct violence against you are always punishable by death.

♣ Knight Marischal

♣ You can always win fights against opponents with no combat experience.

♣ Sheriff of the City

♣ You are legally empowered to arrest commoners of the realm.

♣ Prince of the Blood

♣ You're distantly related to the royal family, and spilling your blood is high treason (other forms of violence are fine!)

♣ Member of the Equestrian Order

♣ You have a horse, and it's two of: strong • fast • bloodthirsty • tough • majestic • noble • smart

♣ Seigneur Manorial

♣ Your vast family estate provides an unlimited supply of: jewels • wine • flowers • livestock • silk • coal • something else

♣ Noblesse Oblige

♣ Pick a title from another playbook.

♣ Climbing the Ranks

♣ Pick a title from your Secret Society.

TWISTS

Start each session with 3

♣ Avoid a misfortune and describe how you evade consequences

♣ Introduce something to the scene

♣ Say "This was part of my plan all along..." and describe how.

♣ Say "Actually, I prepared for this..." and describe how.

Circle 1 that you're secretly an agent of:

- The Hermetic Order
- The Inquisition
- The Sky Chamber
- The Zobian Traitors
- The Chamber of Commerce
- The Karian Loyalists

Tools of the Trade

You always have...

Spend a ducat to have...

♣ A badge of office

♣ An ancient holy relic

♣ Your church's holy book

♣ A silver good luck charm

♣ A long staff

♣ A sacrificial, sharp knife

♣ A heavy set of gold rings

♣ A vial of blessed water

♣ Cuttings from a holy grove

♣ The skull of a saint

♣ A necklace



MARSHAL

A bold, hot-headed general

Margrave • Lord • Lady •
Baron • Marchioness

Helen • Francis • Mavia • Gustaf •
Razia • Ivan • Alexander • Hero

The Bold • The Conqueror
• The Valiant • The Red

of House...

Choose 2-4 that describe
your visage

- a loud and booming voice
- a cold but firm voice
- wild red hair
- long and golden hair
- battle scars
- a missing eye
- a red cloak
- a ceremonial steel helmet
- riding boots
- a collection of medals
- big gauntlets
- abundant muscle mass
- a slight limp
- a pulsing vein in your temple
- a dandyish dress uniform
- a moustache

Conditions

- ✦
- ✦
- ✦
- ✦

Humiliated • Bankrupt •
Cursed • Angry • Tired •
Wounded • Scandalous •
Dead • Disowned •
Enemy of the Crown

At the beginning of the session, tell the table about the great war you fought in, whether you won or lost and how that changed the kingdom.

Whenever the table needs to know about the war, it's your job to tell them.

You can always...

- ✦ Make an action roll
- ✦ Bellow an expletive
- ✦ Brandish your sword
- ✦ Vault over an obstacle
- ✦ Improvise a weapon
- ✦ Exclaim "I challenge you to a duel!"
- ✦ Spend a ducat, and start a brawl
- ✦ Spend a ducat, and fight multiple enemies on even footing
- ✦ Test a PC's nerve: if they rise to the challenge, give them a ducat

Get a ducat when you...

- ✦ Run into someone you wounded in a duel, and tell the table why
- ✦ Walk directly into danger, knowingly and fearlessly
- ✦ Kill or maim one of your enemies in a fair fight
- ✦ Overcomplicate a simple plan by going in all guns blazing
- ✦ Overreact massively to a perceived slight on your honour

Choose a friend and a rival

- Ruqayya, a mercenary
- Caradog, a veteran
- Eefje, a foreign duchess
- Miroslav, a squire
- Yvonne, a widow

Treachery

- ○ ○ ○ Skulk
- ● ○ ○ Duel
- ○ ○ ○ Ruin
- ○ ○ ○ Shadow

Cunning

- ○ ○ ○ Concoct
- ○ ○ ○ Study
- ○ ○ ○ Survey
- ○ ○ ○ Balance

Deceit

- ○ ○ ○ Bluster
- ○ ○ ○ Appease
- ○ ○ ○ Disdain
- ○ ○ ○ Bewitch

Ask the players next to you I each:

- ✦ What peril were you facing when I rode to your rescue?
- ✦ What happened to your brother who fought alongside me?
- ✦ Why do you want to lead the army in my stead?
- ✦ What scheme of yours requires my army to back you up?

TITLES

Choose 3 to start with

♣ Yeoman of the Palace Guard

♣ Constables, soldiers, and castle guards will never attack you first.

♣ Grand Falconer

♣ You acquire a loyal falcon, who will attack your enemies on command.

♣ Crown Equerry

♣ As a Twist, you can heroically burst into any scene on horseback.

♣ Commander of the Hussars

♣ When you Duel someone with reckless disregard for your own safety, take +1d.

♣ Bearer of the Royal Standard

♣ You can never be Tired or Wounded as a result of a misfortune.

♣ Lord Marcher

♣ You can pay a ducat to call in a military regiment to solve a problem for you.

♣ Knight of the Order

♣ You are armed wherever you go, no matter what the situation.

♣ Knight Marischal

♣ You can always win fights against opponents with no combat experience.

♣ Sheriff of the City

♣ You are legally empowered to arrest commoners of the realm.

♣ Prince of the Blood

♣ You're distantly related to the royal family, and spilling your blood is high treason (other forms of violence are fine!)

♣ Member of the Equestrian Order

♣ You have a horse, and it's two of: strong • fast • bloodthirsty • tough • majestic • noble • smart

♣ Seigneur Manorial

♣ Your vast family estate provides an unlimited supply of: jewels • wine • flowers • livestock • silk • coal • something else

♣ Noblesse Oblige

♣ Pick a title from another playbook.

♣ Climbing the Ranks

♣ Pick a title from your Secret Society.

TWISTS

Start each session with 3

♣ Avoid a misfortune and describe how you evade consequences

♣ Introduce something to the scene

♣ Say "This was part of my plan all along..." and describe how.

♣ Say "Actually, I prepared for this..." and describe how.

Circle 1 that you're secretly an agent of:

- The Hermetic Order
- The Inquisition
- The Sky Chamber
- The Zobian Traitors
- The Chamber of Commerce
- The Karian Loyalists

Tools of the Trade

You always have...	Spend a ducat to have...
♣ An arming sword	♣ A full suit of armour
♣ A shield	♣ A loyal, if reluctant, squire
♣ A riding crop	♣ A sack of war plunder
♣ A decorated helmet	♣ A weapon of war
♣ A map of the city	♣ A map of a foreign realm
♣ A family heirloom	



BLACKGUARD

A sneaky, treacherous backstabber

Lady • Prince • Count •
Baroness • Contessa

Elise • Edmund • Gwen • Lorenzo •
Nicola • Vladimir • Ishak • Elizabeth

The Cruel • The Spider •
The Pale • The Impaler

of House...

Choose 2-4 that describe
your visage

- scheming eyes
- cold eyes
- bright eyes
- a cruel smile
- a friendly smile
- a dark hood
- a humble cloak
- flowing robes
- a smiling mask
- a pet rat, cat, or raven
- long pale fingers
- an eyepatch
- a sheathed dagger
- heavy boots
- a black goatee
- dark circles under your eyes

Conditions

- ✦
- ✦
- ✦
- ✦

Humiliated • Bankrupt •
Cursed • Angry • Tired •
Wounded • Scandalous •
Dead • Disowned •
Enemy of the Crown

At the beginning of the session, tell the table about your Liege's family and their darkest secrets that you alone know.

Whenever the table needs to know something about this, it's your job to answer.

You can always...

- ✦ Make an action roll
- ✦ Disparage someone's intelligence
- ✦ Emerge from the shadows
- ✦ Meaningfully sharpen a dagger
- ✦ Disguise yourself as someone else
- ✦ Announce "I have a cunning plan!"
- ✦ Spend a ducat, and learn a secret
- ✦ Spend a ducat, and know somebody on the inside
- ✦ Lie to a PC: if they believe you, give them a ducat

Get a ducat when you...

- ✦ Run into someone who wants revenge, and tell the table why
- ✦ Literally (or metaphorically) stab someone in the back
- ✦ Say something snide about someone more powerful than you
- ✦ Overcomplicate a simple plan with layers of needless duplicity
- ✦ Tell a laughably bad lie or wear a paper-thin disguise

Choose a friend and a rival

- Victor, a hangman
- Carlotta, a poisoner
- Lord Hawcett, a traitor
- Estragon, a good lawyer
- Karolina, a pirate

Treachery

- ○ ○ ○ Skulk
- ○ ○ ○ Duel
- ○ ○ ○ Ruin
- ● ○ ○ Shadow

Cunning

- ○ ○ ○ Concoct
- ○ ○ ○ Study
- ○ ○ ○ Survey
- ○ ○ ○ Balance

Deceit

- ○ ○ ○ Bluster
- ○ ○ ○ Appease
- ○ ○ ○ Disdain
- ○ ○ ○ Bewitch

Ask the players next to you I each:

- ✦ What do I know about you that you wish I didn't?
- ✦ How have I betrayed you in the past?
- ✦ What plot are we co-conspirators in?
- ✦ Why are you convinced that I'm not really as bad as everyone says?

TITLES

Choose 3 to start with

♣ Postmaster General

♣ You control the kingdom's postal service, and can intercept and read mail as you please.

♣ Royal Botanist

♣ You can spend a ducat and produce a vial of deadly poison.

♣ Royal Cupbearer

♣ You can spend a ducat and slip something into someone's goblet unnoticed.

♣ Grand Vizier

♣ Your liege will always listen to your advice (but may grossly misinterpret it)

♣ Lord Spymaster

♣ You have spies in very nook and cranny. As a Twist, you can reveal any NPC to be one of them.

♣ Lord of the Trapdoor

♣ When you Ruin someone who trusted you, take +1d.

♣ Court Jester

♣ You can spend a ducat and pass anything you were caught doing or saying off as a joke, however unlikely.

♣ Knight Marischal

♣ You can always win fights against opponents with no combat experience.

♣ Sheriff of the City

♣ You are legally empowered to arrest commoners of the realm.

♣ Prince of the Blood

♣ You're distantly related to the royal family, and spilling your blood is high treason (other forms of violence are fine!)

♣ Member of the Equestrian Order

♣ You have a horse, and it's two of: strong • fast • bloodthirsty • tough • majestic • noble • smart

♣ Seigneur Manorial

♣ Your vast family estate provides an unlimited supply of: jewels • wine • flowers • livestock • silk • coal • something else

♣ Noblesse Oblige

♣ Pick a title from another playbook.

♣ Climbing the Ranks

♣ Pick a title from your Secret Society.

TWISTS

Start each session with 3

♣ Avoid a misfortune and describe how you evade consequences

♣ Introduce something to the scene

♣ Say "This was part of my plan all along..." and describe how.

♣ Say "Actually, I prepared for this..." and describe how.

Circle 1 that you're secretly an agent of:

- The Hermetic Order
- The Inquisition
- The Sky Chamber
- The Zobian Traitors
- The Chamber of Commerce
- The Karian Loyalists

Tools of the Trade

You always have...	Spend a ducat to have...
♣ A dagger	♣ A dagger in an unlikely place
♣ Rope and a blindfold	♣ A skeleton key
♣ A trunk full of disguises	♣ A bag filled with venomous snakes
♣ A false royal signet ring	♣ An envelope of blackmail material
♣ A handheld lantern	♣ A bottle of vintage wine
♣ Some dice	



THE HERMETIC ORDER

Secretive occultists in search of metaphysical truths.



Natural philosophy is a subtle and complex art. Some people, in fact, would even describe it as ‘a load of bunkus made up as an excuse for rich blokes to dress up in poncey robes and dance around underneath the light of the full moon’. Sorry, did I say that, I meant ‘the pursuit of the betterment of the human soul’.

Commanding among their number alchemists, sorcerers, and mathematicians, the Hermetic Order pursue wisdom in all its myriad forms. Joining the Hermetic Order means seeking forbidden knowledge, reading ancient tomes by moonlight, and performing curious experiments in secret laboratories.

AGENDAS

What they ask of you. Roll 1d6, pick one, or invent your own.

1. Meet your fellow Hermetic Sages on a moonlit hill at midnight to perform the grisly Rite of the Solar Sacrifice.
2. Cultivate a magic flower that can only be watered with liquid gold, expensive wine, human blood, or goat urine.
3. Find a copy of *On the Principles of Formes*, a book that’s as strictly forbidden as it is unreadably wordy.
4. Invent a futuristic contraption a hundred-odd years early and prove that it works in front of your Liege.
5. A brilliant foreign scholar is visiting the realm: make a copy of his closely guarded life’s work for the royal library.
6. Test an experimental tincture on a willing or unwilling subject. You won’t know what it does until you try it!

Possible Contacts

NPC members of the society: they might pass on Agendas, or be called into a scene as friends or rivals by a Twist or Misfortune.

- *Mercurius*, a dark magician who loves to hold a grudge.
- *Hypatia*, a smug, self-taught alchemist and polyglot.
- *Ibn Nasir*, a curious scholar working on a mystic tome.
- *Good Jane*, an evil sorceress who keeps three dozen goats.
- *al-Misri*, who will stop at nothing to turn lead to gold.
- *Teophanie*, a prodigy trying to get into a mens’ university.

Societal Titles

♣ Grand Magus

- ♣ You have a loyal, albeit bumbling, apprentice. Once per session, they can suffer a Misfortune in your place.

♣ Adeptus Major

- ♣ You can **Concoct** thick, hallucinatory gases that induce incredible hypnotic suggestibility.

♣ Emerald Theurge

- ♣ You can spend a ducat to create precious gems via alchemical reaction.

♣ Rosicrucian Scribe

- ♣ You can read and write in an unbreakable Hermetic cypher.

THE INQUISITION

Religious fanatics looking to punish sins, real or imagined.



You can't trust anyone these days. There are heathens around every corner, heretics under every child's bed, schismatics hidden in every artinsal topiary! Fortunately, the Inquisition are here to protect the innocent people of Dulcinea from spiritual danger at the small price of drastically increasing their physical danger.

Composed chiefly of religious zealots, aspiring tyrants, and unscrupulous sadists, the Inquisition has eyes everywhere. Their network of informants scour the realm for blasphemers, apostates, or, on a slow day, anybody they could torture into making some fun accusations about their wife, neighbour, brother, or dog.

AGENDAS

What they ask of you. Roll 1d6, pick one, or invent your own.

1. Heretics have infiltrated a local church/school/friendly neighbourhood pie shop. Infiltrate them and rat them out!
2. Retrieve the *Lost Fingerbone of Saint Parsimonious* from the impromptu rural cult that's sprung up around it.
3. Have somebody found guilty of blasphemy and punished accordingly. Anybody will do, the Inquisition isn't picky.
4. A parish priest has been preaching a radical message of tolerance and kindness. That won't do: get him to cut it out!
5. The corrupt perverts in the clergy are giving the corrupt perverts in the Inquisition a bad name. Expose one of them!
6. Convince some young local ruffians to give up a life of crime and accept the god of your choice into their hearts.

Possible Contacts

NPC members of the society: they might pass on Agendas, or be called into a scene as friends or rivals by a Twist or Misfortune.

- *Flavius*, a slimy little man who'll rat out anybody.
- *Lady Liza*, a retired torturer with an eerily calm voice.
- *Pulgar*, a prudish scholar and hobbyist book-burner.
- *Sister Joana*, a naïve and blindly optimistic novice nun.
- *Lord Wilson*, a bloodsoaked and paranoid war veteran.
- *Anna*, a popular preacher with incendiary rhetoric.

Societal Titles

- ♣ **Witchfinder General**
 - ♣ Given an hour alone with someone, you can produce a written confession of anything you like.
- ♣ **Notary of Secrets**
 - ♣ You can spend a ducat to be well-acquainted with someone's worst enemy.
- ♣ **Lord Inquisitor**
 - ♣ You have a personal key to the Royal Dungeons, from which you may come and go as you please.
- ♣ **Notary of Edicts**
 - ♣ When you Appease or Bluster to authorities to justify inquisitorial activity, take +1d.

THE SKY CHAMBER

There is no such organization as the Sky Chamber.



A paragraph offering flavour text about a so-called Sky Chamber has been removed from this book by order of the Sky Chamber. If the Sky Chamber were to exist, which it does not, it would certainly not be a super-judicial council of lords and ministers running the realm from behind the scenes with utmost secrecy.

The Sky Chamber is primarily composed of nobody, because there is no such society. If there was, it would certainly not employ agents across society, from dukes to bakers, to conduct secretive operations. It certainly wouldn't destroy any proof of its existence. Most of all, its goals would be neither cryptic nor sinister.

AGENDAS

What they ask of you. Roll 1d6, pick one, or invent your own.

1. A nobleman has recently died in an innocuous throat slicing accident. Ensure that the authorities see it that way.
2. There are no records of the Sky Chamber. The book claiming to be such a record is fiction, and must be burned.
3. Pick another secret society and roll 1d6 on their Agenda table. Perform that duty exactly as they would.
4. A judge is spreading dangerous lies about being a former agent of the Sky Chamber. Ensure he does not continue.
5. The Sky Chamber does not exist. When the Agenda of the player to your left fails, it will be mere bad luck.
6. A foreign diplomat must be given a particular code word at a particular time. His actions thereafter are his own.

Possible Contacts

NPC members of the society: they might pass on Agendas, or be called into a scene as friends or rivals by a Twist or Misfortune.

- **Lord Voured**, who looks curiously unlike his portraits.
- **Roxana**, who is always seen nearby after arson attacks.
- **Jean**, who encodes secret messages in flower bouquets.
- **Jamila**, who delivers letters in the dead of midnight.
- **Rudolf**, who sneaks into libraries and censors books.
- **Yekaterina**, who knows where the bodies are buried.

Societal Titles

♣ Minerval Secretary

- ♣ You can spend a ducat to permanently destroy all evidence of something.

♣ Elect of the Twelve

- ♣ You gain a second identity, with all the same Titles, who seems totally unconnected to you.

♣ [REDACTED]

- ♣ At the beginning of each session, you can replace this title with a title from any society.

♣ Silent Watcher

- ♣ As a Twist, you can suddenly appear in a scene, having been listening the whole time.

ZOBIAN TRAITORS

Seditious and cunning spies, loyal to the Duke of Zobia.



The Dukes of Zobia and the Kings of Dulcinea have feuded and fought for centuries. The hatred between the two houses runs deep and bloody, but for good reasons. You see, it all started with an apricot tree — or, no, wait, was it a racehorse? Well, it's all very important regardless.

After the most recent war, the Duke of Zobia has opened up his coffers in order to establish an intricate espionage network among the Dulcinean nobility. If you're short on money, the king was rude to you, or you just want to meet new people, spying for the Duke of Zobia is easy, lucrative, and incredibly treasonous!

AGENDAS

What they ask of you. Roll 1d6, pick one, or invent your own.

1. Deliver a lumpy, odd-smelling package to the Zobian ambassador's lady-in-waiting under cover of night.
2. The Duke is always eager to make new friends. Obtain blackmail material of some sort on the player to your right.
3. Distribute the pamphlet '*On the Moste Noble Deeds of the Zobian Dukes*' to every literate person you meet.
4. Convince your Liege, falsely, that a great army of Zobian mercenaries is amassing on the northern border.
5. A noble has been outed as a traitor: help them escape safely to Zobia before your Liege has them executed.
6. A notoriously lecherous and gullible noble knows a vital state secret. Discover it by any means necessary.

Possible Contacts

NPC members of the society: they might pass on Agendas, or be called into a scene as friends or rivals by a Twist or Misfortune.

- **Domhall**, a corrupt diplomat ineptly playing both sides
- **Dame Sybil**, who's not sure if she's a double or triple agent.
- **Honest Rob**, a slimy trader reliant on Zobian suppliers.
- **Felicia**, a spy who only contacts you through letters.
- **Baron Redl**, a wounded war hero turned resentful traitor.
- **Sir Arnault**, a well-beloved engineer and secret saboteur.

Societal Titles

- ♣ **Eyes of the Duke**
 - ♣ When you Study or Survey the secrets of your Liege or fellow players, take +1d.
- ♣ **Royal Cartographer**
 - ♣ You have a detailed set of Zobian maps, indoor and outdoor, of the entire city of Valdrada.
- ♣ **Order of the Crow**
 - ♣ You can spend a ducat to send a secret message to anyone you please via your choice of trained bird.
- ♣ **Zobian Sommelier**
 - ♣ You can spend a ducat to procure a bottle of fine Zobian wine, an effective bribe for any noble.

CHAMBER OF COMMERCE

Wealthy burghers and merchants conspiring for profit



As urban populations grow more concentrated and wealthy, merchants and tradesman have started to concern themselves with the chief injustice of the world: ‘Hang on, I’m also grotesquely rich, why don’t I get to ponce about in fancy robes and a big shiny hat?’

These city-dwelling burghers would like nothing more than to live in a republic with universal suffrage — for rich, landowning men who look like them, that is, they’re not mad. As commerce and trade becomes every more lucrative, their vast coffers have brought lesser nobles and wealthy freemen into their ranks with promises of profit, lucre, and the biggest, shiniest hats money can buy.

AGENDAS

What they ask of you. Roll 1d6, pick one, or invent your own.

1. A royal decree forbids the sale of grain that’s more than 10% rats (by weight). This unnecessary red tape needs to go!
2. Some serfs have heard talk about the “rights of man” and think they should be “paid”. Talk some sense into them.
3. The price of tulips is at an all-time high. Find some idiot who’ll buy ten thousand of them before prices crash.
4. Establish a new Zobian trade venture: there’s a good chance this may involve committing some light treason.
5. Convince your Liege to offer an exclusive royal monopoly on ship-building to Honest Walter’s Seaworthy Rafts.
6. The price of fish is falling rapidly: protect mercantile investments by increasing demand or decreasing supply.

Possible Contacts

NPC members of the society: they might pass on Agendas, or be called into a scene as friends or rivals by a Twist or Misfortune.

- **Valdemar**, a well-traveled merchant who loves to boast.
- **Dame Isabel**, the head of a profitable counterfeiting ring.
- **Guiscard**, a chatty conman looking for a royal charter.
- **Pascale**, a headstrong apprentice with big dreams.
- **Gherd**, a vicious privateer with a thin veneer of civility.
- **Ms. Buckerell**, the widow of a very wealthy guildmaster.

Societal Titles

♣ Guild Alderman

♣ If you are to be executed or imprisoned, you always have the right to defend yourself in court first.

♣ Accredited Importer

♣ Given a day’s notice, you can obtain any object, so long as it’s not one-of-a-kind.

♣ Chartered Trader

♣ You have your own private ship and a crew of sailors to man it.

♣ Lord Mayor

♣ You may spend a ducat to have any building in the city of Valdrada summarily demolished.

KARIAN LOYALISTS

Staunch traditionalists still loyal to a long-deposed dynasty



The Karian Dynasty ruled Dulcinea for centuries, before being deposed by the current ruling family. Decades later, there are still many traditionalists who think that everything's gone downhill since. Young people nowadays don't know what it was like to show respect, work hard for what you had, and die of the bubonic plague.

Many nobles are convinced that if the distant remnants of the rightful Karian kings are returned to the throne, it'll fix all the ills of modern society. Men will be men, women will be women, cats will be cats, and those damn kids will stop eating so many foreign spices.

AGENDAS

What they ask of you. Roll 1d6, pick one, or invent your own.

1. A relative of your Liege is due to speak in front of the realm: ensure that everything goes as wrong as possible.
2. Steal the heavy and cumbersome Karian Crown Jewels, kept under lock and key in the royal treasure chamber.
3. Get one of those troubadours that young people love to write a song that promotes family values, like eating gruel.
4. Help local 'intellectual' Lord Nimrod win his scheduled public debate against a student, using *Factes* and *Logick*.
5. Find a way to cancel the newly announced feast day before it descends into dancing, sodomy, and candy apples.
6. Help a naïve, romantically hopeless Karian dynast land the bride of his dreams and secure a powerful alliance.

Possible Contacts

NPC members of the society: they might pass on Agendas, or be called into a scene as friends or rivals by a *Twist* or *Misfortune*.

- *Giovanni*, a minor noble with dubious Karian lineage.
- *Lady Agnes*, a collector who thinks frescoes are ruining art.
- *Sir Hamish*, a crotchety old knight well past his prime.
- *Sancha*, who obsessively reads bad historical romances.
- *Fawaz*, a fussy bureaucrat drowning in new red tape.
- *Duke Duncan*, a snooty git who hates all foreigners.

Societal Titles

♣ Hereditary Baronet

♣ When you *Disdain* somebody younger than you, take +1d.

♣ Royal Tombkeeper

♣ You have access to the Karian catacombs, tunnels that stretch underground beneath the entire city.

♣ Junior Karian Dynast

♣ You have a legal claim to the Dulcinean throne. If your Liege finds out, you will be executed on the spot.

♣ Brother of the Restorationist Church

♣ You are exempt from religious laws and customs.

OTHER WAYS TO USE THEM (AND WAYS YOU DEFINITELY SHOULDN'T)

Most Trusted Advisors is mostly written with the assumption that secret societies will take a back seat to the central business of the players handling their Liege: fulfilling their whims, avoiding their wrath, and trying to make sure they don't get themselves killed. Secret societies are intended to form a sort of B-plot, complicating what might otherwise be simple and adding another layer of backstabbing and duplicity to proceedings.

However, there's nothing stopping your table from making secret societies the centerpiece of your game. Perhaps everyone is a Zobian Traitor, with a single Sky Chamber double agent among them. Perhaps half the players are in the Hermetic Order and the other half are in the Inquisition, playing out a violent game of cat and mouse behind closed doors while presenting a united front to other nobles and their Liege. Like everything else in *Most Trusted Advisors*, you should try a few things out and default to whatever is the most fun.

Before we continue, unfortunately, we must request that our humble readers briefly don their serious hats as we touch on ideas our culture has about secret societies and conspiracies. Of course, secret societies of various flavors were a real historical phenomenon across the broad swathe of history that *Most Trusted Advisors* pastiches. The Bavarian Illuminati really existed, albeit at the very tail end of this period (and they weren't nearly as impressive as Dan Brown cracked them up to be). The Vehmgericht, the Compagnons du Devoir, and the School of Night are all more timely, if perhaps less culturally impactful examples. The idea of the secret society, powerful men meeting in dark rooms to secretly decide the fate of the world, is an alluring one, and a fun one to play with: that's why they're in this game.

However, it's irresponsible to draw on this cultural imagery without acknowledging the insidious antisemitic ideology that often gets reflexively baked into it. Throughout history, the Jewish people have been one of the most horrifically persecuted groups worldwide. In the medieval period, this persecution took the form of pogroms, brutal riots in which Jews were attacked, killed, and expelled from their homes and communities. This violence was often justified with lurid canards of Jewish conspiracy: claims that Jews killed infants to use their blood in rituals (the blood libel), that they bore responsibility for the death of Christ, or that they poisoned town wells. Historic and compelling accounts of secret societies are therefore chock-full of these antisemitic stereotypes, portraying Jews as greedy foreigners conspiring to sabotage the people around them.

When you incorporate secret societies in your campaign, make sure that when you draw from history and culture, you're not accidentally drawing the stereotypes that have infiltrated popular imagination. To inspire your Chamber of Commerce, look to the Hanseatic League and London Livery Companies, rather than defaulting to 'greedy moneylenders'. The Hermetic Order carries out ghastly rites: but think about what cultural baggage you might be bringing to the table if you establish drinking the blood of children as one of them. Secret societies in *Most Trusted Advisors* are groups of powerful members of the upper classes: like real secret societies, they are for insiders, not outsiders.

ADVANCES & FOOTNOTES

When the day's action is over and your schemes have decisively failed and succeeded, it's time to work out what comes next. If you and your fellow players are planning to come back for another misadventure next week (or in four to five business months, depending on availability) your characters all *Advance*. Your characters either succeeded in their tasks as the Liege's most trusted advisors, in which case they are to be rewarded with additional powers, or they failed, in which case additional powers must be granted in order to prevent future failure. To advance, follow these three steps:

1. Eat the *Consequences* for any remaining *Conditions*.
2. Gain a new *Title* of your choice from your playbook.
3. Put an extra point into any one of your *action ratings*.

If your character is *Dead* or an *Enemy of the Crown*, Step 1 is your last chance to use a *Twist* to save yourself, or bribe/beg/threaten/plead/openly weep until somebody else does.

If you're done with the stories of your characters: say, your session of *Most Trusted Advisors* was a one-shot, or the thrilling finale to your campaign, or every character died in a tragic dung explosion, then you don't Advance. Instead, the session ends with the *Footnote*, an epilogue for your characters told from the perspective of future historians. These are the notes scribbled in the margins of history books, the small impacts your characters had on the world, for better or for worse. To create these, you answer questions about fate treated your character from this point onward. Roll one die for each of the following that's true:

- ♣ You survived until the end of the game.
- ♣ You're your Liege's most trusted advisor (the Liege player decides who this is!)
- ♣ You completed one of your secret society's agendas.
- ♣ You completed two or more of your secret society's agendas.

Read the highest result of this roll, and then answer questions from the lists on the page opposite accordingly:

- ♣ If you rolled a 6, answer two questions from the Legacy list.
- ♣ If you rolled a 4-5, answer one question each from the Legacy and Infamy lists.
- ♣ If you rolled a 1-3, answer two questions from the Infamy list.

You can give any answers you want to these questions. Remember that this is one of a few chances you get in *Most Trusted Advisors* to decide what kind of story you're telling. Is it the kind of story where scheming bastards get their comeuppance, or the kind of story where the nastiest, slimiest little toad in the room ends up ruling the world?

Answer, from the point of view of a future historian...

LEGACIES

- ♣ What invention/food/geographical feature/game is named after you?
- ♣ What famous folklore character is based on your deeds?
- ♣ How did you permanently change the realm's political system?
- ♣ How did you meet the love of your life, and what was special about them?
- ♣ Which of your enemies did you comprehensively destroy, and how?
- ♣ How did you make the staggeringly large fortune your family becomes known for?
- ♣ What famous work of art did you have commissioned?
- ♣ Which of your personal quirks became permanently associated with this period?
- ♣ In what way will historians describe you as 'ahead of your time'?
- ♣ What sweeping powers did your Liege give you? What did you achieve with them?

INFAMIES

- ♣ What insult does your name become synonymous with?
- ♣ Who do you ill-advisedly duel? What makes your loss especially pathetic?
- ♣ What embarrassing story gets told about your death? Is it true, or just believable?
- ♣ What ignominious scandal ends up seeing your eldest child disinherited?
- ♣ What leads your spouse to leave you, and why do they announce it publicly?
- ♣ Why did nobody go to your funeral? What was the least convincing excuse?
- ♣ What did you squander the entirety of your family's remaining finances on?
- ♣ Which of your enemies overshadowed you and your achievements completely?
- ♣ Why do the village children point and laugh at you in your old age?
- ♣ Why did you fall out of favour with your Liege? What fool ended up replacing you?

SUCCESSION

If your character dies horribly, is jailed for life, flees the country, or finds themselves otherwise indisposed—or, for that matter, if you simply don't want to keep playing them—you may at any point create an entirely new character. Just follow all the steps outlined on *page 14*, exchanging a new set of playbook questions with whoever you did so at the campaign's outset.

However, if this seems tiresome, if you were quite partial to the way your character played, or just if you think it would be funnier, you can instead undergo *Succession*. Keep your playbook filled in as it was, but add a new name (or a Roman numeral at the end of the same one). This is your character's heir: their son, daughter, cousin, nephew-twice-removed, secret bastard who was mentioned in the will, or something similar. They inherit the Titles and action ratings of your previous character, and become the target of any grudges or enemies they accrued.

Your new character might be suspiciously identical (like the generations of the eponymous Blackadder family from the BBC show) or dramatically different (like the eclectic and colourful Joestar family on Jojo's Bizarre Adventure): You can mine either of these for comedy.

THE LIEGE & MISCELLANIES

THE LIEGE PLAYER & THE LIEGE

At the centre of *Most Trusted Advisors* is the *Liege*. They're the lynchpin of the story, the instigator and motivating factor for everything that happens. The role of the Liege is quite similar to the role of the Liege player who controls them: to cause new problems and to complicate simple situations. As the Liege player, it's not your place to guide the other players through a story you've come up with. Instead, it's on you to create troublesome and ridiculous situations, and lightheartedly heckle the other players as they try to make their way out of them.

Encourage all of the other players' most outlandish, risky ideas, see how wildly the story can unfold, and remember the three maxims at the beginning of the book: hold on lightly, share the table, and let yourself be inspired. Finally, make sure that the Liege you're playing is memorable and fun for the players to bounce off. A good rule of thumb is that, by any objective measure, your Liege should be *the least qualified person for the job in the realm*, perhaps the world.

Just like the other players, the Liege player gets to pick from one of five *Playbooks*, archetypes that suggest new and exciting flavours of aristocratic douchebag. Each of these five playbooks provides unique *Mishaps* and *Misfortunes* to represent a specific brand of incompetence, as well as a few prompts and story hooks to get your table's misadventures on the cobbled road.

- ♣ The *Royal Buffoon* is the median wealthy jackass. Pick them if you want to turn the game into pure farce and set up the other players for snide one-liners.
- ♣ The *Have-at-Them* is an upstart warmonger. Pick them if you want to endlessly sabre-rattle and cause the other players endless diplomatic headaches.
- ♣ The *Bleeding Heart* is terminally afflicted with noblesse oblige. Pick them if you want to engage in condescending let-them-eat-cake philanthropy and bankrupt the other players.
- ♣ The *Loathsome Toad* mistakenly thinks they're a master of intrigue. Pick them if you want to be a slimy little worm and scheme right back at the other players.
- ♣ The *Powder Keg* is a paranoid tyrant always looking for someone to behead. Pick them if you want to rack up a bodycount and put the fear of God into the other players.

THE ROYAL BUFFOON

A standard-issue incompetent pompous nitwit.

Prince • Princess •
Archduke • King • Queen

Albert • Angelica • Rupert • Astrid •
Charles • Beatrice • Baldwin • Rosalind

The Unready • The Weak
• The Mild • The Fickle



Choose 2-4 or make up
some of your own

This Liege...

- Is always a month late to trends
- Believes anything anybody tells them
- Is distrustful of mathematics, and the use of numbers over twenty in general
- Has never left the palace unescorted
- Bizarrely misquotes aphorisms (e.g., 'better to kill two birds with one bush!')
- Often trips on their own crakows
- Never learned what 'taxes' are
- Has reminders of their own laws written in ink on the back of their hand
- Thinks chicken legs are a vegetable
- Believes that nobody really dies in wars, surely? They wouldn't be allowed!

Mishaps

Cause a Mix-up

The Liege confuses one thing for another. Perhaps they've sent one of the players a secret message intended for another, or they forgot the difference between 'annexation' and 'anniversary' at a diplomatic conference. There's still time to fix it, but it's going to be a madcap rush.

What Have I Forgotten...

The Liege realises they've forgotten something. They're not dressed for their parade, or they haven't memorised a speech, or they dropped their sceptre. It's on their privy council to rectify this—immediately!

Misfortunes

Ah, I Remember!

The Liege remembers something they'd been forgetting! It's a great relief to them, but not to the players—because they've remembered something nobody wants to hear abruptly, like 'you're all due to be executed today' or 'we're being invaded'.

Bumble Into Danger

The Liege, much like a baby or a small dog, shouldn't have been left alone! They've wandered off into the clutches of enemy spies, brigands, or the most dangerous enemy of all, one of their own family members.

THE HAVE-AT-THEM

A blustering war-hawk who can barely hold a sword.

Prince • Princess • Lord
Protector • King • Queen

Benjamin • Atlanta • Osman • Jeanne •
Gaius • Bellatrix • Huxley • Agrippina

The Brute • The Rash •
The Mad • The Drunkard



Choose 2-4 or make up
some of your own

This Liege...

- Can't tell the ends of a sword apart
- Is perpetually suffering from a series of horse-induced concussions
- Wears full plate armour to bed
- Thinks shields are for pussies
- Attends tournaments and loudly asks 'who's winning?' during the quiet parts
- Drinks one small lake of wine a day
- Plays a lot of board games and flips the table whenever they lose (often)
- Sleeps cuddled up to a halberd
- Is an avid nude wrestler
- Finds 'tactics' to be generally suspect, and 'strategy' to be right out

Mishaps

Wave Something Dangerous

The Liege gets a little too excited and starts to gesticulate with a sword, a loaded musket, a pitcher of Greek Fire, or any other safety hazard within arm's reach. If nobody stops them, someone will get hurt (probably them).

Rattle Their Saber

The Liege's inner war-hawk takes ahold of them, and they immediately set about in search of the nearest foreign noble in order to spark some kind of national incident. If they're not somehow pacified or waylaid, it could be mean war, or worse, tariffs!

Misfortunes

Issue A Catastrophic Order

The Liege gets it into their head that we must declare war on a much larger enemy, arm all our soldiers with downy duckfeather pillows, try a strategy of walking very slowly towards the enemy ballistas, or all of the above. They won't hear any criticism of the idea, and it's their advisors' job to make it work, or else.

Agree To An Unwinnable Duel

The Liege lets their temper get the best of them and leaps into a duel they can't possibly win, in a way that makes it everyone else's problem.

THE BLEEDING HEART

A patronising ingenu with misguided intentions.

Prince • Princess •
Infante • King • Queen

Peter • Eleanor • Owain • Amina •
Alphonse • Olga • Erik • Philiberta

The Foolish • The Young •
The Kind • The Insolvent



Choose 2-4 or make up
some of your own

This Liege...

- Thinks peasants should just eat honey when there's a grain shortage
- Distributes opera glasses to the poor
- Didn't know peasants existed until they read about them in a book
- Believes in trickle-down feudalism
- Only attends public executions if the rope for the noose is ethically sourced
- Thinks humanity is the real plague
- Has given their heir a bizarre and unpronounceable novelty name
- Thinks the peasants should all have their own serfs, to make things fair
- Has a thousand named pet ostriches

Mishaps

Have Good Intentions

The Liege does or says something that they legitimately believe is kind, generous, or courteous. They give someone a gift they hate, or a duty they'd be terrible at, and will become extremely offended if they feel as if their magnanimity is being rejected.

Reach Out to the Commoners

The Liege decides they should get to know the common folk of the realm. Not by actually talking to any, heavens—but by starting a new asinine fashion like wearing straw shoes, bathing in dirty water, or contracting tuberculosis.

Misfortunes

Attempt a Good Deed

The Liege attempts to do something good for the people of the land. However, due to bad luck, ignorance, or intractable economic entanglement in the incentive structures of feudalism, it's going to be an absolute catastrophe: a pet wolf for every shepherd! Bonfires to celebrate the driest day of the year! Therapy rats for plague victims!

Bankrupt the Realm

The Liege has emptied the nation's coffers doing something that one can only presume seemed like a good idea to them, somehow. You're never seeing that gold again.

THE LOATHSOME TOAD

Worse than a fool; a fool who thinks they're a genius.

Prince • Princess • Doge
• King • Queen

Julian • Lucrezia • Mehmet • Bethany •
Stefano • Beatrice • Nero • Anastasia

The Toad • The Wicked •
The Poisoner • The Worm



Choose 2-4 or make up
some of your own

This Liege...

- Once accidentally poisoned himself
- Tells lies that don't even benefit them
- Regularly hires assassins to target them just so they can feel important
- Has a hapless identical twin sibling
- Applied to and was rejected by every single one of the six Secret Societies
- Pays courtiers to act scared of them
- Incorrectly believes they're a polyglot
- Has read one book, ever, and hasn't shut up about it since
- Practices their evil laugh in the mirror
- Flunked out of torturers' school for being, quote, "weird about it".

Mishaps

Tell a Flawless Lie

The Liege tells a lie that they're convinced is the pinnacle of deception. No matter how obvious the lie is, if you don't pretend to be entirely deceived it'll hurt their feelings and they'll probably take it out on you, so play along.

Hatch a Cunning Plan

The Liege has just had an idea, which is never a good thing. They'll hmm and haw and wink knowingly, but refuse to explain what they're thinking. The only thing you can be certain of is that whatever harebrained scheme they've come up with will come back to haunt you.

Misfortunes

Don a Lifelike Disguise

The Liege appears in a situation that's unbelievably inconvenient for them to be present at, in a half-baked disguise, for confusing reasons. If you don't act like you're entirely fooled, they'll be prone to order your execution out of insecurity.

Execute a Cunning Plan

The Liege, having hatched an awful plan, now sets it into baffling motion. Whatever they do is poorly thought out, somewhere on the spectrum from 'inconvenient' to 'deadly' for everyone involved, and not even they will be able to explain the logic behind it.

THE POWDERKEG

A bloodthirsty tyrant who loves a good execution.

Prince • Princess •
Duchess • King • Queen

Ludwig • Henrietta • Leopold • Maud •
Shariyar • Mary • Augustus • Matilda

The Tyrant • The Evil •
The Wicked • The Terrible



Choose 2-4 or make up
some of your own

This Liege...

- Keeps the severed heads of their former advisors on spikes
- Fed their last spouse to a bear
- Saves on palace heating costs with economical winter heretic burnings
- Thinks beheading is too humane
- Shoots traitors out of cannons
- Made it punishable by death to beat them at croquet, cards, or hopscotch
- Has built a deadly labyrinth to throw orphans and grandmothers into
- Invented a new execution method involving donkeys and ripe cantaloupes
- Outlaws a new religion every day

Mishaps

Make an Enemy

The Liege takes some innocuous comment or mild faux pas as a slight and immediately starts to loathe somebody with the rage of the sun. The moment they step out of line or give them some sort of excuse, it'll be off to the dungeons for the sorry offender.

Outlaw Something

You can only have loads of lovely executions when you have loads of criminals to execute! The Liege invents a new law on the spot, outlawing a common vice like owning goats, eating cabbage, singing, dancing, sneezing, or wearing an ugly hat.

Misfortunes

Off With Their Heads!

The Liege has had enough! Everyone present is to be executed post-haste, no exceptions! Unless they receive a royal pardon, or the Liege forgets about it, or it would be inconvenient, or the executioner's arm gets tired. Other than that? No exceptions!

Oh, Him?

The Liege, while their advisors weren't in the room, ordered the summary execution of someone vital to their schemes. They're either already dead or on the chopping block, and either way will certainly not be helping you out with anything any time soon.

HOW'S IT GOING, GEOFFREY?

a game after the game

If you all have ten to fifteen minutes after a session of *Most Trusted Advisors*, you can tie a nice ribbon on your play session with *How's It Going, Geoffrey?*, a microgame that grounds your characters' wacky shenanigans by contrasting them with the lives of the peasantry.

The premise is simple: Geoffrey is the unluckiest peasant in the realm. Whatever you did as players, it directly affected him, in the most comically bleak way possible. If you started a war, then his seventeen brothers, mother, grandmother, and dog were all conscripted and then died on their way to the battlefield. If you built a church, it was built directly on top of his childhood home, and the sinners being tormented in Hell on the wall mural happen to look like him by complete coincidence.

To play *How's It Going, Geoffrey?*, one of you must play Geoffrey. Everyone else will take the role of Geoffrey's fellow peasants, one of whom must kick off the conversation with the titular question. From here on out, you play a group conversation with the following rules:

- ♣ If you're *Geoffrey*, you must always describe the most dramatic and darkly comic misfortune you can imagine having stemmed from the player characters' actions. Whenever you answer a question, it must make the situation seem even more absurdly tragic.
- ♣ If you're *another peasant*, you must vastly underreact, offer mild sympathy, and generally make it clear that this sort of thing is commonplace. Every response or interjection you offer should serve as a prompt for Geoffrey to make their tale even sadder: 'Oh, your mother? Your 107-year-old mother? With leprosy?'

Continue back and forth in this fashion until you feel like you've extracted the maximum comic potential from Geoffrey's outrageous misfortune. At this point, Geoffrey should shrug their shoulders and say "Well, can't complain!" The game then ends.

The point of playing *How's It Going, Geoffrey?* is to approach the question of what it means to only tell stories about rich and powerful aristocrats, without having to radically depart from the genre of farce (everyone should endeavour to make Geoffrey's problems so improbably and singularly dreadful that they end up totally removed from any lived reality you might have experienced).

Now, *Most Trusted Advisors* is a very silly little game with very little to teach you about history and society. But there are many games and novels and films out there that aren't jokes—that strive to be powerful dramas exploring questions of love and vengeance and goodness—and that do not conceive of a history outside of the history authored by and about the rich. The Middle Ages were not an age of kings and dukes and bishops. They were an age of millions of ordinary people, working fields sixteen hours a day to feed them.

TABLES

USING TABLES

It's a well-known fact that tabletop roleplayers love tables. Rolling on random tables is the only enrichment many of them get in their enclosures. If you're ever stuck for something—a nobleman, a name, a hook for a session—you can roll on a table, or pick an option you like the look of, or just browse it and come up with something of your own in a similar ballpark. To roll on a '2d6' table, roll one die first and see whether it's 1-3 or 4-6. If it's 1-3, read the second die's result on the table on the left. If it's 4-6, read it on the table on the right.

d6 Opulent Trinkets

1. A flamboyantly complex mechanical clock
2. A ring with a gem the size of an apple
3. A pocket-sized statue of yourself
4. An unnervingly realistic porcelain doll
5. A cushion that takes five men to carry
6. A peacock-feather quill with purple ink

d6 Court Hobby Crazes

1. Competitive squirrel tossing
2. Sewing erotic tapestries
3. Anatomically correct animal topiary
4. The noble sport of horseback checkers
5. Painting portraits of sad jesters
6. Tabletop roleplaying games

d6 Bands of Outlaws

1. Highwaymen with impeccable manners
2. Pirates who can't stop singing
3. Animal-welfare-concerned cattle rustlers
4. Insurance fraudsters, armed to the teeth
5. Politically literate peasant's rebellion
6. Cryptic band of ultraviolet jesters

d6 Exotic Pets

1. A monkey with no sense of boundaries
2. A parrot that's learned to say 'fuck'
3. A grizzly bear on a worryingly thin leash
4. A dog breed so inbred it can't walk
5. A flying gecko that's plotting its escape
6. A small carnivorous plant in a pot

d6 Fashionable Garb

1. Hats the size and weight of a six-year-old
2. Crakow shoes with toes curled to the knee
3. Novelty tartan blindfolds
4. Indecently large codpieces
5. Arsenic-based eyeshadow
6. Neck ruffs with a three-foot diameter

d6 Inconveniences

1. Stopped and searched by city lawmen
2. Invited to a party you don't want to go to
3. Accosted on the road by a band of outlaws
4. Your most annoying relative is visiting
5. You have to solve someone else's problem
6. International incident threatens war

2d6 Frivolous Demands From Your Liege

1-3

1. I want that man's coat in particular!
2. I need you to rid me of a turbulent priest!
3. I must have a pet crocodile at once!
4. The crown jewels are dirty; get new ones!
5. Throw my dog a luxurious birthday ball!
6. Establish a two-crown tax on eggs at once!

4-6

1. I'm bored of my titles; grant me another!
2. Help me seduce this lovely maid/bachelor!
3. Make my rival look like an utter fool!
4. I want to become a wizard; teach me!
5. I'm suffering from maladies; heal me!
6. I do so miss mummy; arrange a visit!

2d6 Inciting Incidents for a Session

1-3

1. It's your liege's birthday tomorrow
2. Your liege wants a family chronicle written
3. Your liege's mother is coming to visit
4. It's marriage season among the gentry
5. It's time to collect the centennial census
6. Your liege is now obsessed with astrology

4-6

1. Your liege is building a summer palace
2. Your liege's brother has claimed the throne
3. Your liege is having a messy divorce
4. An anti-monarchist play is performing
5. A powerful vassal has declared rebellion
6. The Duchy of Zobia has threatened war

d6 Impossible Demands

1. I tire of my father; have him killed!
2. The sea offends me; drain it all!
3. The time has come to invade Zobia!
4. I must have a pet unicorn at once!
5. Beards are hideous things; ban them!
6. I must claim a new fiefdom; the moon!

d6 Terrible Secrets

1. Has a very embarrassing middle name
2. Has a bastard son or twelve
3. Was a cunningly disguised bear all along
4. Growing hashish plants in their garden
5. A well-trained dog writes their legislation
6. Lied about being able to play the lute

d6 Royal Family Members

1. Your liege's younger brother, who loudly tells everyone who'll listen that he'd do a better job
2. Your liege's uncle, fourth in line to the throne, who is constantly sharpening three knives
3. Your liege's nephew, who, possibly due to a miasmic affliction, looks up to them greatly
4. Your liege's foreign cousin, with an incomprehensible accent and strange taste in food
5. Your liege's grandmother, who has a very strong and wrong idea of what gifts they like
6. Your liege's third cousin twice removed, who insists unprompted that they really are related

2d6 Peasants You Might Meet

1-3

1. Eric, a turnip farmer who is well-versed in political theory and eager to debate it

2. Anna, a mother of eight who would love to chat, but... Oi! Take that out of your mouth!

3. Louis, who is eager, loyal, and interprets any order in the worst way possible

4. Helga, an innocent-looking young girl who has no idea who poisoned that Duke, nuh-uh

5. Reginald, a medical marvel who has been diagnosed with every single disease

6. Katlin, a lumberjack with an attendant crowd of fawning young women

4-6

1. Ifan, a little boy who likes to collect snails from the fields and show them to people

2. Abigal, who isn't a witch. Who told you that? They'll get what's coming to them!

3. Riley, who reckons the country needs more heretic burnings and the king's too soft

4. Hasna, a fisherwoman with many long, scary stories that are all about a big trout

5. Brian, a wannabe watchman who 'arrests' 'criminals' on a volunteer basis

6. Francesca, a baker known for her sweet smile and funny-tasting meat pies

2d6 Nobles You Might Meet

1-3

1. Lady Alice, an enterprising duchess and moneylender who has recently invented financial securities fraud

2. Lord Duncan, who challenges everyone he meets to a duel, always loses, and is miraculously still alive

3. Dame Margaret, who has bravely broken the glass ceiling on mass execution of uppity peasants

4. Sir Oscar, a wretched little man attracted to anything with a pulse, a head, and/or two working legs

5. Countess von Klaas, who responds to everything by comparing it to the one book she's read.

6. Abbott Parr, last seen tripping over an altar through a stained glass window into a pile of holy statues

4-6

1. Doña Mafalda, who will make sure everyone around her knows about her terrible melancholy at great dreary length

2. Sir Horne, whose eight wealthy wives died in tragic beheading-and-poison-related accidents

3. Dr. bint Yazid, a mortician, gravedigger, and surgeon with a very loose definition of 'corpse'

4. Duke Clarington, who has enough money to buy the realm, plate it with gold, and sell it back

5. Dr. Nell, who learned everything she knows about medicine from five years of eating hallucinogenic plants

6. Lord LeGrande, a firm believer that the more endangered the animal, the more fun the hunt!

4d6 Medical Afflictions & Treatment

You are clearly suffering from...

and the only known cure is...

1. An excess supply of...	1. Blood	1. Applying a poultice of...	1. Honeybees
2. Troubling thoughts of...	2. Mathematics	2. Oral administration of...	2. Alcohol
3. A critical lack of...	3. Bile	3. That you avoid...	3. Nightshade
4. A miasmatic infection of...	4. Nonsense	4. Surgical insertion of...	4. Frogs
5. A crippling phobia of...	5. Sexuality	5. A warm bath of...	5. Blood
6. A severe allergy to...	6. Leeches	6. Sleeping in a bed of...	6. Vegetables

3d6 Nasty Rumours

Talk around town is that you...

1. Eloped with...	1. ...a man-eating lion...	1. ...and you'd do it again!
2. Said you'd make a stew out of...	2. ...an elderly nun...	2. ...as part of an occult ritual.
3. Made erotic advances towards...	3. ...a novelty topiary...	3. ...at their mother's funeral.
4. Made disgusting remarks about...	4. ...the court jester...	4. ...for tax purposes.
5. Disguised yourself as...	5. ...a miniature horse...	5. ...to skip your son's birth.
6. Bequeathed your fortune to...	6. ...a coven of witches...	6. ...in front of the Duchess.

2d6 Noble Titles

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1.	Duchess	Duke	Margravine	Margrave	Peeress	Peer
2.	Countess	Count	Baroness	Baron	Patrician	Esquire
3.	Marchioness	Marquess	Dame	Sir	Electress	Elector
4.	Princess	Prince	Lady	Lord	Landgravine	Landgrave
5.	Contessa	Doge	Viscountess	Viscount	Seigneuresse	Seigneur
6.	Archduchess	Archduke	Madame	Earl	Baronetess	Baronet

2d6 Noble Names

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1.	Alice	Otto	Marina	Sancho	Anne	Orsino
2.	Matilda	Philip	Irene	Harald	Bianca	Louis
3.	Isabella	Ludovico	Belladonna	Idris	Cassandra	Siegfried
4.	Beatrice	Carlos	Teresa	Percival	Mihrimah	Henry
5.	Olivia	Mustafa	Margaret	Johannes	Elisabeth	Roland
6.	Anastasia	Edgar	Juliet	Mehmed	Eleanor	Rudolph

2d6 Noble Nicknames

You're known as 'the...'

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1.	Eloquent	Tremulous	Magnificent	Warlike	Unlucky	Cunning
2.	Righteous	Treacherous	Reformer	Kind	Proud	Strong
3.	Silent	Fortunate	Bald	Hammer	Fat	Brave
4.	Young	Sad	Lion	Strict	Good	Impotent
5.	Leper	One-Eyed	Stutterer	Blind	Elder	Chaste
6.	Suspicious	Small	Evil	Generous	Weak	Rich

2d6 Noble Houses

	1.	2.	3.	4.	5.	6.
1.	Montresor	d'Artagan	de Bergerac	Bachmann	MacDermot	Hauteville
2.	Morvoren	Anhalt-Zerbst	Pignatelli	Hohenstaufen	de Almeida	De Vere
3.	Sozzini	Leveson	Hoensbroeck	Rosencrantz	de Tourdonnet	Vilafermosa
4.	de Fonlanque	d'Aragona	FitzMaurice	Altamira	Beaumont	von Zinzendorff
5.	Köprülü	Blackwood	von Reibnitz	de La Mancha	Al-Zayadina	Guildenstern
6.	Trencavel	al-Murabitun	von Holstein	Monte-Cristo	von Nassau	Hauteclouque

