

A Friendly Warning

Put this book down. Right now. I mean it.

This book is deadly. No joke. I'm not employing hyperbole or exaggeration or melodrama.

This book *bates you* and it wants to *hurt you*. It wants to ruin your friendships, wreck your loved ones and devour your free time with a hunger you've never known.

Even now, it has begun infecting you with a mad fever. An obsessive desire to destroy—*destroy*—*destroy*.

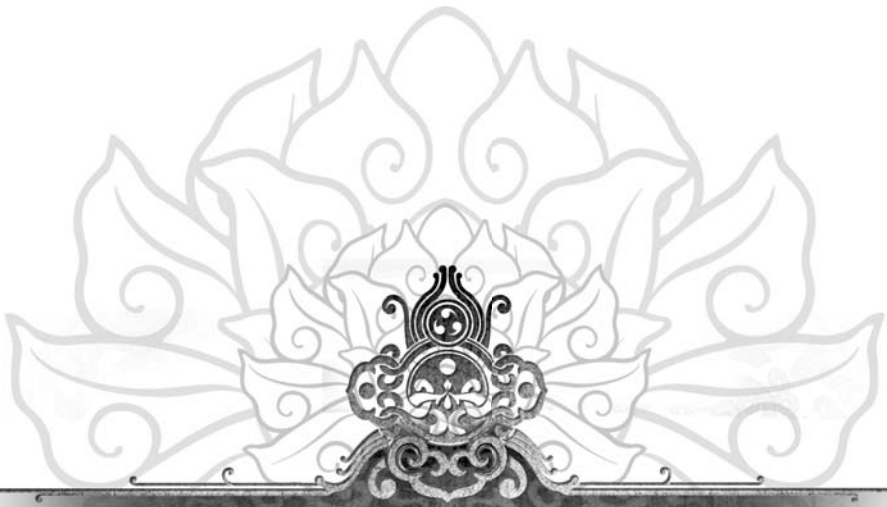
And the only thing that will sate this desire is the blood of your enemies.

This is the only warning you'll get.

You are weak. You are unworthy. You are unready.

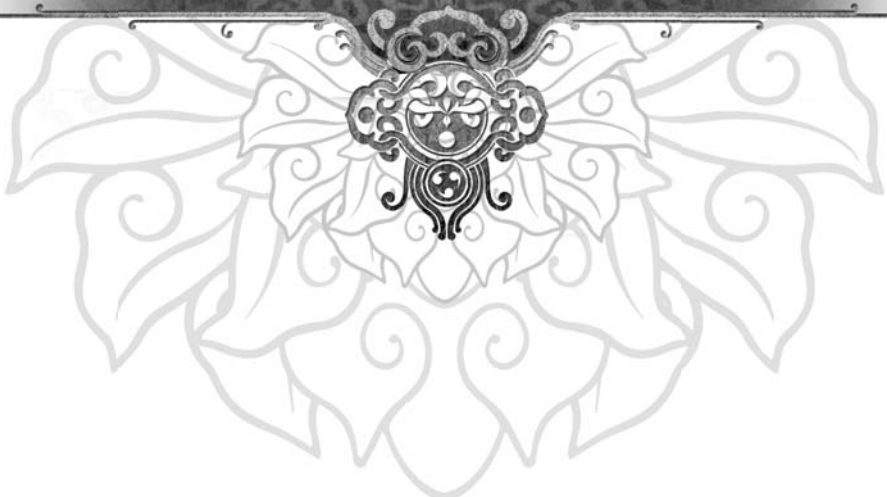
Just put it down and walk away.





For Jess

The Only Honest Man
in Shanri





Blood & Tears

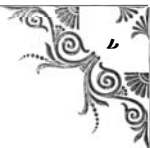
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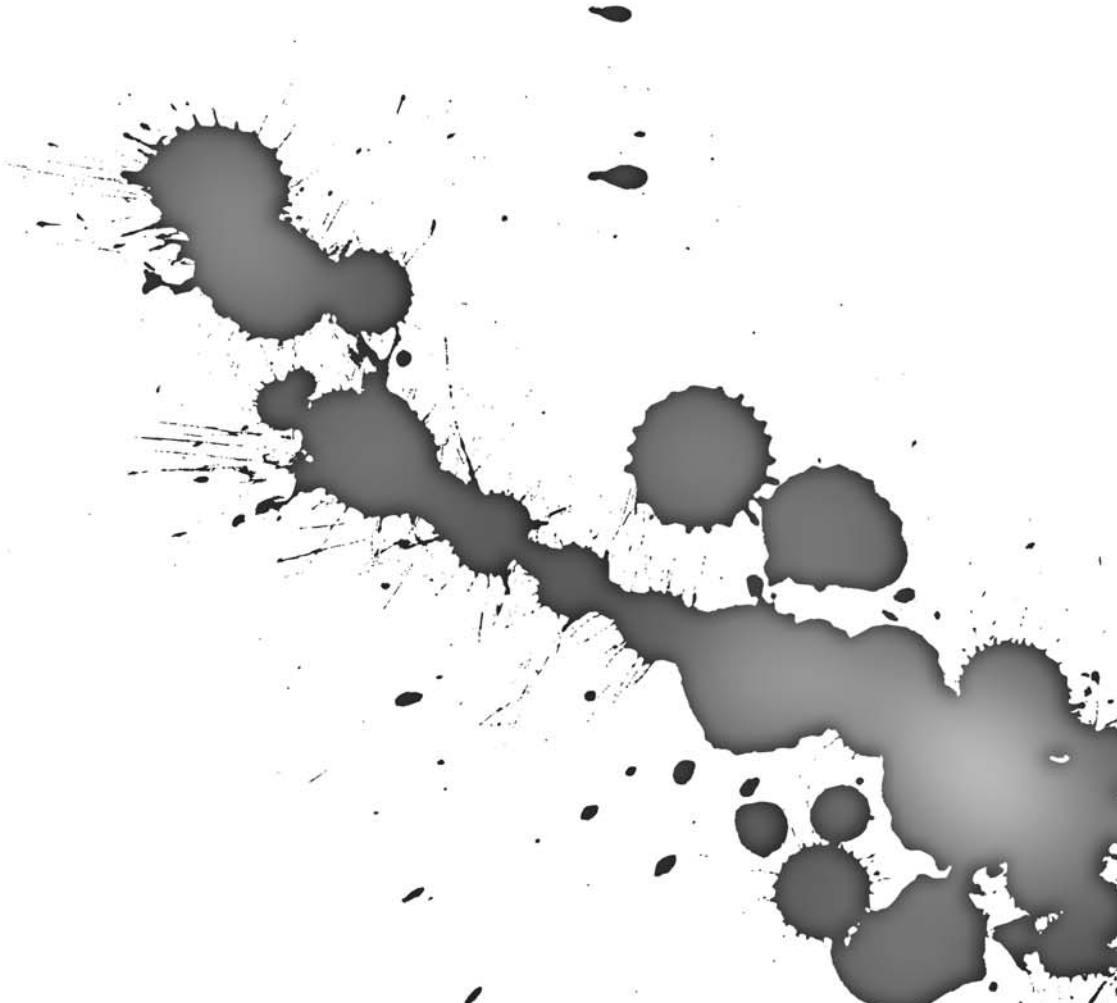
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Portions of this book will be released as Open Content; please see www.housesoftheblooded.net for more information.



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THE PARLOR GAME

IN MY RESEARCH ON THE VEN, ONE OF THE MOST FANTASTIC DISCOVERIES I MADE WAS THE *GUZA'DUN* (*GOOZAH DOON*): THE PARLOR GAME. *GUZA'DUN* WAS SO MANY THINGS: DINNER PARTY, IMPROVISATIONAL THEATER, HISTORICAL RE-ENACTMENT AND A CHANCE FOR THE VEN TO MAKE SOME TROUBLE. THE VEN NEVER TURNED DOWN AN OPPORTUNITY TO MAKE SOME TROUBLE.

Nobles gathered together in elaborate costumes—surrounded by drink, food and decorations—for the sole purpose of recreating the stories of famous characters. The Host of the party chose the theme, sending out roles with invitations. Each guest came “in character” and remained thus until the end of the evening, answering only to his character’s name, acting only in his character’s interest, playing the role as only a ven could. Those who broke character were often severely punished, enforcing the atmosphere and authenticity of the event.

And so, in the spirit of this ancient ven tradition, I present these rules for the *guza dun*. The Parlor Game. Better known to gamers as “a live action roleplaying game.”

Blood & Tears is a set of rules for playing *Houses of the Blooded* in a different environment. A live environment. These aren’t table top rules with a few friends. Instead, I designed these rules to be used by large groups in a social setting. Food, drink, decorations, costumes. Like a large, interactive play.

The players take on the roles of ven nobles—just as they do in the table top game—but instead of using dice, wagers and risks, you’ll use a much simpler system. A system I designed to be as noninvasive as possible allowing you to maintain the immersive feel of a live action game with little effort.

In a way, *Blood & Tears* is a different game from *Houses of the Blooded*. Same subject matter, but a different way to experience it. Like watching *Hamlet* in a theater, then seeing it again on the movie screen. Same story but an entirely different experience.

To play *Blood & Tears*, you must already have or have access to the original *Houses of the Blooded* book. *Blood & Tears* provides rules to play in a live action format within the game and the world described in *Houses of the Blooded*. You can get *Houses of the Blooded* at www.housesoftheblooded.com or wherever you find quality roleplaying games.

GOALS

I had a few goals in designing *Blood & Tears*. These goals were inspired and directed by playing in all kinds of live games, including “challenge LARPs” (where all the mechanics are decided by an abstract system), “boffer LARPs” (where tests are done with real tools and fake weapons), and “parlor LARPs” (where there are almost no rules at all). I’ve tried to draw strengths from all three and avoid the weaknesses.

After playing in as many LARPs as I could, I came up with the following goals.

SIMPLE

You may notice that this book is rather small. That’s because you won’t need a lot of rules. Not a lot of fancy talk or flavor or fluff. Just the rules you need to play in the live environment.

The whole system can be boiled down to one sentence: “Whoever spends the most Style wins.” That’s pretty much it. If everything else falls apart, you can always fall back on that one simple rule. Spend Style.

You do, however, need to read the original *Houses of the Blooded* book to understand this one. There’s a lot of terminology and concept in this book that just won’t make any sense unless you’ve read the original. You won’t need the original to play *Blood & Tears* but having one copy around for reference would probably be handy.

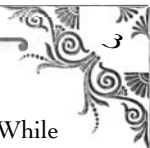
ACTUAL

I wanted a system that was the absolute polar opposite of abstract. One of my pet peeves as a player is a game that offers players an in game bonus that has no out-of-game mechanic. In other words, your character has “something cool” in play, but there are no mechanics to represent that on your sheet.

Therefore, I wanted *everything* on your sheet to mean something. To have a counterpart in the game. Art, costumes and other elements of the sheet don’t just represent points, but can have a real impact on the game environment.

COMPLEMENTARY

If you’ve got a character sheet for *Houses of the Blooded*, you can bring it to *Blood & Tears*. Yet... I didn’t want players lugging around four sheets of paper. In a LARP, too many sheets can be as heavy as an anchor. Instead, I wanted a tiny card. But, at the same time, I did not want you to lose out on any advantages on your tabletop character sheet.



After thinking about parties in a less abstract way, I came across a solution. While you've got all this stuff on your sheet, when you decide to cross Shanri on your way to a distant party, you can't really bring everything with you. You've got to pick and choose which dress to bring, which coat to bring, which date to bring (your spouse or your lover!). So, keeping with my previous goal, I turned those kinds of decisions into a mechanic. You can bring your sheet... just not *all* of it. You'll see how it works out.

USEFUL

Finally, I also wanted to make this book *useful*. Useful to players, useful to the Narrator. I knew the book was going to be small, so I decided to make the second half of it a guide to LARPs in general, *Blood & Tears* in specific. I also put a bunch of reference sheets so you won't need to bring out the main book, keeping this one handy. And, I tried to keep the book as small as possible so you can carry it around.

CONTESTS: USING STYLE

And now, ladies and gentlemen, here on the next few pages, I present the *only rule* you need to understand to play *Blood & Tears*.

In the tabletop game, players settle their scores with risks. Here, in *Blood & Tears*, we settle things with *Contests*. There really aren't any dice or playing cards or any other random number generators. Nope. What we've got is spending Style.

The key to the Parlor Game is Style. If you want something to happen in the game, spend a Style and it happens. Want to add a secret door to the room you are in? Spend a Style. Want to say Lord Willford is your uncle? Spend a Style. Jump across rooftops or pick a lock? Spend a Style.

Spending a single Style gets you what you want, regardless of what it may be.

If you want to prevent it from happening, you have to spend *more* Style than the other guy.

If you modify any existing character or object in the game with a Style Point, you must give the owner of that character or object the Style Point. If he accepts your suggestion, he gets the Style you want to spend. If he doesn't, you can either submit and accept his "no" taking your Style back, or you can start a *Contest*. Let's go through it, step-by-step.

RULE ZERO

First, an important rule. In fact, it may be the most important rule.

You cannot use Style to replace roleplaying. In other words, if you want to convince another player to act against his better interests, you cannot simply offer Style and be done with it.

If you don't roleplay a contest, you cannot spend Style.

Let me say that again in bold and italics.

If you don't roleplay a contest, you cannot spend Style.

If another player tries to give you Style without making an effort to roleplay the reason for spending the Style, you may ignore the entire contest, calling "Rule Zero." I give you permission. Now, on to the system.

STEP 1: "IS IT TRUE?"

First, remember what I said just above about trying to replace roleplaying with Style.

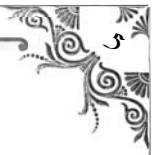
Next, if you want to say something is true in the game—that you and another character were once lovers in a younger and more innocent age or that a secret panel exists in the wall or that a particular library contains a particular book—offer a Style to the appropriate player, explain your suggestion and ask, "Is it true?"

You may offer as much Style as you want: one, two, three, fifteen. Offer all the Style you want.

If your target says, "Yes," give him the Style you offered and your request is fulfilled.

If your target says, "No," you have three choices. You can *persist*, *desist* or *insist*.

- If you *persist*, you simply offer them more Style, upping your original offer. If your target says, "Yes," the contest is over.
- If you *desist*, you give up the attempt and put your Style pack in your pocket or pouch. The target has said "No" and that's enough. The contest is done.
- If you *insist*, move on to Step 2.

*Example 1*

I am playing Tomas Yvarai, a devious and infamous character from ven literature, at a party thrown by Tomas' sister, Ismene. Ismene is played by my friend, Rachel. I approach Rachel and say, "Do you remember, my sister, when we were young, exploring every inch of this castle from top to bottom?"

Rachel nods and says, "Indeed, I do."

And then, I offer her a Style and ask, "Isn't it true there is a secret passage in the castle that only you and I know about?"

Rachel nods and accepts the Style. "Yes, there is," she says.

Example 2

Jess Heinig is playing Symmon Thorne, "the only honest ven in Shanri." At this particular party, the Narrator announced that Symmon's wife has been kidnapped and held for ransom. I ask the Narrator, with a Style in hand, if I may be the kidnapper. The Narrator tells me that since this action is happening to Jess's character, I have to offer the Style to him.

As I approach Jess, I offer a Style and say, "Isn't it true that it was *me* who kidnapped her and sent the ransom letter?"

Jess thinks for a moment, then nods. "Yes, it was."

As it turns out, Jess told the Narrator that he wanted a story involving his wife's kidnapper. Because Symmon's wife is Jess' NPC, I must give the Style to Jess.

Example 3

Again, I approach Rachel as Ismene Yvarai, and again, we talk about our past. At the end of the conversation, I ask her, "Isn't it true that you once gave me a key to your private chambers?"

Rachel shakes her head. "No, I would have never done that."

At this point, I can either *persist* (offer more Style) or *desist* (give up). I persist. "I will offer you two Style to say yes."

Rachel shakes her head again. "No, I am sure Ismene would have never done that."

And so, after two rejections, I *desist*. I could have tried to offer more Style or I could have insisted. Let's talk about that next.

STEP 2: “BUT, I INSIST...”

This is where you step up the game. Your target has refused a friendly offer of Style. As soon as you say, “But I insist...” any Style spent by any player involved in the contest is *lost*. No player gets any Style after someone invokes “But I insist...”.

The acting player (the one who started the Contest) and the reacting player (the one the Contest is about) both spend Style as they wish. You can wait to see how much Style your opponent is willing to spend to outbid him or you can make an offer of your own.

Whoever is willing to spend the most Style has *privilege* (as per the core game) and may narrate the outcome of the Contest.

Again: all Style spent after players invoke “But I insist...” is lost.

Example 1

As Tomas, I encounter Fabien and his character Arisaph and engage in conversation. After a few moments, I offer a Style saying, “You are convinced you can trust me.”

Fabien says, “No, I would never trust Tomas.”

At this point, I can *desist* (take the Style back), *persist* (offer more Style) or *insist* (declare a Contest). I don’t want to go so far as a Contest just yet, but I do want to earn Arisaph’s trust. So, I *persist*. I offer two Style, saying, “Are you certain?”

Fabien looks at the two Style and shakes his head. “Sorry, but no. I just can’t trust Tomas.”

Again, I have options. I can *desist*, *persist* or *insist*. I don’t want to spend any more Style, so I *desist*. I put the Style back in my pocket and smile. “Very well, perhaps another time,” I tell him.

Example 2

As Tomas, I encounter another player: this time, it’s Jessica playing Vriyana. I engage in conversation and a few moments later, offer a Style. “You are convinced you can trust me.”

Jessica says, “I’m pretty sure Vriyana would not trust Tomas.”

At this point, I can *desist* (take the Style back), *persist* (offer more Style) or *insist* (declare a Contest). I don’t want to go so far as a Contest just yet, but I do want to earn Vriyana’s trust. So, I *persist*. I offer two Style, saying, “Are you certain?”

Jessica shakes her head. “No, I don’t think so.”



Again, I have options. This time, I choose to *insist*. I offer one Style (all Contests begin with one Style), again saying, “But I insist...”

Now, the Contest has begun. In order to win the Contest, Jessica has to offer up more Style than me. I’m currently offering one Style. Also, the Style we lose to a Contest is *lost* and does not go to either player.

She offers up two Style. “I do not trust Tomas.”

I offer up three. “But you do,” I tell her.

Jessica looks at the three Style and considers spending four. Then, she says, “Perhaps I do trust him after all.”

Now, because we entered a Contest, both players discard all the Style they used in the Contest—both the winner and the loser.

STATIC CONTESTS

Sometimes, you need to take a Contest against an object such as picking a lock or climbing a wall or jumping over rooftops.

These are called *static Contests* and they require Style to overcome. Again, static Contests involve no other character: only inanimate objects.

Every static Contest requires at least three Style to overcome. Don’t worry, there’s plenty of ways to get Style to overcome these Contests.

LASTING EFFECTS

If any players spend Style to create a lasting effect, the sum total of that Style is divided by two, rounded up. You’ll see this in rules for Rumors, Romances and elsewhere.

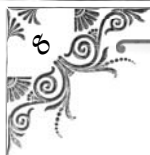
CONCLUSION

And that’s how it works.

If you want something, spend Style. Whoever spends the most Style gets what they want.

You now know everything you need to know to play *Blood & Tears*. All the other rules in this book are just ways to give players more advantages in Contests. You can find those in the Style chapter.

Onward now, faithful Reader. You have more Road to travel!



CHARACTER

Your character is going to a Party. What will she bring?

That's the question you have to ask. You can't bring everything, so what do you really need?

You'll need that dress and you'll need your Bloodsword. Better bring a few spies: there's no telling what the Duke is up to. Come to think of it, you'd better bring some bodyguards. And you'll need something to trade with. And a gift. Don't forget the gift!

And maybe you'll need your Prowess. Yes, you'll need that. And your Swordsman Aspect. Will you need your Cunning? Of course you will, but you're running out of room. You can't bring everything... and it isn't until you arrive that you realize what you really needed...

The Parlor Game is quite different from the tabletop game, but you'll use the same character sheet. However, you won't be using *all* of it. Only what you bring to the Party.

My chief goal for the Parlor Game was cutting down the fat. I wanted to make the game as simple as possible, while at the same time, I didn't want to invalidate the tabletop character sheet. I wanted you to bring your character sheet from the tabletop game with you to the LARP and back again. No translation or conversion. At the same time, I didn't want to recreate the same mistakes (what I saw as mistakes) that many tabletop game/LARP conversions made: a character sheet full of rules slowing down the action of the live game.

Thus, the Parlor Game. A system as simple as I could make it. I trimmed out everything you don't need, leaving only the most basic and fundamental mechanics. After a few test sessions, what I found was that players really only *needed* a single mechanic. Everything else just kind of faded into the background.

And now, it's party time! And your character has to get ready. What will she bring with her? What will he leave behind? Only bring what you think you need. Don't want your baggage slowing you down.

Let's talk about how to bring your tabletop character over to the LARP.

WHAT DO YOU BRING?

(If you don't have a copy of the *Houses of the Blooded* core book, you will need it now. You cannot create a *Blood & Tears* character without it.)

First, if you don't have one already, go through the usual steps of making a Houses of the Blooded character.

Now, take a look at your character sheet. Isn't it cool? Look at all the things you've got on it. Virtues, Names, Vassals, Aspects. All of those advantages that make you different from other characters. All of those advantages that make you so special.

Well, I've got some bad news. You're going to a Party and you can't bring your entire sheet with you. Not all of it. Only some of it. Depending on your character's Age.

As I said before, I wanted the *Blood & Tears* system to be absolutely compatible with the table top version. If you already have a *Houses of the Blooded* character, converting her over to the *Blood & Tears* system is very easy. We just need to learn how to talk in terms of Advantages.

ADVANTAGES

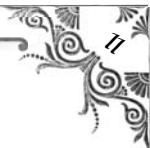
Everything on your sheet is an Advantage. Your Virtues, your Aspects, your Blessings: all Advantages. When you go to a Party, you can only bring a few of those Advantages with you. See the list below.

- Spring characters bring four Advantages to a Party.
- Summer characters bring five Advantages to a Party.
- Autumn characters bring six Advantages and one Solace Aspect to a Party.
- Winter characters bring seven Advantages and two Solace Aspects to a Party.

First, consider what Advantages your character has on his sheet. Go through the list provided here. If you qualify for an Advantage, you can carry it with you into the Parlor Game.

As a Spring character, you can only carry four Advantages with you into the Parlor Game (more if you are an older character). Choose from the Advantages you qualify for.

Also, your character keeps his weakness. Other players can exploit your weakness if they discover it; so make sure nobody discovers your weakness. At least, not unless you want them to.



STYLE & ADVANTAGES

Whenever you spend a Style Point in a Contest, you can invoke Advantages on your sheet for bonus Style.

For example, if you have Strength and you are in a Strength Contest, spending a Style and invoking your Strength counts as a number of Style Points equal to your Strength rank. In other words, if your character has a 4 Strength and you spend a Style, invoking your Strength, that counts as *four Style Points* rather than just one because you invoked your Strength.

Also, if you invoke an Aspect—such as Courtier in a Beauty Contest—it counts as *three Style Points*.

Everything on your sheet is an Advantage. Virtues give you Advantage, Aspects give you Advantage, Devotions give you Advantage... it all depends on what happens to be on your sheet.

Example 1

As Tomas, if I spend a Style to invoke my 3 Cunning and spend another Style to invoke my Spy Master Aspect, I spent two Style for six Style. The six Style helps me try to win the Contest, but my opponent spends seven and I lose.

FREE ADVANTAGES

Your character receives three Free Advantages. A Free Advantage is an Advantage you don't need to spend Style to invoke. These are your character's Name, his Secret Name and his Title.

NAME AND SECRET NAME

Your character's Name always counts as an Advantage you don't need to spend Style for. If your Name is appropriate to a contest, it gives you one Style.

If your character's Secret Name is appropriate to a contest, you can invoke it as well: it gives you two Style. Unfortunately, as in the table top game, if anyone hears you invoke your Secret Name, they know it and can use it against you.

Advantages

Each of the things on this list counts as a single Advantage on your B&T character sheet. Pick four (or more, if your character is older).

- 1 Virtue
- 1 Aspect
- 1 Devotion
- 3 Maneuvers
- 1 Vassal
- 1 Artifact

Advantages and Contests

Advantages only come into play during Contests. Never use an Advantage unless you begin a Contest.

TITLE

Any Title you own is also a free Advantage. If your Title is appropriate to a Contest, you gain one Style. Master of the Road, Swordsman, Seneschal, etc.

Noble Title—Baron, Count, Marquis, Duke—are also Titles that may be invoked for Advantage in any Contest involving authority. See below.

- Baron = one Style
- Count = two Style
- Marquis = three Style
- Duke = four Style

ADVANTAGE FROM VIRTUES

If your character wants to bring a Virtue to the Party, he may do so. A Virtue counts as one Advantage.

At any time during the game, you can spend a Style Point to gain Advantage from one of your Virtues. Invoking a Virtue in this way gives you a bonus equal to the rank of your Virtue. If you have a rank 3 Virtue, invoking the Virtue turns one Style into three. If you have a rank 2 Virtue, invoking the Virtue turns one style into two.

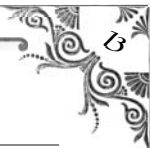
During a Contest, Advantages add to your Style Point total. If you've spend two Style Points in a Contest, then gain three Style from your Virtue, you now have a total of five Style to put toward winning the Contest.

You may only invoke a Virtue once per Contest.

WEAKNESS

All characters have a weakness: a Virtue with no ranks.

If you enter a Contest that involves your weakness, you can spend no Style.



ADVANTAGE FROM ASPECTS

If your character wants to bring an Aspect to the Party, he may do so. An Aspect counts as one Advantage.

At any time during the game, you may spend a Style to gain three bonus points from an Aspect if that Aspect is appropriate to the Contest.

You may only invoke an Aspect once per Contest.

APPROVED ASPECTS

I suggest using standard list of Aspects every player can draw from. Standardized Aspects make things a bit easier. Of course, players can make up Aspects, but for a one-shot, a concise list of Aspects makes everything easier. Here is a list of Aspects that pretty much cover the field for an adult, educated ven.

Of course, you can change the names of the Aspects as you like. "Negotiator" becomes "Silver Tongued," while "Herbalist" becomes "Master of Flowers." Just make sure the original name of the Aspect is in parenthesis next to it.

Academy Educated

Knowledge of the Senate and House politics.

Criminal

Sneaking and stealing.

Negotiator

Making deals and dealing with disagreements.

Devoted

Knowledge of the

Artisan

Making works of Beauty.

Philosopher

Knowledge of sorcery and the sorcerer-kings.

Duelist

Use of a Sword.

Athlete

Running, jumping and other body skills.

Rake/Lady of the Fan

Well-versed in the Art of Romance.

Gossip

Creating or finding out about secrets and scandals.

Courtier

Knowing what to do and when to do it.

Well-Travelled

Knowledge of travel, orks and other outdoor activities.

Herbalist

Dealing with poisons.

ADVANTAGE FROM MANEUVERS

If your character wants to bring Maneuvers to the Party, he may do so. Three Maneuvers count as one Advantage.

As one Advantage, you may bring three Maneuvers with you to the game. The ranks of the Maneuvers mean nothing: you can have your 3 Parry, 2 Dodge and 1 Riposte as a single Advantage.

So, again, to put it a different way, you can choose one of your Advantages to be three different Maneuvers. The ranks of the Maneuvers do not matter: choose three different Maneuvers to bring with you to the game.

For more information on how to use Maneuvers in the Game, see *Revenge*.

ADVANTAGE FROM VASSALS

If your character wants to bring a Vassal to the Party, he may do so. A Vassal counts as one Advantage.

Vassals provide you with a different kind of advantage in the Parlor Game. Each Vassal provides a specific service based on what kind of Vassal he is. Also, he may provide this service to you a number of times equal to his rank. Each Master Vassal (Spy Master, General, Seneschal, Master of the Road) counts as a fourth rank for the purposes of the below Vassal effects.

Apothecary

An Apothecary may bring a number of Poison Resources equal to his rank.

Artisan

With an Artisan, you may bring/wear an additional number of Items of Quality equal to the Artisan's rank.

Caravan

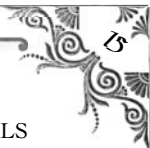
You may bring two bonus Resources to the event (see Domain, below) for every rank of your Caravan. Rank 1 Caravan = two bonus Resources. Rank 2 Caravan = 4 bonus Resources. Rank 3 Caravan = six bonus Resources.

Court Scholar

The Court Scholar may bring a number of bonus Rituals equal to his rank.

Herald

Upon your arrival at the Party, you gain a number of bonus Style equal to the rank of your Herald.

*Maid/Valet*

You may carry a number of extra Advantages equal to your Maid/Valet's rank.

Personal Guard

You may add the rank of your Personal Guard to any Contest that involves violence.

Spy Network

You gain a number of Espionage Actions equal to your Spy Network's rank.

Roadmen

During Hunting Scenes, each rank of Roadmen adds one to any Contest.

Secret Army

Secret Armies are used in Warfare. See *Revenge* for details.

Staff

Staff may only be called upon in your own home and they do not count toward your total number of Advantages. They are always there when you need them. Staff allow you to carry one additional Advantage per rank. You may carry Staff with you if you have the Seneschal Title (see *Master Vassals*, below).

MASTER VASSALS

Master Vassals *must* be portrayed by other players: either as NPCs or PCs.

Creating a Master Vassal requires a Season Action and you must qualify for having one.

A Master Vassal may carry a Vassal of his own which does not count as one of his Advantages. For example, the Master Spy can carry a Spy Network, a Master of the Road may carry Roadmen and a Seneschal may carry Staff.

ADVANTAGE FROM REGIONS

Regions and Holdings seldom come into play during the Parlor Game. As part of the Seasons System, they represent the means to acquire long-term goals and the Parlor Game is best played as a one-shot or short-term entertainment. However, if you want to use Regions and Resources in the Parlor Game, I suggest the following system.

RESOURCES

In most Parlor Games, Regions and Domains will not be a matter of importance. A Parlor Game has a limited scope and time frame. On the other hand, a character's ability to produce Resources may very well be useful. After all, ven nobles need Resources to maintain their lands, Loyalties, plots and plans.

Therefore, nobles can bring Resources with them to the Parlor Game as a means to bribe—I mean, as a means to entice others to act in accordance to their own plans.

Resources represent the building blocks of a ven's slowly growing empire. Therefore, Resources should be extremely valuable. To make that true in a Parlor Game, we have to give special attention to Resources. We have to make them desirable to each and every ven in your game.

To make Resources valuable, let's give them in-game bonuses.

ADVANTAGES

Each Resource that enters the game needs a name attached to it: the name of the character who began the game with the Resource.

For example, if you begin the game with two Lumber and three Stone, each of those Resources has an Advantage.

Each Resource type can be spent during a Contest. A Resource counts as two points of Style. If a Resource with your name on it is used against you in a Contest, it is worth three additional Style. You may only use one Resource type per Contest.

Metals

Metal from the mountains and hills allows the Wolf to forge the beautiful and elegant Swords of legend. A Metal Resource provides two Advantage to any Prowess Contest.

Lumber

A ven needs Courage to go out into the Forest for lumber and supplies. A Lumber Resource provides two Advantage to any Courage Contest.

Food

Preparing crops for the long summer requires delicate planning and foresight. A Food Resource provides two Advantage to any Cunning Contest.

Stone

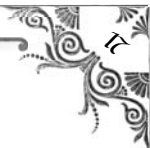
High in the Mountains, the Bear teach their children independence, self-reliance and survival. A Stone Resource provides two Advantage to any Strength Contest.

Herbs

Knowledge of the wicked ways of the world comes from learning and meditation. A Herbs Resource provides two Advantage to any Wisdom Contest.

Industry

Beauty may be in the eye of the beholder but dressing up a bribe or a seduction never hurts. An Industry Resource provides two Advantage to any Beauty Contest.



Luxuries

Luxury Resources (wine and spices) count as *three* Advantage points but only if spent with other Resources. In other words, you cannot use Luxuries to gain Advantage unless you have already spent another Resource to gain Advantage in the same Contest.

ADDITIONAL SEASON ACTIONS

At the end of each Season, every *set* of Resources gives you an additional Season Action. What you need is a set of five *different* Resources. A set of Resources gives your character an additional Season Action between games. See *Seasons* for more information.

ADVANTAGE FROM HOLDINGS

Most of the benefits from Holdings are used in Season Actions, but a few give you Advantages during a Party.

Art Gallery

An Art Gallery adds one rank to any Art you create. It allows you to throw showings of great Art.

Garden

Once per Season, you can use a Garden to add to Advantage Points to any Beauty Contest.

Marketplace

A City with a Marketplace can produce Trade.

Mine

Any Region with a Mine may produce an extra Metal or Stone per Season.

Dam

Any Region with a dam can produce Food.

Garrison

A Garrison increases Security in a Region by one rank.

Game Reserve

Any Forest with a Game Reserve produces one extra Food per Season. You may also hold Hunts at your Parties.

Gymnasium

Once per Season, you can use your Gymnasium to add two Advantage Points to a Strength Contest.

Opera House

You may sponsor Operas.

Port

Once per Season, your Port provides you with a free Season Action to trade Resources with another noble.

Road

Draw one less Trouble card in this Region. See *Seasons* for more information.

School of Etiquette

Once per Season, you can use your School to add two Style Points to a Cunning Contest.

Shrine

For more information on Shrines, see the *Suaven* chapter.

Silo

You can store three Resources in a silo.

Stadium

If you build a Stadium in your City, your people will adore you. Increase your Province's Loyalty by one rank.

Swordsman Academy

Once per Season, you can use your Swordsman academy to add two Style to a Prowess Contest.

Temple

For more information on Temples, see the *Suaven* chapter.

Theater

You may sponsor Plays.

University

Once per Season, you can use your University to add two Style to a Wisdom Contest.

Warehouse

You may store up to five Resources in a Warehouse.

Winery

Once per Season, you can use your Winery to add two Style to a Courage Contest.

ADVANTAGE FROM ARTIFACTS

If your character wants to bring an Artifact to the Party, he may do so. An Artifact counts as one Advantage.

Because of the nature of Artifacts, many of the effects have to be modified to better fit the live environment. See *Sorcery* for more information.

ADVANTAGE FROM DEVOTIONS

If you want to carry a Blessing with you into the Game, you can invoke it for specific Advantages.

SUAVEN SHRINES

If a castle or home you visit contains a shrine to a Suaven, you may visit that Shrine for spiritual insight. Not all castles or homes have Shrines to every Suaven. If you want to have the Advantage of a Shrine in your own castle, you best get to building one now. You may only use a number of these Advantages a number of times per game equal to your Devotion to that Suaven.

Switching Virtue Advantages

You may spend a Style to switch a Virtue you are already carrying for the Virtue associated with that Suaven.

Blessing Advantage

You may spend a Style to gain a number of bonus Style in a Contest appropriate to the House of the Suaven equal to your Devotion to that Suaven. For example, if you have 3 Devotion to a Serpent Suaven, you may spend a Style to gain three Style points in a Wisdom Contest.

RESOURCES

One of the points of coming to a Party is the free trading that occurs there. You can trade Resources with other characters as you wish. No Season Actions necessary.

You may bring up to three Resources with you to the Party.

A Caravan allows you to bring two additional Resources for each rank of the Caravan. A rank 1 Caravan allows you to bring two additional Resources, a rank 2 Caravan allows you to bring four additional Resources, etc.

STYLE

All characters begin the game with at least three Style Points. I said “at least” because there are many ways to earn bring more Style with you to a Party. See *Style* for more information.

SEASONS

Season Actions translate very well from the core book to *Blood & Tears*. Players still have the same number of Season Actions, still grow their Regions and Vassals in the same way, still train the same way, etc.

I've added a couple new rules to help make Regions more important in a LARP environment. They aren't really necessary (use them at your leisure), but I've found they make things a little more interesting.

BRING IT WITH YOU

I like the idea of nobles bringing their Resources with them for trading. As a Narrator, it gives players something to do and it also gets everybody talking.

I limit the amount of Resources a player can bring with him to a Party. That limit is five. You can only carry three Resources with you from your lands to the Party. Of course, if you have a Caravan, you can bring more.

A Caravan allows you to bring two additional Resources for each rank of the Caravan. A rank 1 Caravan allows you to bring two additional Resources, a rank 2 Caravan allows you to bring four additional Resources, etc.

Why would you want to trade your Resources? Because they provide you a super cool bonus, that's why.

FIVE DIFFERENT RESOURCES

For each set of five different Resources (example: 1 Lumber, 1 Food, 1 Metals, 1 Luxuries, 1 Poison), your character gains one additional Season Action. You may use these Resources during the Season; you gain the bonus for *collecting* those Resources.

Each set gets you an additional Season Action, so get trading!

Season Actions translate very well from the core book to *Blood & Tears*. Players still have the same number of Season Actions, still grow their Regions and Vassals in the same way, still train the same way, etc.

BLOOD & TEARS CHARACTER SETUP

Step 1

Build a Character as per the rules in the core book.

Step 2

Take your two Free Advantages: Name and Title

Step 3

Choose Advantages from your character sheet. Each of the below consists of a single Advantage.

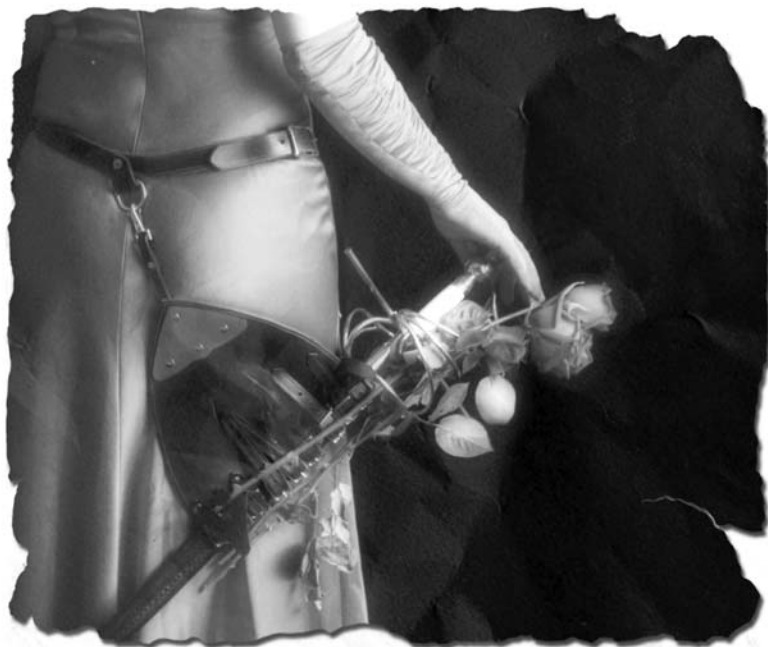
- 1 Virtue
- 1 Aspect
- 3 Maneuvers
- 1 Artifact
- 1 Ritual
- 1 Vassal

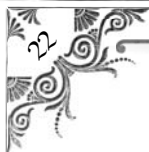
Step 4

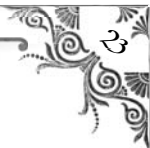
Bring at least three Resources; you may bring more if you have the right Advantages.

Step 5

Party!







STYLE

THE BIGGEST CHANGE BETWEEN *HOUSES OF THE BLOODED* AND *BLOOD & TEARS* IS HOW PLAYERS USE STYLE. PLAYERS USE STYLE POINTS IN A VERY DIFFERENT WAY IN THE *BLOOD & TEARS* RULES. ALSO, HOW THEY GAIN AND LOSE THOSE POINTS IS A LITTLE DIFFERENT. WE'LL COVER ALL OF THESE CHANGES IN THIS CHAPTER.

First, we'll talk about how players gain Style. Then, we'll talk about how players spend Style. Finally, we'll discuss the different rules for banking Style.

NEW RULE: STYLE, GOODS & ART

In the table top game, players can bank Style in Goods and Art. In *Blood & Tears*, these items work a little differently.

Instead of banking Style at the end of a game session, these items *create* Style at the beginning of each game session. Players may still bank five Style at the end of each game session, but that is all. Any excess Style is discarded.

Then, at the beginning of the next session, any Art or Goods generate a number of Style equal to their rank, losing one rank per Season.

BONUS STYLE

All new characters enter the game with a minimum of *three Style*. However, that isn't the maximum they can start with. A beginning character can start the game with much more Style, depending on a few factors.

Costume

If a player shows up to a game in costume, he earns himself additional Style. If a player makes any attempt at a costume—putting a plastic sword around his waist, a head band, some costume jewelry—we're going to reward his efforts. If a player shows up with a *full* costume, clothed from head to toe, we'll give him even more Style.

Also, I *highly suggest* any Goods such as hats, cloaks and other clothes that generate Style be reflected by actual costume pieces. In other words, if your character has a rank 3 hat and you don't, I can't really see giving you three Style for something you don't actually own.

- No costume: +0 Style
- Partial costume: +1 Style
- Full costume: +3 Style

Drink & Food

If a player brings refreshments to the party—drinks or food—he deserves Style. The Narrator decides on the proper reward. One Style is for bringing drinks. Two Style for bringing something a bit more substantial. Homemade plates of food that can feed multiple people are definitely worth three Style.

Setup/Tear Down

Setting up and tearing down a site is a lot of work. Cleaning up soda cans, throwing away paper plates, putting away decorations. It's more than a one-man job.

If players assist setting up and tearing down the site, be sure to reward additional Style. I suggest one or two, depending on the level of commitment.

Good Form

This is the most nebulous way to receive Style, but here are some examples...

- Spending time explaining a rule or helping a new player
- Giving another player the first wager in a contested Contest after winning privilege
- Creating an effective and evocative scene with another player

Helping deal with a “situation” (spilled soda, costume malfunction, etc.)

Bringing new players to the game

Maintaining character

Helping resolve a contentious situation

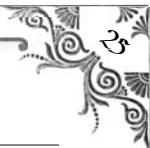
Keeping the spirit of “Friendly Game”

ESTABLISHED TRUTHS

If someone spends a Style to say something is true about you or something that belongs to you (your Castle, your lands, one of your NPCs), they have to give you a Style Point. You must accept the Style Point.

REFRESHMENTS

During the game, every thirty minutes or so, the Narrator staff makes sure every player in the game receives one Style Point. The Staff can't be everywhere at once, so to make up for their absence (and worthy Style rewards), everyone gets one Style every thirty minutes.



SPENDING STYLE

Here is a list of all the ways to spend Style Points.

CONTESTS

This is the biggest change in the rules from table top to LARP. A character may spend Style for a Contest. He may spend any and all Style he has on any contest, adding to his total.

ESTABLISH TRUTHS

Players can also spend Style to establish “little truths” about Shanri and the ven who inhabit it.

Establishing a Truth costs one Style. If you are adding a Truth to another character, that character must be present. You have to give that Style to the targeted player and he has to accept it.

Giving Away Style

No player may give Style Points to another player.

Players *may* suggest the Narrator reward Style to other players for Good Form.

SCENE ASPECTS

You can also use Style to create new Aspects, such as Scene Aspects. Spend Style and tag a scene with the Aspect *On Fire* or *Romantic Lighting* or *B blisteringly Hot*. When you spend your Style, add up the total, divide by half and round up. That’s the rank of the scene Aspect.

FINAL STYLE NOTES

Style is the engine of the game. It gives the Narrator a real mechanic for rewarding behavior that makes a better game experience for everybody. It also provides a real mechanic for dissuading behavior that sabotages the game experience.

Use it wisely. If you are a player, suggest Style rewards for players when you see a reason for it. The Narrator can’t see everything. You have to be his eyes and ears.



REVENGE

THE WORLD OF THE VEN IS A WORLD OF VIOLENCE. A VEN UNPREPARED FOR VIOLENCE DESERVES ALL THE PAIN HE'S ABOUT TO RECEIVE. DON'T BE THAT GUY. IN THE PARLOR GAME, VIOLENCE IS AN EVER-PRESENT THREAT. YOU MUST BE READY FOR IT.

Now, I have two systems for resolving violence at a Party. They aren't "optional" or "alternative" systems or anything like that. Consider the first the primary system and the second... a contingency. You'll see what I mean as we go. But first, exactly how do you declare a duel at a Party? Let's look at the in-character steps before we get to the mechanics.

UNAPPROVED VIOLENCE

Before we do anything else, a very important mechanic.

Assume for the moment that you are a ven noble and you are about to invite a few dozen friends over for a Party. You know how the ven can be (you are one of them, after all), so you make preparations. One of the preparations you make is ensuring the Tradition of Hospitality is not violated. You do this by hiring guards, putting them in masks and giving them spears. A lot of guards. Probably ten for each guest.

Now, imagine someone tries to pull his sword at your Party. Your guards are ordered to halt any violence. What chance do you think a single ven stands against fifty or sixty guards all armed with spears?

If you said, "No chance at all," you'd be right.

If any ven performs any unapproved violence during the evening—including, but not exclusive to pulling a sword—he *immediately* receives a rank 5 Injury and gets delivered to the Host's feet.

No tests, no rolls, no other mechanics required. An *immediate* rank 5 Injury. Out of the game.

That's how the ven roll. Now, let's look at *approved* violence.

A Friendly Warning

Question: Does the Host have an opportunity of warning an offending party before he receives that rank 5 Injury? In other words, if a ven pulls a Sword, do I have a moment to say, "You should seriously reconsider that action, sir?" as fifty guards stand ready to knock him down?

Answer: Would that be cool? Hell, yes. Therefore, the answer to your question is yes.

THE DUEL

Most violence at a Party occurs during a duel. Because the Parlor Game usually happens in a Party setting, you'll be dealing with violence in someone else's house. The Tradition of Hospitality allows a Host to punish those who commit violence in his home (without his permission), so almost all violence should be handled through duels.

(Although, sometimes, this is not the case. We'll deal with that issue with the Murder rules, below.)

THE JURY

When two ven want to commit violence against each other in the proper and civilized way, the Host of the Party must appoint a Jury to determine if violence is necessary. As usual, the Jury must include at least three ven; one of these ven *cannot* be from the House of either of the duelists.

The Jury hears the cases of both duelists and then retires to determine if a duel is necessary. If they return with a "Yes," they also determine to what degree the duel will be: first blood, injury, etc.

PREPARATIONS

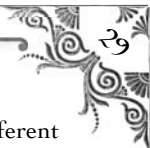
If the Jury determines a duel is necessary, the two duelists retire to prepare for the duel. They are isolated, set apart from the party and each other, and given time to contemplate on the inevitable violence.

Out of game, this means the two players involved go into another room (or another private accommodation) for the purpose of using mechanics to resolve the duel. Then, when the duel has been resolved, they emerge and narrate the duel (with the Narrator's assistance) for the other players to witness.

Example

For example, Smitty (Leopold) and I (Tomas) have come to a disagreement. Leopold feels he has been offended by my choice of words and insists to the Host of the Party that a Jury be called to determine the degree (if any) of the insult.

The Host of the Party calls together a Jury. Leopold and Tomas both have the opportunity to argue before the Jury whether or not we feel an insult has been committed and what degree the insult is. Once we've pleaded our cases, the Jury makes their decision: a duel is necessary. A duel to injury: a severe wound will cleanse the matter.



Both Leopold and Tomas retire to prepare for the duel: Smitty and I go to a different room with a Narrator...

A CHOICE OF VIOLENCE

After the Jury makes its decisions, the two duelists retire to prepare for the duel. The characters step into private chambers and make ready for violence. This means the two players (and a Narrator) step outside the game for a moment to resolve the duel.

Now, a bit of a sea change. Normally, violence systems in LARPs provide a method to determine the winner of the exchange. Not so here. Instead, the system rewards players for creating a dynamic and exciting fight scene. Let me explain.

The duelists have a choice: the Friendly Duel or the Cut-Throat Duel. A Friendly Duel provides them the opportunity to resolve the details of the duel *together*, creating a scene for the other players to enjoy. The Cut-Throat Duel provides a mechanic for players who cannot agree on the outcome or who want to allow an element of chance in their duel.

The players choose: Friendly or Cut-Throat. Here are the details.

FRIENDLY DUEL

When alone, the two duelists have an opportunity to work together, determining the outcome of the duel. If they work together, agreeing on the details of the duel (including the winner), each duelist splits a number of Style Points equal to *both* Prowess Virtues. If the number of Style to be split is odd, the loser of the duel gets the extra Style.

Also, each duelist gains an additional Style for any Maneuvers he brought with him to the Party. The number of bonus Style is equal to the number of Maneuvers the duelist knows. Because everybody knows the Injure Maneuver, this means each duelist receives one Style on his own, regardless of the outcome of the duel.

Again, add the duelists' Prowess. This gives you the base Style for the duel that both duelists share.

Another Sword Question

Question: My Enemy and I want to arrange a scene where we recklessly draw swords and attack each other, but the rules say we both get knocked out by the guards. What do we do?

Answer: Talk to the Host of the party and the Narrator to see if you can arrange something. Remember the first rule about breaking rules: if it's cool, and everyone agrees, then do it!

Then, each duelist adds one Style for each Maneuver he brought with him to the Party.

For example, Smitty and I retire to prepare for the duel. Because Smitty is the challenger, he asks, “Friendly duel?” I agree. Friendly it is.

Together, we sit down for a few moments and talk about what we’d like to do, what kind of things we’d like to see. We agree that Smitty should win the duel, but not without consequence. We agree on a series of dramatic moments and communicate those to the Narrator sitting with us. Then, when we are ready, we return to the game and have our duel. With the help of the Narrator, we act out the duel—with prop weapons—and when the duel is over, Smitty’s character wins.

Because we agreed before hand who would win the duel, we split a total number of Style equal to both characters’ Prowess. My Prowess is 4, Smitty’s is 5, so that’s nine so far.

In addition, Smitty and I both have Maneuvers. I have two Maneuvers (Injure and Defend) and Smitty has three (Injure, Defend and Parry). That means I gain two bonus Style and Smitty earns three additional Style regardless of how we decide to divide up the Style from our Prowess.

Again, the intent here is not to use some arbitrary mechanics to figure out which character is the best duelist, but rather, to create a scene that will be dramatic and exciting for the other players to watch.

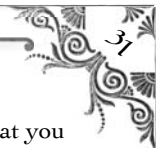
Think of it like a professional wrestling match: the outcome is already known by both competitors before they even get in the ring. The goal of the wrestlers isn’t to see which is the best, but to use their skills to create the most entertaining and exciting match for the audience.

As a duelist in a Friendly Duel, your job is just the same as those wrestlers: the outcome of the duel is far less important than both of you looking fantastic and entertaining those who are watching.

An Extra Step

When determining the outcome of the duel, I suggest the following.

Pool together the Style Points you and the other duelist will share. First, determine who will lose. That character receives one Style Point. Also, whenever your character takes an Injury or suffers a drawback of some kind, get another Style Point. This way, whoever volunteers to be on the bad end of the duel gets the most Style. I’ve seen players



sit down for the duel and take all the Style, then say to the other duelist, “Do what you want to me.”

This system encourages players to work together. They get Style for the duel, get Style for losing, get Style for putting their character at risk. While it may sound completely unorthodox, I’ve found players take to this system with great enthusiasm. Rather than cursing combat, they get involved with zeal. A duel becomes an opportunity to earn Style and make a great scene for the other players to enjoy.

For example, Smitty and I (Leopold and Tomas) have our private meeting to work out the details of the duel. Because Leopold challenged Tomas, Smitty asks, “Friendly Duel?” I agree. Therefore, we will work together to create a duel that satisfies both of us. Tomas has a 4 Prowess and Leopold has a 5 Prowess, so we have a total of nine Style Points to divide among us. Here are the points of the duel we agree on.

- We start with the end. I offer to have Tomas lose the duel. Smitty agrees. We agree the Injury should be serious, but not too serious. Rank 3. I get the first Style Point (1; Tomas 1).
- Smitty offers to take at least two Injuries. I agree and Smitty gets two Style Points (3; Leopold 2).
- I want Tomas to knock Leopold to the ground (Bear vs Wolf). Smitty agrees and he gets a Style Point (4; Leopold 3).
- I also suggest being disarmed. Smitty agrees and I get another Style Point (5; Tomas 2).
- Smitty suggests a scar across Tomas’ face. I like the idea; it makes Tomas look scary. (6; Tomas 3).
- I suggest, when Leopold is knocked down, stealing Leopold’s sword from him as he tries to strike Tomas. He likes that idea, so he gets another Style (7; Leopold 4).
- I also want to give Leopold a swift kick to the nether regions. Smitty laughs and thinks that’s fine (8; Leopold 5).
- Smitty notes I’m behind on Style but I’m also losing the duel. He suggests a pommel strike to Tomas’ gut. I agree and get the last Style (9; Tomas 4).

The final score: Tomas 4, Leopold 5.

Now that we have the events, Smitty and I construct the duel, preparing for our performance.

Saying “No”

During the negotiations, a player may not like a suggestion from the Narrator or his opponent. Saying “No” costs a Style Point. Not a Style you get from the duel, but from your own pool.

The Outcome

After the duel, both duelists will probably be Injured. Good form to players who show those Injuries all night long. (We wrestling fans know this is called “selling the Injury.”) Bad form to those who suddenly ignore Injuries and carry on as if nothing happened.

Injury also leaves yourself open to enemies after the duel. For example, I know of one ven who bribed a Wolf to entreat a duel with his enemy, then waited until the duel was over to challenge him *again*, knowing he would be injured by his duel with the Wolf. This may or not be bad form depending on your Host.

So much depends on your Host...

CUT-THROAT

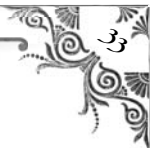
If either the challenger or the challenged player refuses a Friendly Duel, a Cut-Throat Duel is necessary.

The disadvantage of a Cut-Throat duel is this: nobody gets Style for it. In fact, duelists spend Style like mad. So, if the players cannot cooperate, they have to spend Style to make the duel work.

Like I said, a Cut-Throat Duel occurs when one or both of the duelists refuse to have a Friendly Duel. If the angered parties cannot be moved, begin the procedure listed below.

First, to start a Cut-Throat Duel, the player who insisted must spend one Style. Then, the duel begins in earnest. Just like a Friendly Duel, the actual mechanics occur off-screen, in private. Then, when the mechanics are over, the duelists—with the assistance of the Narrator—perform the duel for the other players.

For the duel, we follow the same procedures from the core book. Remember: a duel is between two ven *only*. If you have three or more ven in a violence scene, we use the Murder rules. See those below.



Step 1: Gather Style

The Duelists announce how much Style they can gather for the duel. Is your Name appropriate? Do you have Wolf's Prowess? An Aspect? Announce how many points you have to your opponent.

Step 2: The First Strike

The player with the higher Prowess goes first. In the case of a tie, the players spend Style to say who may strike first. Whoever spends the most Style may strike first.

Step 3: Attack and Counterattack

To strike your opponent, begin a Prowess Contest. Spend a Style and invoke your Prowess plus any appropriate Aspects or Maneuvers. The first attack will usually invoke the Injure Maneuver, but you may find circumstances to change that.

Your opponent must now spend an equal amount of Style to counter your attack. He may invoke his own Prowess, Aspects or Maneuvers to do so. The Defend Maneuver may be the most appropriate Maneuver here, but you may find circumstances where that is not true.

Step 4: Continue Until Injury

Players may now spend Style to invoke Maneuvers to cancel each other's attacks and defenses. In this circumstance, each Maneuver costs only one Style to invoke.

Remember: you must spend one Style to refresh any Aspects or Advanced Maneuvers you want to use more than once in a duel. Because Injure and Defend are basic Maneuvers, you do not need to spend Style to refresh them.

If a player cannot bring enough Style to stop an attack or counterattack, he receives an Injury equal to the rank of the attacker's Injure Maneuver. The attacker may spend Style to aggravate the Injury: one Style per additional rank of Injury.

As soon as one duelist is Injured, go back to Step 1 and begin again.

INJURY

Your ven can have multiple Injuries. A cut above the eyes, a sprained ankle, even a missing hand.

Injury 1 and Injury 2 are *flesh wounds*. A sliver of pain. Just a distraction. Any Injury 1 or 2 heals in an equal number of days. Rank 1 and rank 2 Injuries both heal one rank per day. The next morning, a rank 2 Injury becomes a rank 1 Injury and a rank 1 Injury heals completely.

Injury 3 and Injury 4 are *crippling wounds*. A deep, piercing wound through the chest. A missing digit. An ear torn from the side of the head. A blinded eye. Rank 3 and 4 Injuries heal one rank per Season. At the beginning of next Season, a rank 3 Injury becomes a rank 2 Injury, a rank 2 Injury becomes a rank 1 Injury, and a rank 1 Injury heals completely.

Injury 5 is a *mortal wound*. Any ven who takes an Injury 5 is automatically knocked to the ground, helpless. He cannot protect himself. A single action by a ruthless enemy will kill him. A ven with a mortal wound is helpless for the rest of the adventure. He may still take actions, but must spend one Style to even enter a Contest. Rank 5 Injuries heal one rank per Season.

Injury 5 can also leave a Scar. See *Scars* just below for more information.

INJURIES AS TAGS

Injuries are Free Aspects: your enemies can tag them for bonus points against you. Your enemy can tag an Injury for Advantage equal to the Injury. A rank 2 Injury gives an enemy two Advantage. A rank 3 Injury gives your opponent three Advantage.

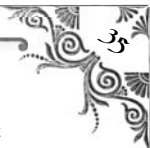
Unlike the table top game, any Style spent to tag an Injury goes to the Narrator and not the player who was tagged.

SCARS

Whenever your ven takes an Injury 5, the ven who gave it to him can spend five Style and give your ven a Scar. A permanent Injury.

Scars are Injuries that just won't go away. They become Aspects that anyone can tag or compel. A limp, a missing eye, a crooked finger. The tag is worth two bonus points. Scars never heal.

So, the next time you give another ven an Injury 5, spend some Style and twist that blade hard.



DEATH

Taking a rank 5 Injury does not kill your character, but it does make her *helpless*. She can take an action, but any Contest requires a Style Point. If you don't have a Style, you cannot participate in Contests.

If you want to kill a helpless character, you may do so by spending a Style Point. A helpless character cannot defend herself against this action: you gain an automatic success.

Death robs you of your chance for Solace. Don't lie down for it lightly.

MANEUVERS

Use Maneuvers exactly as they appear in the core book. Instead of wagers, however, spend Style instead.

INTERFERING WITH THE DUEL

I can already hear your question. "What if I want to interfere with the duel?"

You should already know my answer. "What kind of fool are you?"

The duel is a sacred ritual. Interfering with a duel holds the same kind of taboo as interfering with a Catholic mass or slapping the President of the United States. It's just something you don't do. No ven would consider it.

Now, if you want to *participate* in the duel... that's a different matter. For a Friendly Duel, it's pretty simple: send a note or talk to the Narrator during the preparation time. Inform the duelists you would like to add to the duel in some way. The duelists have privilege here: this is *their duel* and they can decline any interference or participation from outsiders.

If you want to participate in the duel, offer the duelists (each of them) a Style Point. If you want to be involved in their scene, it's going to cost you. Then, give your suggestion and they'll work you in.

Maneuver Errata

I've officially lowered the cost of using Maneuvers. Lower the wager cost of all Maneuvers in the core book by one, with a minimum of one wager per Maneuver.

- Bash - 1 wager
- Bind — 1 wager
- Disarm — 1 wager
- Dodge — 3 wagers
- Parry — 1 wager
- Feint — 1 wager
- Lunge — 1 wager
- Press — 1 wager
- Recover — 2 wagers
- Riposte — 1 wager
- Sap — 1 wager
- Step — 1 wager
- Grab — 1 wager
- Squeeze — 1 wager
- Throw — 1 wager



For example, during our negotiations, a player sends Smitty and I a note. It's Leopold's lover (who has a Romance going with his character) and she wants a wounded Leopold to fall into her arms during the duel. She's sent two Style Points along with the letter. Smitty and I both think this is a brilliant idea and we work it into the duel. We send her note back along with the cue for when the moment will happen during the duel.

MURDER

A duel is a formal engagement: two ven engaged in mutual violence. But what happens when you are alone in a room with another ven with a poison dagger?

Murder.

What we're talking about here is an ambush in an environment where murder has been declared a valid tactic in the Host's home. In other words, you went to the Host and asked permission to commit murder against another guest. This causes all kinds of legal problems—which we'll address shortly.

But first, how to handle the situation.

PLOTTING

If you plan to do away with an enemy through covert means, you have to do it the right way.

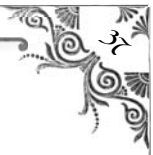
First, you have to get someone out of sight of any witnesses.

Second, you have to spend a Style and declare, "Murder."

Third, you need to succeed in a Cunning or Prowess Contest, whichever is higher for both opponents. In other words, if your Prowess is higher than your Cunning, you use your Prowess. If your opponent's Prowess is higher than his Cunning, he uses Prowess.

Finally, whoever succeeds gets privilege: they can say what happens in the Murder scene. Either a) the victim survives and escapes or b) receives a rank 5 Injury (becoming incapacitated).

You can apply your Name, your Virtue, an Aspect and any other advantage you can find. If you have permission of the Host, you can also add the rank of his Castle to your attempt at Murder (it costs a Style).



OUTCOME

You cannot commit Murder without permission from the Host. If you try it, the Host's guards capture you, give you a rank 5 Injury and take you to the Host for judgment.

If you get Host's permission, follow the steps above. If the victim wins the contest, she decides if she gets a rank 5 Injury or escapes. If the assassin wins the contest, he decides if the victim receives a rank 5 Injury or escapes.

Here's the deal: if you are the assassin and you get privilege, you don't have to murder your target. Instead, you can give them a rank 5 Injury and steal them away for ransom.

Or, if you like, you can allow your victim to escape. Why would you do this? Because your opponent is your Enemy and you want to prolong the bonus you get for having an Enemy, that's why. Everyone will know you had the opportunity to kill another character and you didn't take it. Instead, you chose to create *drama*.

That's what we call Good Form. I'll talk more about that in the *Player* chapter.

MASS MURDER

There's really only one complication for the Murder mechanic: more than two people involved in the scene. I designed this system to be *fast* and *simple*. I have no desire to recreate any table top mechanics for Mass Murder or for a violence scene involving more than five seconds of mechanics. And so, here's how we handle the complications.

First, you cannot commit Murder on another ven if you have less conspirators in the room than your target does. The definition of "conspirator" is "someone on your side." If you have two friends with you in a room and your target is by himself, you can try Murder. If you have two friends with you and your target has two friends as well, you cannot commit Murder.

Second, if you've got multiple ven involved, everyone gets involved in the contest. Everyone puts together their Name, Virtue, Aspect and any other advantage to get a total. Then, follow these steps.

The winner has privilege. He picks one ven in the room (including himself) and declares whether or not that ven escapes or suffers a rank 5 Injury.

Then, the next highest total has privilege. He picks one ven in the room (including himself) and declares whether or not that ven escapes or suffers a rank 5 Injury.

This goes on until no ven has privilege. At that point, any ven without a rank 5 Injury escapes the scene.

HUNTING

A lot of parties involve hunting. Now, for the ven, hunting is a social activity. There are those who hunt and then those who *hunt*.

If you want to go hunting during the party (good form!), gather up everyone who wants to go and divide them into two groups: fore and aft. The fore group are those who are actually interested in hunting down something, killing it, and bringing it back for the cook to prepare. The aft group are those who have dressed up nicely and are more interested in flirting and gossiping with their neighbors or getting lost for an hour or so in the woods when nobody is looking.

For the aft party, you really don't need any kind of violence mechanics. But the fore party, you need something to make matters interesting.

Design orks exactly as you would in the core book. Then, let them lose on the players. Use a mechanic similar to the one listed above for Mass Murder.

- Everyone secretly spends Style.
- The character (or ork) with the most Style selects one other ven or ork involved in the murder scene. That ven or ork receives a rank 5 Injury.
- Continue with each ven or ork until one side retreats, surrenders or cannot fight any longer.

Roadmen and Personal Guard are important in Hunting scenes.

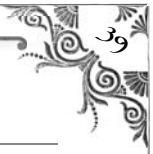
Each rank of Roadmen can deliver a single rank 5 Injury to any ork or ven in the scene.

Each rank of Personal Guard can take a any Injury for their liege.

WARFARE

If warfare becomes necessary, use the same mechanic listed above for each battle.

The Secret Army Vassal is helpful here. Each rank of Secret Army can either deliver or take a rank 5 Injury for their liege. Personal Guard and Roadmen still have their same abilities.



DANGERS & CONSEQUENCES

Now, observant readers will notice how deadly these systems are. That's intentional. If you plan on committing violence, you'd better be prepared to face the dangers and the consequences.

For all their hypocrisy, the ven look upon the act of Murder as the unforgivable sin. Preventing another ven from reaching Solace. If a Host permits Murder in his house, he is just as culpable as the ven who did the deed. High Revenge is necessary here. Wearing the red.

If you allow Murder in your home, you'd better make sure you've got your own backside covered. I'll talk more about that in the last chapter.





ROMANCE

AH, THE FUN PART OF THE BOOK...
Sorry. Where was I?

This chapter is pretty short. I condensed the rules for Romance down to a quick and easy version from the table top game. Enjoy.

ROMANCE & ADVANTAGE

In order to gain any Advantage from a Romance, two ven must first *begin* a Romance. Now, these are slightly different than the Romance rules in the core book. I designed them to be simpler and better fit a live environment. After all, starting a Romance should be a show. It isn't a private affair. When it starts, everyone should watch.

Here's how it works.

BEGINNING A ROMANCE

In the old days, the *real* way the ven started a Romance was with a secret handshake. A secret signal. A dip of the fan, a tilt of the Sword. We don't know exactly what these signals were (there are no real documents describing them), but each involved some sort of way to silently communicate the intention of beginning a Romance. Meeting a potential lover, taking her hand, squeezing so gently so others may not see. This is the right and proper way to start a Romance. Let us cling to tradition.

If you want to start a Romance with another character, you must risk a Style Point. You may put it in your palm when you shake your intended paramour's hand, or you may hold it with your fan as you whisper to him, showing him the Style Point as you do, or you may reveal it in some other way.

Give your target a flirtatious innuendo. Reveal the Style. Then, wait to see how your potential lover answers your invitation.

If she also puts up a Style, the Romance begins and the both of you spend that Style. You may, if you like, invoke Beauty to add to the rank of the Romance. You may also spend additional Style to invoke appropriate Aspects or any other bonuses you may have. The total Style spent by *both parties* is then divided by half, rounded up. That total is the *potential* of the Romance: exactly how many Seasons the Romance will last.

If she refuses (politely or otherwise), there is no Romance, but you lose your Style anyway.

That's it. That's all you need to start a Romance.

RANK & POTENTIAL

All Romances begin with rank 1, but may grow depending on the actions of the lovers. A Romance's current rank always begins with 1, but if the lovers treat each other right, the Romance grows by one rank each Season until it reaches its potential. See *Growing & Ending Romances*, below.

EXAMPLE 1

Playing as Tomas Yvarai, I speak for a few moments to Surena's character, Jasdyn. Then, after roleplaying, I offer her a Style to begin a Romance.

Surena accepts and offers a Style of her own. We may now use that Style to invoke the Beauty Virtue, the Rake or Lady of the Fan Aspect or any other bonuses appropriate.

I choose my Beauty, which is rank 4.

Surena chooses her Beauty as well, which is rank 3.

At this time, we have seven points dedicated to the Romance.

I decide to add my Rake Aspect. This costs me an additional Style and I add three more to our total, making it a total of ten.

Surena adds her Lady of the Fan Aspect, making it rank thirteen.

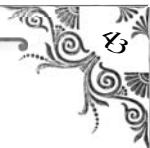
We now decide to stop spending Style. We have thirteen points dedicated to the Romance. We divide that in half, rounding up, giving us a total of seven.

We have begun a Romance with seven potential.

ROMANCE ADVANTAGES

If you have a Romance, you may bring with you the following Advantages. Romance Advantages do not count toward your total number of Advantages from your character sheet. You may only use each Advantage once per game session.

- You may tag your Romance with a Style in a Contest that involves your paramour. The bonus Style is equal to the *current rank* of your Romance. (See *Continuing & Ending Romance*, below.)
- You may spend a Style Point for your paramour if she has no Style Points.
- You may take any Injury your paramour is about to take. The "Lover's Leap."



CONTINUING & ENDING ROMANCE

At the beginning of each Season, the lovers must spend one Style Point to maintain the Romance into the following Season.

Now, you *could* just allow players to spend a Style Point before the game begins... or you could force them to present some kind of *alta*. Remember *alta*? The stuff that makes Romances go?

Each Season, both lovers must present their paramour with some sort of test. An ordeal. If your lover succeeds, give him a Style Point to continue the Romance. If both lovers overcome their tests, the Romance continues.

However...

A lover could choose to end the Romance by not asking for a test or not giving a reward for a test or could choose the Romance in the many, many ways listed in the core book. Either way, if someone ends a Romance with you, you gain the Heartbroken Advantage. Yeah, I called it an "Advantage."

When a lover becomes Heartbroken, he gains a new Advantage equal to the rank of the Romance's *potential* (not current rank). So, if you get Heartbroken after starting a rank 7 Romance, you get the Heartbroken Advantage at rank 7 regardless of what rank the Romance was when it ended.

The Heartbroken Advantage gives you *all* following benefits.

- You may tag the Advantage for bonus Style equal to its rank. You may only do this in Contests that will *directly* cause your ex-lover pain or sorrow.
- You cannot start a new Romance while you have the Heartbroken Advantage unless the new Romance's potential is greater than your current Advantage's rank. However, you *must* remain Heartbroken for at least one Season regardless of how many offers for new Romances you receive.

Finally, the Heartbroken Advantage decreases one rank per Season. So, if you wait a couple of Seasons, it gets easier to get rid of your Heartbroken Advantage.

THE LOVER'S LEAP AND THE DUEL

Question: Can I use the Lover's Leap during a duel?

Answer: Yes, but it could be seen as either good form or bad form by the Host. So many things depend on the Host...

THE COURTS OF LOVE

If the Host wishes to hold a Court of Love, she must assign a Jury—just like a duel. She chooses at least three ven to sit on the Jury to judge the worthiness of Romances. Unlike a Jury of Violence, the Hostess is expected to sit on this Jury.

Guests tell stories about fictional (read as, “slightly disguised”) lovers: their tests and their travails. The Jury decides which stories tell of true love and which are just bawdy stories of lust. When all the stories are done, one is chosen as the most true, the most faithful depiction of the subtleties of true love. The winner receives Style (as do the Jurors).

THE JURY’S DILEMMA

The Jury does not have to pick the story with the most points. They can pick any story they want, but they will receive their own Style from the points of the story they pick. Thus, they are *encouraged* to pick the story with the highest rank, but no rule says they have to.

ROMANCE STORY ADVANTAGES

Beauty: spend a Style to add your Beauty rank as Advantage to your story’s rank.

Rake/Lady of the Fan: spend a Style to add three Advantage to your story’s rank.

Your own Romance: add two Advantage to your story’s rank.

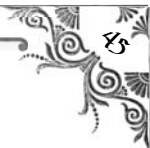
If you want to participate, you must tell a story of lovers and their hardships. Then, you may spend Style. You may invoke Advantages as well. Beauty, of course, is the most appropriate Virtue for telling a story (especially a love story). The best Aspects to invoke are either Rake/Lady of the Fan or Artisan.

If you are telling a story about your own Romance, add two points to your story’s rank.

Keep your total secret! Write down how many points your story is worth (including Style and any Advantages) and give it to the Jury. Be sure to write your name on the paper so they know what totals belong to which storyteller.

Then, other lovers tell their stories, secretly writing down their totals, giving them to the Jury. When all stories are told, the Jury retires and considers their choice. When they finish their debate, they return with a decision and everyone who attended receives Style.

- One Style for every ven who attended the Court. Even if you just sat in the audience, you get one Style.
- The Jury receives Style equal to half the total of the winning story, rounded up.
- All storytellers (including the winner) get a number of Style equal to the number of stories told.
- The winner gets three additional Style.



SORCERY

LISTED BELOW ARE THE SORCERIES AND ARTIFACT VALUES FOR USE IN THE LIVE ENVIRONMENT. I HAD TO MAKE VERY LITTLE CHANGES HERE, BUT I LISTED THE BULK OF THE ORIGINAL BODY OF THE *SORCERY* CHAPTER FOR REFERENCE. PRETTY MUCH ALL SORCERY WORKS THE SAME WAY IT DOES IN THE CORE RULES. EITHER YOU KNOW THE RITUAL OR YOU DON'T. I'LL GO THROUGH ALL THE RITUALS HERE TO CLARIFY HOW THEY OPERATE IN THE LIVE ENVIRONMENT.

All Rituals require one Style to activate and cause the caster a rank 1 Injury.

Also, a Ritual must be performed over a course of time. To successfully cast the Ritual, the actual text of the Ritual (the text in this book) must be read at least three times. Read in a slow, deliberate voice. Or, if you prefer, go to www.housesoftheblooded.com for sample ritual text to use in your live event. Your choice, of course.

RITUALS

The Blooding

The ritual makes a ven part of a House. The Virtue of his chosen House increases by one rank. (Starting characters already have this bonus. That's the "+1" you get after you assign your Virtues ranks, remember?) No ven may be Blooded to more than one House and once you are Blooded, you may not be Blooded to another.

The Circle

An old ritual originally associated with hedge wizards and wise women, the Blood circle creates a ward against hungry spirits. The ritual must be performed upon

a door. The sorcerer cuts his hand or wrist and spills enough Blood to make a mark on the door. He then shuts the door behind him, locking it with his bloody hand, leaving some drops on the lock. As long as the door is not opened, nothing from the invisible world may enter. The ritual lasts until dawn.

The Corpse

The ritual requires a corpse. The corpse can be freshly dead or could be nearly devoured by decay. When Blood is spread over the corpse's lips—and the corpse must have lips—it reanimates, a creature bound by the sorcerer's will. The creature

may be almost any species. A dog, a cat, a mouse. As long as the creature has lips, it can be a target for this ritual.

The Corpse is a rank 6 ork. It has the following Ork Traits: Blind Spot, Claws, Fangs, Muscle, Regeneration and Rhino Hide.

The Curse

A Blood Curse requires only one sorcerer and one target. The target must be within sight and must be able to hear the sorcerer. The sorcerer cuts his skin, letting his Blood flow. He takes one Injury (“severe cut”) at least. He may take as many as five Injuries before the curse kills him.

The Ritual puts a curse on the target. The rank of the curse is equal to the number of Injuries the sorcerer is willing to take, up to rank 5. (Yes, this ritual can kill the caster.) The curse must specify an action the subject must or must not do and begin with the phrase “You will always,” or “You will never.”

- You will never sleep in the same bed twice.
- You will always lie to the ones you love.
- You will never hold your father’s sword again.
- You will always betray your family.

Whenever your target goes against the terms of the Curse, he must spend a

number of Style equal to the rank of the Curse; otherwise, he cannot take that action.

The Eye

This ritual is known only by the House of the Serpent. Those outside the House who have used it in the presence of the Blooded of the Serpent usually find themselves at mysterious ends.

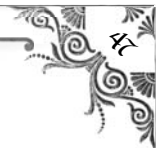
This ritual requires only a bit of Blood, a few drops. The sorcerer makes his cut, chanting the words of the ritual as he does, placing his wounded hand over his own left eye. Blood oozes into the eye, making it red. The sorcerer may now look upon any individual and see if he is using any Blood rituals or carrying any Orichalcum items. No test is involved.

The ritual lasts for one night, and all the while, the left eye remains a deep crimson: no pupil, no iris. Just Blood red.

The Familiar

Rumors of this ritual among the Blooded of the Bear were rampant in the courts. It was not until two generations ago that evidence of its use finally found the light of day.

The ritual bonds an animal to the sorcerer, making the beast a companion for life. The animal must be fed the sorcerer’s Blood (usually mixed with milk) when it is an infant. As the beast grows, at least



one Injury's worth of Blood ("cut hand" or "cut wrist") is fed for one Season. When the beast matures, the Blood merges the sorcerer's soul with the animal, creating a powerful bond.

The sorcerer always knows the location and general emotional state of the beast.

While they cannot communicate directly, the beast can share what it has seen with the sorcerer. It may share one day's worth of sight and hearing. It cannot communicate language—animals cannot understand ven language.

If the beast is ever killed, the sorcerer receives a rank 3 Injury: "Lost Familiar."

The Mirror

Making a Blood Mirror requires an ornate and intricate mirror. The mirror must be made from Orichalcum. Making a Blood Mirror requires three Seasons of work.

When finished, the sorcerer can use the Blood Mirror to spy on others. He must gain something personal from the individual he wishes to spy upon. It could be a page from a diary, a comb, a glove, or any other object that belongs to the target. The sorcerer holds the item and bleeds onto the mirror. He may observe his target until dawn.

Blood Mirrors qualify as Artifacts. See *Artifacts* below for more information.

The Oath

This ritual is one of the most ubiquitous in ven literature. A piece of parchment, a cup, a knife, a quill. Words are written on the parchment.

Powerful words.

Promises.

Punishments.

All provide Blood for the cup, dipping the quill and signing their names. All ven who sign receive a rank 3 Injury. The Injury must be made with an Orichalcum knife.

All three names. Family, Public, and Secret.

All ven signing the Oath make a promise to abide by its edicts. They gain benefits for doing so.

- You may spend a Style Point for three Advantage if you are protecting another ven who signed the Oath.
- You may spend a Style Point to know the emotional state of someone within your Oath. A reply of "nothing" indicates the ven is dead, and "Solace" indicates... you know.
- You may spend a Style Point to know the general direction and distance of someone within your Oath.

While the Oath of Fellowship is a powerful tool, it also bears a heavy cost. If you ever betray any member of the circle, the Oath is broken for all of you. Also, the word "traitor" burns onto your forehead

for a year and a day. Within that time, you may make no Oaths.

The Oath may be written in such a way that it lasts a specific amount of time or until a specific goal is reached. “The Oath expires in five years,” or “The Oath expires when we all become Dukes.”

Orichalcum

To create Orichalcum, you must first gain two Metals Resources. Silver and gold. It also requires a rank 3 Injury. The Blood does not necessarily have to come from the sorcerer. Then, you must spend a Season Action. Once all that’s accomplished, you have created one Resource of Orichalcum. Orichalcum is just like any other Resources and can be traded as you see fit.

The Puppet

If you know the full name of another ven, you may perform this ritual. (Remember: peasants do not have secret names.) A slice on your hand, a slice on their hand. Mixing Blood. Your body falls limp and helpless while you possess the body of your target.

If your own body is injured, you immediately return to your flesh. If your own body is killed, your spirit is trapped in the body of your target.

The mind of your target is subdued by your superior will (amplified by the ritual). The ritual lasts until sunrise.

The Quill

More than any other House, the Falcon uses the Bloody Quill most often. Rumor has it the ritual was developed by a Falcon, although the House historians deny this claim. The ritual requires a few drops of Blood be dropped into an inkwell. The ink in the well must be fresh. The sorcerer recites the ritual as the Blood drops and as a quill stirs the ink and Blood together. While the ritual is active (until dawn), anyone writing with the quill cannot write a lie. If the inkwell is spilled, the ritual ends.

The Rose

This ritual was developed by a Fox sorcerer many generations ago. The sorcerer uses a rose—any rose will do—to perform the ritual. He cuts his hand or wrist, bleeds a few drops onto the petals, and places the rose on a table. As many as four may sit at the table. As long as they sit at the table, anyone not sitting at the table hears nothing but gibberish sing-song from those sitting at it. The ritual lasts until dawn, until the rose is removed, or if someone leaves the table.

The Sword

The Sword Ritual requires at least one Season to perform. The sorcerer must have at least one Orichalcum Resource (see the Orichalcum Ritual, above), and either

employ a blacksmith or be a blacksmith himself for this ritual to succeed. To be a blacksmith himself,

The Twins

In the rare event that someone actually uses this Ritual... oh, who am I kidding? There's a set of twins in every game I've ever run.

Just go get yourself pregnant (it's a Season Action), spend some Blood and you've got twins.

The Tulpa

Creating a tulpa requires time and a few particular objects. First, you must have a personal item of the ven you wish to mimic. By "personal item," I mean you need something they have owned for at least a year. It could also be hair, Blood, or some other part of their anatomy. Then, you perform the ritual. Blood is necessary. Enough to cause a rank 2 Injury. That creates a tulpa that not only looks like the ven you want to mimic but also believes it is the ven you want to mimic. The ritual takes about an hour to perform. The tulpa lasts until sunrise.

The Vendetta

A very dangerous ritual, the vendetta is also the oldest. The ritual requires two participants: the sorcerer and another. A knife tastes the Blood of both and then each subject puts his hand on the knife, making a promise to kill the other. Once completed, the ritual gives each participant an Aspect: "Vendetta (X)" where "X" is the name of the person whom you owe a Vendetta. This Aspect can be invoked for three bonus dice, but only for actions that lead to the death of the other. Also, the subjects of the ritual always know where the other is and what emotional state he is in. He also becomes aware of all his enemy's Aspects.

If a Season passes and the vendetta has not been fulfilled, both participants receive a rank 1 Injury, "Vendetta Pains." They begin as a low ache near the heart, a constant reminder that the vow has not been fulfilled. If another Season passes, the Aspect gains another rank. This continues until the vendetta has been fulfilled.

ARTIFACTS

All Artifacts require at least one Style to activate.

Aspect

The Artifact gives you an additional Aspect as per the rules in the core book.

Drink

This Artifact provides bonus Advantage in exchange for Injury. Every rank 3 Injury gives your ven an Advantage for a specific kind of Contest. But these bonus Advantages don't last. Once you use an Advantage, it is gone until a new Injury is made.

Face of Shadows

This Artifact allows you to make other ven forget you were in the room. Spend a Style for each ven you want to forget who they were just talking to.

Farsight

This Artifact allows you to see into the future. Like all Artifacts, you must spend a Style to activate it. When activated, the Artifact gives you a number of visions equal to its rank. Rank 1 Artifact gives one Vision, rank 2 Artifact gives two Visions, etc. Each vision allows you to say one thing is true. You trade off with the Narrator, saying things are true. The Narrator always gets the first Vision (unless she's feeling generous and gives it to you).

Key

Spend a Style to use this Artifact. The Key opens any locked doors in a sorcerering Ruin.

Leech

This Artifact allows you to steal spent Style from other ven. Whenever another ven spends Style, you may steal a number of Style he expended equal to the rank of the Artifact. Like other Artifacts, you must spend a Style to activate this Artifact.

Heart of (Flame/Ice)

The Artifact protects you from either the effects of fire or freezing temperatures (but not both). Spend a Style Point to eliminate any Injury received by flame or cold.

Seductive

Spend a Style and target another ven. He gets a Style (from the general pool, not from you) every time he says "Yes" to any request you make of him. This lasts for a number of requests equal to the rank of the Artifact.

Sharp

This Artifact is usually a weapon, but not always so. The ven are quite clever at turning tools into weapons. A knife, a sword. A hairpin. Whatever shape it takes, this Artifact gives Injuries that do not heal normally. No medicine, no amount of time. Any Injury caused by this Artifact takes an entire Season to heal just one rank. You must spend a Style to activate this Artifact.

Subtle

An Artifact with this Value can be hidden without any chance of finding it. Gone. But it must be hidden. It doesn't just disappear. Up the sleeve, down the corset, in the folds of your cloak. It must be hidden. And once hidden, always hidden.

Swift

This Artifact is almost always a weapon. It allows you to cancel any attacker Maneuvers during a duel. You must spend a Style to activate this Artifact.

Terror

The Artifact causes Terror. Spend a Style Point and your Artifact projects Terror at one ven or ork. The base Terror is 3, plus one additional rank of Terror per additional Style Point you spend.

Vampire

This Artifact always appears in the form of a weapon. Specifically, a weapon that can draw Blood. If you inflict a rank 5 Injury on an opponent, spend a Style Point. You now steal one of your opponent's Aspects for the rest of the Season. If you know the name of an Aspect and one of its elements (invoke, tag or compel), you can steal it. Otherwise, your victim picks the Aspect.

Vulgar

This Artifact ability is not used in the live environment. It's just an excuse to get hit with Bad Form over and over and over again.

Watchful

This Artifact watches. Usually a skull or an eye or some other symbolically important object, it watches a room and whispers what it sees to its owner. It sees everything in the room. Spend a Style Point and bleed a rank 1 Injury for every hour you wish the object to watch.

Whispers

This Artifact whispers to its owner. Sometimes telling lies, sometimes telling truth. Spend a Style Point and gain a rank 1 Injury to discover any Advantage from one other ven. You must know the ven's Public and Family Name. If you know

the ven's Secret Name, you can know two Advantages and you know her weakness. You may only target one particular ven per Season.

Wicked

This Artifact almost always appears as a weapon of some kind. When you perform a successful strike against an opponent, spend a Style Point. You always deliver an extra rank of Injury with every successful strike.

DOOM!

Thought I forgot about that, didn't ya?

DOOM! is still a part of the game. If a ven owns an Artifact or uses Sorcery, he is subject to DOOM!

DOOM! invokes itself as complete failure. After all Style is spent, the Narrator calls out "DOOM!" The target loses all Style spent and does not get privilege.



.....
DOOM!



THE GREAT GAME

I TRIED WRITING DIFFERENT CHAPTERS FOR THE PLAYER AND NARRATOR. I REALLY DID. BUT, WHEN IT COMES DOWN TO IT, THE STYLE OF THIS GAME REALLY BLURS THE LINE BETWEEN THE TWO; EVEN MORE THAN THE TABLE TOP GAME DOES. AND SO, HERE AT THE END, IS A CHAPTER FOR BOTH PLAYERS AND NARRATORS. THE SAME ADVICE APPLIES TO BOTH.

SOME BASICS

First, let's talk about a few basics about *Blood e' Tearv*. Folks familiar with live action events will be familiar with most of these, but there are a few new twists you should pay attention to.

NO TOUCHING

Touching another player is not allowed. There are exceptions, but only with another player's permission.

If you offer your hand to another player, that's an invitation to take it. In many LARPs, shaking hands is an acceptable exception to this rule. Also, there's a ven tradition of the ven greeting of kissing a lady's hand: when she offers you her hand, you take it, bow low, and kiss your own thumb or fingers. It accomplishes the act without an actual touch. This is how ven nobles played lovers in the *guzadun*: a polite way to show an intimate touch without actually touching.

NO SWORDS

Depending on your group's comfort level with actual weapons, there should be no actual swords present at the game. Swords that are obviously play weapons are appropriate. Of course, there are exceptions to this rule.

If your group feels comfortable with showing off their collective sword collection, players may be allowed to bring costume or real weapons to the game, but they must remain *peace tied*. That is, the swords are somehow tied into their scabbards and cannot be removed.

I have a personal policy of allowing peace tied weapons, but if a duel occurs, both duelists *must* remove their weapons. This is a safety issue I just don't feel comfortable

with, so I “disarm” any chances of the weapons causing any accidental damage.

Needless to say, drawing a sword at a game is Bad Form.

GAMING THE DUEL

Often times, I allow players to pantomime a duel. Players can be enthusiastic sorts, so I emphasize safety, common sense and caution. And, depending on the players, my level of comfort with this option changes. I know stuntmen. Actual, honest to Talia *stuntmen*. I don’t allow them to do crazy stuff at my live events. It’s nothing personal, but if they get themselves hurt, I’ll feel awful. And that’s exactly how I explain it: if you get hurt, I’ll feel like a jerk. Please don’t make me feel like a jerk.

I found that works very well.

CHARACTER CARDS

I also have a policy of making character cards for each player: 3” x 5” cards with the character’s name, Advantages, etc. printed in big, clear letters. Then, I pick up name card badges at the local office supply store and put those character badges *right on the front of the player’s chest*. Here’s why I do that.

First, it means nobody is ever asking, “What’s your character’s name?” It’s right there on their chest.

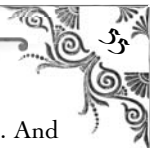
Second, it means everybody gets to see everybody else’s character sheet. They know what Advantages they brought and they know their weakness, and they know everything else. Why would I do this? Because it makes the abstract “Friendly Game” mechanics very, very real.

Everybody knows everybody else’s character sheet. It’s right there. And because everybody is playing with their strengths and weaknesses on their sleeve, it disarms that cut-throat atmosphere that most live action events have. We’re all here to have a good time. I see your weakness and you see mine. Let’s party!

NO PET NPCs

One of the first rules I set up for myself was this one: I would play *no* NPCs in the live action event. Instead, the entire Narrator staff plays servants.

That’s right: servants. We serve drinks, we serve food, we answer questions, we help everyone out the best we can. If it is true that the Narrator is supposed to be referee, storyteller and *Host*, then he should get on the black and put a pitcher of tasty beverage in his hand.



And that's exactly what I do. I don't allow anybody on my staff to play NPCs. And when I say, "We serve food and drinks," I mean the players sit down at a table and we serve them food and drinks.

We also say, "Vente, vente" a lot. A whole lot.

This solves all kinds of problems I've found in other live action games. It solves the Pet NPC Problem. It also puts the focus on the players and not the Narrating staff. It also puts the Narrating staff in the position of subservient to the players.

(I will never forget overhearing a player say, "I can't believe I just heard John Wick beg me not to kill him!")

I'm not just encouraging you to do this: I'm making it a rule. Just like the rules in the Violence chapter. The Narrator staff is *forbidden* from playing NPCs. Instead, we have the players do it.

If you need an NPC to show up, give a player Style to do it. Give them an alternate costume and send them on their way. In fact, I suggest using a trick I learned from Jess Heinig about NPCs.

Make it mandatory that every player must play an NPC for at least one quarter of the scheduled game. Now, you may not get to everybody in one game, but all the players understand that they may be called upon to play an NPC and it may be for as little as one quarter of the game, but it may be more. As you may suspect, this also has other benefits.

Sitting in someone else's skin makes you very sympathetic to their cause. Putting a player in the role of an NPC that he hates can make for some very interesting scenes. On the other hand, putting him in the skin of someone his normal character loves also creates interesting possibilities.

Now, this may raise some hackles out there; especially among the folks who are saying, "But what do we do about people who cheat with out-of-character knowledge?" Don't worry, we're getting to that. In fact, we're going to talk about it *next*.

NOTES FOR THE PLAYER

The live environment can be a dangerous place. In no other game environment (with the sole exception of playing *Diplomacy*, but that's another matter) have I seen players get so heated and emotional than the live environment. That's because, I think, of a few factors. And we're going to address them, one-by-one, as we go along here.

I want *Blood & Tears* to be the most intense, most authentic, most immediate, most immersive experience you've ever had. But I also want it to be *fun*. And it's really easy

to screw up the fun in a LARP. So, this chapter is about that. Making the game intense, authentic, immediate, immersive, but most importantly, *fun*.

CHARACTER PROTECTION

Okay, the formalities are over. Let's you and me talk about a problem. When it shows up in table top games, it's a nuisance but when it shows up in a LARP environment, it creates all kinds of trouble. It's called character protection: limiting your choices as a player to protect your character from other players taking advantage of your weaknesses.

In a table top environment, this is a problem. If the players don't trust each other, if they sabotage each other's fun, you've got a problem. In a LARP environment, it's an even *bigger* problem. You aren't just controlling an abstract character from afar here. No, you are the character. You aren't walking in his footsteps, you are *making* his footsteps. You have a tangible connection to other characters. You can touch their hands. Stand with them or against them. I mean, your Enemy is right there! *Right there!* So close, you could pull out a knife and cut this throat.

This immediacy creates a powerful sense of protection in us. Yes, I said "us" because I'm including myself in all this. I feel that same protective drive in me. The same need to keep my character away from Bad Things. (Most of the time, those Bad Things are wankers, but that's for another day.)

I wanted to create a LARP environment that would give players a sense of safety. An environment where they could take creative chances and not feel they had to protect themselves.

Now, I'm not talking about in-game violence or danger. Rather, I'm talking about metagaming, cheating, wankerism and the other dangers that permeate the LARP environment. After all, it's *so easy* to cheat in a LARP. There are so many ways to do it. I wanted to create a system that stymied cheating and wankery but at the same time provided a healthy environment for players to do things creatively dangerous.

You shouldn't feel the need to protect your character from cheaters. Instead, you should feel free to put your character in dangerous situations and trust that the other players will help you tell your character's story. Now, that may mean spending Style to further aggravate your mental and physical injuries, but you know that everyone is looking out for everyone else's interests.

Friendly Game, remember?

Now, I can't be at every game to guarantee this. Nor can the Narrator be everywhere at once to ensure players aren't taking unfair advantage of situations.



Frankly, this all comes down to *you*.

I need you.

I need you to set aside your preconceived notions of how a LARP works for a new model that may be very unfamiliar at first.

I need you to get together with other players and talk about the kind of game you want to play.

I need you to expose your character to dangers knowing the other players want to help you and your character reach their goals.

I need you to help me create a play environment that makes other players feel safe to take creative chances.

I need you.

And together, this is how we're going to do it.

GOOD FORM/BAD FORM

I talk a lot about Good Form and Bad Form in the core book, but I'd like to address it directly here. These two rules really make the backbone of the *Blood e' Tears* environment, creating a different kind of experience for the players.

See, I play in a lot of differentLARPs. Games about vampires, eternal cosmic nobles, United Nations simulations, Old West... the list goes on and on. And in all those environments, I've found similar problems. The problem most Narrators run against in all of these is the dichotomy between a light rule system and problem players. After all, running a table top game means you have a small, intimate experience. A LARP is more like a rock concert; you get to see your favorite band and you get to see them with a few thousand people who are also fans, but you really don't get to pick who you sit next to. That means you may get to sit next to that really hot girl or guy who gives you a wink and a smile or you may get the smelly loser who hasn't showered in a month and insists on getting high next to you during the show.

(And he won't share.)

When you open up your game to strangers—like many parlorLARPs do—you need more rules. Not just to protect you from wankers (although that's necessary), but to communicate to a large group of players exactly what kind of experience the environment promises. Rules not only protect players from bad behavior but reward them for good behavior.

And by "bad," I mean, "diminish the game, sabotage the environment and ruin other players' fun."

And by “good,” I mean, “add to the game, creatively contribute and help other players have fun.”

Good form and bad form. One gives you Style, the other takes Style away.

GOOD FORM

It seems strange to me that I find describing the behaviors of Good Form easier than the behaviors that make Bad Form. I don’t know why.

Good Form isn’t just making the other players and Narrators laugh. It isn’t just being witty. Yes, you should receive Style for those things, but it isn’t just that. And a witty player shouldn’t be rewarded for *everything* he says. Damn straight, you add a whole evening of sharp humor to my game and I’m gonna reward you, but not for everything.

Reward Good Form to helpful players.

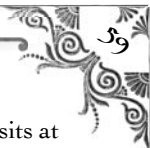
- Players who take the time to explain a rule to someone they’re facing in a Contest.
- Players who confirm a weakness when it’s clearly to their disadvantage.
- Players who bring new players to the game.
- Players who take NPC roles and portray them with excitement and veritas.
- Players who bring props and costume bits for other players to use.
- Players who create a conflict with another player in a constructive and positive way.
- Players who quietly point out a mistake you’ve made (instead of throwing a fit in front of the entire group).

“I’ll Win, but You’ll be Awesome.”

I cannot take credit for this quote. No, it belongs to the Mighty Mighty Paul Tevis of the *Have Games, Will Travel* podcast (www.havegameswilltravel.net). After a playtest, Paul and I were talking about the live environment and how the *Blood e³ Tears* system worked. Paul made the astute observation that in order to win, you had to put a whole bunch of Style in your opponent’s hands. You made a small sacrifice—a single Style Point, maybe two—and your opponent received a huge bonus (a whole ton of Style) if he agreed to lose.

That’s when Paul said it. “I’ll win, but you’ll be awesome.”

That quote influenced a lot of this chapter. All too often, as gamers, we are trained to believe that only the person who wins gets the opportunity to be awesome. That’s not true. And we’re talking about more than just gracious losing here. In order to win with the *Be³T* system, you have to give your target the very resource that powers his ability to win later.



This trade off—I get what I want, but make my enemy more powerful—really sits at the center of the game’s philosophy: every strength comes with a weakness. Virtues give you power, but they also provide a weakness. Aspects give you power, but they also have tags and compels. Suaven give you power, but you have to appease them. And, in the live environment, you can get what you want, but you have to pay for it.

Cooperative Antagonists

Not too long ago, I was in a “occult noir” LARP. You know the kind: a modern game with monsters. I was playing the Magic Cop and Jess Heinig was playing the Magic Serial Killer. It was a new character for Jess, but the Cop was an old character for me. I’d been playing him for a while, trying to make him the kind of Magic Cop that Chandler would have been proud of: the knight in the wastelands.

Then Jess brought in his Killer. A cannibalistic killer. Kind of like Harry Potter meets Hannibal Lecter. The guy was just plain scary.

Now the two characters seemed made for each other, but Jess and I created them independently. Of course, when we saw what we both had—an opportunity for a great story—we decided to work together to create something great and powerful. Something the rest of the players in the game would remember for a long time coming.

(A brief aside. Everyone in the game knew my Cop had the ability to sense Truth. When a murder happened, I’d go around asking questions. Everyone knew not to lie to the Cop. If you’re lying to the Cop, there’s a reason for it and if there’s a reason for it, he’ll look deeper. Keep that little fact in mind.)

Before the game started, Jess and I sat down and started discussing how we wanted to create our rivalry. Obviously, this thing could really only end in blood (sound familiar?) but we wanted to stretch it out as long as possible. No reason to go rushing for each other’s throats; that’s now how drama works. Instead, we made a plan. We made an agreement: no blood until we both agreed on it. We could mess with each other all we wanted, but no blood. We also agreed that throwing surprises at each other would be fun, and while we wanted to encourage other players to participate, we’d have to make sure to let them know the rules.

So, the very first night of our rivalry, I showed up with a manila envelope full of papers. I found Jess’s Killer and greeted him politely. Then, I pulled out the first paper and showed it to him.

The paper had a picture on it I pulled from the Los Angeles Police Department Missing Person website. I held the paper up to Jess's Killer and said, "Have you seen this person?"

(Remember the Truth thing?)

Jess's Killer looked at the paper and in his perfect polite voice said, "I don't believe I have."

I dropped the paper and pulled out another one. "How about this person?"

"No."

Paper drops. People start noticing.

"This one?"

"No."

Paper drops. We've got a crowd now.

"This one?"

A pause. And he smiles. "Yes. I have."

I went through fifty sheets of paper. More than half of them were on the floor. The rest I stuffed into a pocket. I tipped my hat. "Thank you," I told him. He smiled and nodded.

And the crowd completely broke character, clapping. It was an intense scene. Jess and I staring at each other. The realization of what was happening. Each time I asked, "This one?" my eyes were saying, "I'm going to catch you."

And with each "Yes. I have," Jess's eyes were saying, "Come and try."

We put our characters on a collision course, but we knew what we were doing. We *wanted* conflict, but we wanted it on our own terms. Yes, one of us would win, and it was really up to our own ingenuity who would win. We didn't want a predetermined answer, but we wanted to orchestrate parts of the story to help build it.

Writing stories is the same way. You have a plan, but happy accidents bump into those plans and throw you in a direction you never thought you'd go. That was how it was for Jess and I. Others got involved, complicated our plans and took us by surprise. We even let go of things every once in a while, just to see where they'd go.

This isn't about complete control. This isn't about disallowing chance or circumstance. But it is about building a framework to build on. A strong foundation. Because if you don't have that, you've got something that will fall apart when you're only halfway through building it.

So, how does this work in a game? Glad you asked.

The Enemy Rule

Before the game begins, I encourage this little bit of fun.

Everybody needs an Enemy. Pick one.

At the beginning of each game, every player should have an Enemy. They could be mutual Enemies (you and I are both Enemies) or they could be exclusive Enemies (I have an Enemy and so do you). Here's how they work in the game.

Your Enemy begins at rank 1. At the beginning of each game you have an Enemy, you gain a bonus Style equal to your Enemy's rank. Whenever you are involved in a Contest against your Enemy (or attempt to harm, thwart, or otherwise hinder your Enemy in a Contest), you can tag your Enemy's rank for bonus Style equal to his rank. Of course, at the beginning of each Season, your Enemy's rank goes up by one rank.

Now, this little rule accomplishes a few goals.

First, it clearly identifies the players you want to have stories with. If someone comes up to you and asks to be Enemies, it's a compliment. It means, "I like the way you play the game, and I'd like to be a part of whatever it is you are doing." And that's a cool thing.

Second, it encourages players to create vivid and moving scenes. Find your Enemy before the game begins and make plans. Plot out confrontation scenes. Plan for maneuvers with other players. Get together with your Enemy and make the audience (the other players) gasp at the visceral reality of your rivalry.

That's your Enemy. Best get friendly now.

Saying Yes

As you may have noticed, saying yes is pretty important in this game. Say yes or pay Style.

When thinking about roleplaying games, find myself more fixed on a particular philosophy: "Say yes or roll." Now, in a LARP, we don't roll dice; instead, we roll Style. So, let's modify that rule just a little. "Say yes or spend Style."

You are fully within your rights as a player to say "No" to things you don't want. I'm just going to make you pay for it. And more often than not, you'll want to say, "Yes."

Saying "Yes" helps the plot move forward. Sure, it often means changing or sacrificing something on about your character, but loss *drives* characters. Pushes them hard. Static, content, happy characters don't have a lot of motivation to do *anything*. A character with loss and grief and hate in his heart... he's the guy we like reading about, like watching on the screen, like *playing in a game*.

When failure knocks on your door, let it in. Say yes. Allow your character to lose what is precious to him. You never know what that loss may help him find.

The Morley-Wick Method, Revisited

I talked about this in the core book, but it's worth taking a look at it under the light of a LARP environment.

It all boils down to the question, "Who is your audience?"

What's the point of having a rich character history if you are the only one who knows it. Part of the Enemy rule is having another player in the game who knows your character as well as you do. Another player who will know why your character makes decisions that seemingly don't make any sense. Don't make any sense unless you understand the character's motives.

Now, a sense of mystery is important to any story, so keeping some secrets is valuable (especially for a powerful dramatic reveal later in the game), but if people are frustrated rather than intrigued by your mysterious past, we've got to go back to the original question.

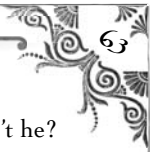
"Who is your audience?"

I've often said that a roleplaying game is the only medium where the audience and the author are the same person. I like that sentiment. But I'm beginning to like it less as time goes by. I think it limits us. I think it limits our potential as cooperative storytellers. If we don't open up our characters to others—let them see what's going on inside the labyrinth of our character's motives—we're missing out on an opportunity. So, I suggest this alternative.

Be open with your character. Communicate his motives. Do it through narration. When holding the sword that used to belong to your father...

... and I hold the sword with fingers that shake. I remember the training. My father's discipline. And I remember the last time my father and I trained with swords in our hands. My blade found the flesh just under his right eye. And I remember my father's rage. His fists pounding me. My mother had to pull us apart. He never forgave me after that. And I never forgave him, either.

That's all it takes. Bang! You've given the other players insight into your character's tangled past. Ten seconds of narration. All of those words going through your character's head. The audience—the other players—they get to see it, but their characters do not. That's okay. We're grown ups. We know the difference between in-character knowledge and out-of-character knowledge.



And only a wanker would use OOC knowledge to gain IC advantage, wouldn't he?
Bad form.

Give a signal your character is about to enter an interior dialogue. I always try to use the same phrase. "And in his memory..." or something like that. Signal to the other players you are about to have a flashback. Don't make it too long. Ten seconds is all you really need. Then, when the moment is over, break the moment with a loud in-character, "Well, where was I?"

That's all. No real rules. Just respect someone else's interior dialogue when it comes time for you to be the audience. Another player is about to take a risk. Help them out. After all, wouldn't you want the same?

"Who is your audience?"

This question directly influences your choices as a player. How you present your character to other players, whether or not those choices are "safe," how you take risks, what you show and what you hide. Consider the question carefully. And remember, other players are making the same choices.

You are both author and audience. Don't let one eclipse the other and be respectful of both.

BAD FORM

This one is tough. Usually, I'd say something like "I know bad form when I see it," but that isn't very helpful to you, now is it?

You want to be spontaneous and you want to gain advantage. I know that. And sometimes, what seems to be a good idea pops into your head and you want to shout it out before anything else happens... and then, once you have there's no taking it back.

But that last part? It's wrong. You *can* take it back. You can say, "That sounded a lot better in my head." Or, you can say, "Goodness me, did I actually *say* that?"

You can save yourself from bad form. Just a little step back is enough.

I believe that you, my gaming friend, are smart enough to know when you've crossed the line and you'll be mature enough to say, "That line I'm not supposed to cross is right behind me, isn't it?" We're all adults. And we can continue playing as adults even when one of us screws up just a little bit.

A good example. I was playing in a game when a friend of mine spent Style to make something truly horrible happen. It messed up the entire game. I mean, just sabotaged it beyond any sense of reason. He planned on doing this for weeks and kept it to himself,

waiting for the right moment to spring his trap. And when the trap sprung, the whole game was thrown out of order.

I stopped the game immediately. I gave everyone ten minutes to shake things off and then we reconvened to talk about what just happened. The player in question immediately knew he had done something awful, but his intent wasn't to do that. He wanted to do something cool... and in his head, it all worked. But when his idea made it to the game, everything screwed up. We talked about how to fix the problem. Whether we should go back and try again or keep on going. We decided to keep on going with our friend's idea and I told him that it would have been best if he had told me about it so we could talk it out and make it fit with the rest of the players.

In short: *we talked*. We sat down like mature adults and talked about what happened.

That's the best way to handle bad form. Talk about it. Don't be defensive, don't be aggressive. Just *talk*.

We are creatures of communication. We should use that tool more often than we do.

This is the tough one to talk about because if someone qualifies for Bad Form, they must be doing something seriously wrong. Sometimes, it's the player's fault: they're being obnoxious, harassing other players, being an ass, ignoring Narrator instructions... but most of the time it's the Narrator's fault.

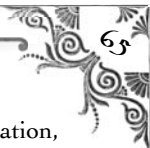
Yeah, it's the other players' fault (including the Narrator). Because the Narrator is the Host and the other players are friends tolerating bad behavior. And because we allowed the behavior go so far that we have to admonish a player. If one of your fellow players needs a talking to, take him aside, explain why his behavior disrupts the game and ask him not to continue said behavior. More on that in the Narrator section.

I've got a list of behaviors that constitute Bad Form just below. Now, I have to admit, I haven't actually *seen* anyone do these things in my own playtests, but I have seen them *a lot* in other games. Players who are familiar with wankerdome have suggested these as valid wanker strategies.

Cheating and Deep Cheating

Needless to say, general cheating in any way will get you a whole lot of Bad Form. You lose Style and you'll probably be asked to leave the game for at least one session.

It's really sad I need to put this on the list. I mean, *who cheats a roleplaying game?* And I don't mean just blatant cheating like saying you have ranks in your weakness or not spending Style to refresh an Aspect you used earlier. No, I mean... well, let me explain.



I call it Deep Cheating. And unless you've been involved in a LARP organization, you really have never seen anything resembling the kind of cheating I'm talking about.

Like keeping a different version of your character sheet in each pocket, using the appropriate one as you need it.

I'm talking about using weaknesses in the system as advantages. "There's nothing in the rules that says my NPC Vassals can't have Vassals can't have Vassals..." Yeah, but you'd be a wanker if you went that far. I mean, how much further could you take it? Vassals who have Vassals who have Vassals who have Vassals? Why not take it further? Because you'd be a wanker to even take it as far as you already have.

Or using a Devotion more than once a game. "I can't do that? I didn't see that in the rules!" This is a big one. Intentional ignorance. I've even seen club officers claim this one. Club officers *who were in charge of rules* claiming, "I didn't know I couldn't do that!" Uh, huh.

Now, an interesting thing just happened to me as I was writing the paragraph above. Ro was reading through Internet news and pointed out to me that President Bush's Chief of Staff criticized a picture of Barack Obama sitting behind the desk in the Oval Office without a suit jacket on. Essentially, criticizing Obama's "lack of professionalism." Of course, the media found about ten pictures of Bush sitting behind the Kennedy Desk without his jacket on in all of twelve seconds. Now, this isn't a slam against Republicans in general, but this wanker tried to get away with something so underhanded... I mean, he's the President's *Chief of Staff*. Surely he saw Bush without his suit jacket on at least once or twice. A knowing omission of the truth for personal gain. Deep cheating.

The reason we have rules is because people cheat. They don't want to lose. Let's say that again. Players cheat because they don't want to lose. This is why I don't understand why people cheat a roleplaying game. We're all working together to tell a story, right? That means you don't have to cheat.

Of course, there's another reason players cheat: it's because they like to cheat.

But some players don't see it that way. They treat a roleplaying game like a board game. Winners and losers. And they aren't about to become one of the losers.

Then again, if we are playing with the Cut-Throat Rules, there are winners and losers. And thus, we'll get cheaters.

Respect

I guess the key to Bad Form can really boil down to that word up there. Do you respect your other players? Because if you don't, there's a problem and you probably shouldn't be playing in the game. But not just your other players, you need to respect the game itself.

Think of your behavior during a movie. Sitting in a dark theater, would you start talking out loud, answering your cell phone or otherwise disrupt other people's enjoyment? No?

Well, why would you do it during a game?

Style Bomb

Here's a strategy: find a guy you don't like, get a bunch of buddies, and all together start putting him in Contests to say things are true about his character. Every time he says no, he loses Style. What a great way to drain someone of Style!

Wanker.

This is a conscious abuse of the rules. Using this strategy not only makes you look like a jerk, but demonstrates that you don't give one flip for your fellow players or their enjoyment of the game.

The door? Yeah, it's right there. Enjoy your way out.

Stashing Extra Style Points

Some players may feel compelled to bring extra Style with them; stashing it in their pockets so they never run out.

Do I even need to say why a player who would do this needs to be excused from the game?

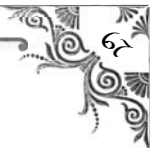
Double wanker.

Cell Phones

Yes, everyone has an exception to this rule. Wife is pregnant. Child is sick. These are understandable and justified reasons to have your cellphone on. If you don't have one, just turn it off.

You're No John Cleese

It's only funny when Python does it. Don't. Just don't.



Drawing a Weapon

Don't draw your weapon (real or otherwise) during the game. Weapons are only drawn during duels and Mass Murder. You pull your sword out prematurely, I'll smack you with Bad Form.

Others...

I'm sure you can think of a dozen other things that can draw Bad Form on a player. I could go on and on and on...

Narrators use Bad Form to discourage disruptive behavior, but if everyone followed a simple rule, no Narrator would ever have to use Bad Form.

Before you do *anything*, if the thought, "Gee, only a real jerk would try this," goes through your brain, you probably shouldn't do it.

END NOTE

Finally, I'd like to say something to you as a player.

Have fun.

That's the end goal here. But, I have a more primary goal for you. (Saving the best for last.)

Make sure other people are having fun first.

If everyone has this primary goal in mind when they come to a live action event, the event becomes much more interesting.

Trust me. I know this from experience.

NOTES FOR THE NARRATOR

If you've run a LARP before, I've got good news for you: this one is easy.

Your players have been given the tools to make their own fun. You don't need to come up with complicated and convoluted plans and plots. Your players will spend Style *to make their own*. You know the phrase, "In a LARP, you've got to bring your own fun?" Well, in *Blood & Tears*, I've given them everything they need to *make their own fun*.

Plus, you can go around the game and offer Style to introduce elements into play that *already exist*. You don't need to introduce a new NPC, you can just walk over to a player, offer her a Style, and say, "Isn't your cousin good at poisons?"

Bang! An NPC already exists and that player has a *vested interest* in her. If she doesn't want to have a cousin good at poisons, she'll say "No," and someone else nearby will say, "I do!"

So, you've got it easy. The only thing you really need to do is manage rules and plot questions. You don't even need to play any NPCs! So, what's a Narrator to do? Let's talk about that...

GAMES WITHIN GAMES

One of the most difficult jobs a LARP Narrator has is keeping everybody busy. When things are going great, every player finds a way to engage the game. They have stimulating and exciting conversations with other players, they take interest in your mysteries and otherwise exhaust themselves in the limited time they have.

That's the optimum goal, but I've got news for you. It's never gonna happen. You'll always have wallflowers. You'll always have reluctant players. But just like alcoholics learning you can't change other people's behavior, as a Narrator, you'll learn there's only so much you can do to make people enjoy your game. Only so much you can do...

Screw that. Let's do *all* of it.

RUMORS

A funny thing happened when running the live game. The Narrator staff and I came up with a little mechanic for creating Rumors. Little did we know it would become so popular.

If a player wants to start a Rumor about another character (or even the castle or an Artifact or anything else), he spends Style. Creating a Rumor is a Beauty Contest. He can also invoke the Gossip Aspect if he wishes. Once he's done adding up all his Style, divide it in half, rounding up. You now have the rank of the Rumor.

Write the Rumor down on a sticky name badge and stick it to the person (place or thing) the Rumor is about. If the Rumor is about a person, *stick it to their back*. Don't show them the Rumor and don't tell them where the Rumor came from. Just stick it to their back. They aren't allowed to look at it, but they can try to persuade others to inform them of what the Rumor may be.

The Rumor can be tagged by any other player for bonus Style if the Rumor is appropriate to the Contest. In other words, if a character is known for being a "willing liaison," another player can tag that Rumor for one Style, getting a bonus equal to the Style of the Rumor for the purposes of seducing the target character.

A Rumor may only be removed by *someone else*. You cannot remove your own Rumors. The someone else in question must spend one more Style than the current rank of the Rumor to get rid of it. Once it has been removed, the Narrator staff should make a large and noisy announcement about the falsehood of the Rumor and chastise any who would believe such nonsense.

Rumors also decrease by one rank per Season.

FASHION TRENDS

Players can also create fashion trends, establishing an in-game reward for following the style of the day. I'll use an example to illustrate how to do this.

One of my players, Ben, started wearing a turban to the game. He spoke to the Narrator staff and told us he wanted to start a trend of wearing turbans. He spent Style (invoking Beauty) and came up with a total of eight Style. Divide that in half (as you do for all Style expenditures of this kind) and he started a rank 4 Fashion Trend of wearing turbans.

Now, if another player shows up wearing a turban, at the beginning of the game, he gets bonus Style equal to the rank of the trend.

Trends don't last forever: the rank of a trend decreases by one for every Season that passes. Also, you can only follow one trend at a time.

THE GRAND GAME

Usually, the premise of a Parlor Game is a Party. The ven throw a lot of parties and the best way to simulate that experience is by throwing a Party yourself.

But the ven don't just throw parties: they play games. Party games. Intense—and sometimes dangerous—party games. Since our goal is to keep true to the nature of ven literature, let's do just that. Let's make the party into a game.

Here's a meta-game for your next Parlor Game. The Grand Game is a largely “out-of-character” game to get your players acting, to give them goals and to make the Party... complicated.

Below you'll find a list of goals. Each goal gives the player one or more Victory Points. At the end of the game, whoever has the most Victory Points “wins” the Parlor Game.

The Grand Game is a “meta-game.” Players score points, not the characters.

You can find a sample set of goals below. Depending on the circumstances of the Party, I change them up, switch them out, delete a few or add a few. Use them as you will.

Contracts

- Every Contract your name appears on (1 VP)

Whatever the Contract may be, if your name appears on it, you get a Victory Point.

Examples of Contracts include Marriage Contracts, Cabal Contracts, Vassal Contracts, Oath of Fealty Contracts, etc.

Duels

- Losing a Duel (1 VP)
- Winning a Duel (2 VP)
- Dueling with your Enemy (+1 VP)

If you fight in a Duel, you get at least 1 Victory Point. If you win the Duel, you get 2, if you lose the Duel, you get 1. If you fight a Duel with your Enemy, regardless of whether or not you win, add one VP to your total.

Injuring Your Enemy

- Every rank of Injury delivered to your Enemy (1 VP)

If you Injure your Enemy, every rank of Injury counts as a Victory Point.

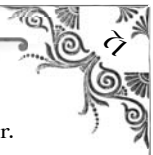
Some players ask if “abstract Injury” counts, such as stealing a Resource from your Enemy or starting a Romance with his wife. The answer is “no.” These are a bit too abstract. Victory Points should be assigned for tangible results, not abstract ones.

Marriage

- Getting engaged (2 VPs)
- Arranging the Marriage (1 VP)
- Getting engaged to your Enemy (+1 VP)

Weddings are huge events in Shanri, and as such, the announcement of a marriage is cause for celebration. Unmarried ven go to Parties seeking all kinds of arrangements... including marriage contracts. If you find yourself in a Contract of Marriage by the end of the evening, you and your partner both get two Victory Points. (Remember: Contracts of Marriage are still Contracts. That’s why a Marriage Contract is worth two Victory Points.)

If both parties involved agree on a single ven who arranged the marriage (both the future groom and future bride must agree on one ven), that busybody gets a Victory Point.



And, finally, if you get engaged to your Enemy, earn yourself a bonus Victory Point.

Resource Sets

- Every Resource Set (1 VP)
- One additional Luxury (+1 VP)
- Five Luxuries (5 VP)

Every five *different* Resources your character collects gets you one Victory Point. Any five Resources will do, as long as all five are unique. For example: 1 Metals, 1 Lumber, 1 Stone, 1 Herbs, 1 Food counts as a Resource Set because all five Resources are unique to the set.

Adding a Luxury to the Set adds one Victory Point to the value of the set. Luxuries do not count toward making a Set.

If a player acquires five Luxuries, that Resource Set counts as five Victory Points.

Romance

- Starting a Romance (1 VP)
- Starting a Romance with your Enemy (+1 VP)

Starting a Romance involves either a Style Contest or an Advantage Contest.

If you want to start a Romance with a Style Contest, both parties involved must spend Style. Divide the total amount of Style they spend by two (round up). That's the rank of their Romance. You can find out more about the *Blood & Tears* rules

for Romance in the Romance chapter.

If you want to start a Romance with an Advantage Contest, both parties add up their total points. Then, add those points together and divide by two (round up). That's the rank of their Romance. Again, you can find more details in the *Romance* chapter.

Title

- Baron (1 VP)
- Count (2 VP)
- Marquis (3 VP)

When the game ends, if a character has earned a new title, he also earns Victory Points. All Barons earn one VP. All Counts earn 2 VP. All Marquis earn 3 VP. These Titles only count if you did not have them when you walked into the Party. You have to earn these Titles; they aren't free Victory Points.

LESSER GAMES

So, we've talked about a kind of meta-game that appeals to your players' sense of winning. We shouldn't neglect your *characters*. After all, they want to win, too!

Lesser Games are activities your *characters* play. There are no Victory Points and no real prize at the end of the game. Instead, the rewards of winning Lesser Games are *in-character* rewards. Let's take a look at a few of the more famous ven parlor games.

The Kissing Game

(Of course, we're not talking about a *real* kiss—see “No Touching” in the *Player* chapter. Now, on to the rules.)

The ven played this game with hats. They'd have the hats specially made so each one had a name on it. We're not going to expect you to spend money on hats, so instead, use index cards or pieces of paper you can attach to the players in some way they can't see.

Write down all the names of the ven attending the Party and throw those names in a hat. Then, have everyone line up, turn their back to you and pray.

You pull a name out of the hat and attach it to that ven's back. Then, have that ven move on and do the same until you are out of ven and names. Now, here are the rules.

You, the player, have to win a kiss from the ven who's name is on your back. You can't look. (That's cheating: Bad Form!) You have to find another way to discover the name on your back. You can use bribing, begging and blubbering if you like, but no peeking!

Of course, the first ven to win a kiss is the winner. The winner of the game gets a prize from the Host and/or Hostess. Perhaps a favor. Perhaps a promise. Perhaps a kiss...

Sound simple? Well, the only thing more powerful than a ven's love of winning is their hatred of losing. With that in mind, think of what you would do to make sure the person with *your* name on their back never learns that fact. Who would you

bribe? Who would you beg? Who would you make promises to?

Yeah. A simple little game.

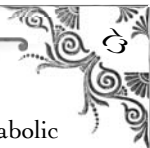
A more complicated version: put three names on each card. You have to get a kiss from *each one* to win the game. Makes things more interesting.

The Forbidden Word

The Host picks a word no ven can say while the Party rages. He also hands out five coins. Whenever someone says the word and another ven calls him on it, he must surrender a coin. Whoever has the most coins at the end of the night wins the game.

The Secret Word

A variant on the Forbidden Word, the Host writes down a word and puts it in his pocket. Whenever a guest says the word, he receives a small prize from the Host. As the Host, make sure you reward the winners *after* they've said the word as to not give it away to your other guests!



Lookabout

The Host hides a valuable object somewhere in the area. Whoever finds it first gets to keep it. A simple game.

Add this complication: the Host hides a valuable object. Whoever *has* the object at the end of the night wins the game. Lose the object, lose the game.

By hook or by crook.

“Do You Love Me?”

This is a guessing game. The guests approach the Host and ask, “Do you love me?” The Host answers “Yes” or “No” based on a qualification he chose at the beginning of the night (written on a piece of paper in an envelope in plain sight).

Perhaps the qualification is “wearing green,” or “holding a cup with his left hand.” It may be based on the questioner’s House or even something more abstract, such as “You have been faithful to your wife.”

The first guest to guess what the qualification is wins the game.

D’Valesh: A Game of Knives

(Use a foam or plastic or otherwise replica knife. Or bean bags. Bean bags work *great*. Do not, I repeat, *do not* play this game with real knives.)

D’Valesh gets mentioned in more than a few works—I found it in *The Great and Terrible Life of Shara Yvarai*—that takes

advantages of the amazing ven metabolic system and their inbred sense of cruelty. What you need are two contestants, six throwing knives and two large targets.

Each ven stands in front of one target. Scoring on the targets goes from 1 point (on the outside of the targets) to five points (on the inside of the targets). With a ven standing in front of it, the ability to score points is limited; a thrower would have to hit the ven standing in front of the higher points.

To begin, one of the contestants throws a knife into the air. Both try to catch it. Whoever catches closest to the tip of the blade gets the first throw.

Now, each contestant stands in front of a target. Remember: the higher points are *behind* your opponent. You throw your knife at whatever score you wish. If you throw at one of the high scoring fields, your opponent will either move or get bloody.

With the knife flying at him, your opponent must now decide if he’s willing to stand or move. If he stands still, he risks taking an Injury. If he moves, you can score more points.

Once you’ve gone through all these steps, it is now time for your opponent to throw one of his three knives, following the same procedure. This continues until all three knives have been thrown.



The opponent at the end of the game (all six knives thrown) with the most points wins. Yes, the game can end in a tie. In fact, it usually does. Most ven do not push the issue. D'Vaesh is a game that demonstrates Prowess and Courage. Winning the game is not the primary goal... although some highly competitive ven disagree.

Okay, sound fun? Here's how you do it at your Party.

Setup targets. Have players stand in front of them and throw bean bags at each other. Don't throw them like bullets, either. We're all friends here. Throwing at full force is Bad Form and deserving of a loss of Style.

Each hit to the body is worth one rank of Injury. Ven can live with Injuries all night (and the tags they provide Enemies), or they can move out of the way and hope their opponent hits a low value target. Player with the highest total after three knives each is the winner.

It's just that easy.

Kind and Cruel

The Host picks a particular thing that makes her kind and a particular thing that makes her cruel. It could be a color, a word or some other factor. The guests must discover what makes her cruel and what makes her kind.

The Compliment Game

The Host picks two players and a subject. The Host then says to the first player, "I heard you say..." and proceeds to say something awful and insulting about the subject. Then, he asks the first player, "What did you mean by that?" The first player must now turn the insult into a compliment.

When he is finished, the Host turns to the second player and says, "I heard you say..." and proceeds to say something else awful and insulting about the subject. Then, he asks the second player, "What did you mean by that?" The second player must now turn the insult into a compliment.

When all complimenting is done, the party votes to decide which "compliment" was more convincing.

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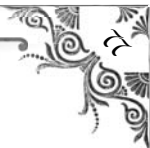
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