



A HENCHMAN PRIMER

In *Leagues of Adventure*, the player character are middle or upper class citizens. Regardless of their exact social status, each one has a henchman.

HENCHMAN ARE NOT CHARACTERS 2!

Henchmen are designed to give the globetrotter access to a few extra Skills he lacks, or a boost to his own Skills through the Teamwork rules. They are not just an extension of the character, though. Henchmen are individual characters in their own right. They have hopes and dreams, personalities, strengths, and foibles. Neither are they mindless slaves, obedient to the globetrotter's every whim and willing to sacrifice their lives at his command. Exactly how a henchman responds to a given request depends equally on his status, with relation to his master, his Flaw, and his occupation.

This is one of the reasons we suggest another player takes the role of a globetrotter's henchman. It allows social interaction between master and follower, but more importantly it prevents a player from abusing his henchman or using sacrificing him to protect his main character ("My henchman will sip the liquid first, just in case it's poisonous").

HENCHMAN STATUS

Although it is easy to see all henchmen as mere minions, they can be grouped into one of three general categories. Each of these is discussed separately below. Aside from actual servants, as defined by their occupation and social class, the exact relationship between globetrotter and henchman cannot be defined by a one-size-fits-all description. Whereas a chauffeur, nanny, or gamekeeper is always a servant, an accountant might be treated as a tradesman by an upper class character, but a peer by a middle class one.

FRIENDS

This category comprises henchmen who are the same social class as the character, and who are friends rather than master and servant or employer and employee. These henchmen are in the minority of pre-generated ones, especially for the upper classes (those with the Status Resource).

The henchman is unlikely to refuse an order to perform a task in keeping with his occupation, but he is not going to mindlessly obey every command. Friends are far more likely to refuse orders that threaten their life (unless that's their particular calling or Flaw),

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and may insist on butting into conversations to offer their learned opinion on a particular topic. Despite being henchmen themselves, they see themselves above henchman of lower social status.

TRADESMEN

Henchmen with a skilled or intellectual occupation are generally upper lower or lower middle class. While those with a trade may find it hard to rise in status, others may become professors or deans, heads of a company, important bureaucrats within government, or otherwise renowned in their field, firmly elevating them to true middle class status.

Friendship may develop over the course of a campaign, but to begin with the relationship is that of employer and employee. However, unlike servants, these henchmen are entitled to respect befitting their status. A cruel character may beat, berate, badger, and belittle his hireling, but the henchman does not have to take it lying down. There is plenty of leeway in what orders a tradesman obeys or refuses. A love-struck assistant may do anything to please her master, even he treats her worse than his dog, but a grizzled explorer might be more inclined to speak his mind and question orders, especially if they fall into his field of expertise. Similarly, an accountant would probably resent being ordered to cross a rope bridge first to test its strength (and refuse to comply), while a spelunker would probably volunteer to be the first to descend into an unexplored cave system.

SERVANTS

The lowest of the low on the employment ladder, servants exist to obey. They are the unskilled labor, the less educated, and those who wait on the needs of others. In game terms, common criminal henchmen fall firmly into this category. Even butlers, the head of the household staff, are servants in the eyes of their masters, and thus of society in general.

Despite being set in the Victorian age, *Leagues of Adventure* does not bother with social roll modifiers between different castes. It's a game of exploration, intrigue, and adventure, and there is no reason to invent rules for something adequately handled by good roleplaying and the Status resource. That said, and putting modern sensibilities aside, a globetrotter who treats a mere servant as a friend (and thus implied social equal) may quickly find himself shunned by his or her true peers. If he persists in this acquaintance, he might acquire the Bad Reputation Flaw, representing his status as a social pariah.

A thin line exists between respect and true friendship. Lord Percival Fanhard, famous explorer and nobleman, might well enjoy friendly banter with his gamekeeper, but he would never think of inviting him to join him for dinner at his mansion or taking him out to the opera. He's also very likely to use his surname at all times (in the same manner as his lordship's social betters and peers would probably call him Fanhard). In return, the

gamekeeper would never think to address Fanhard by his given name, even when alone with him on a shoot.

Typically, servants do as they are told. They might grumble, but they're very unlikely to refuse unless the order places them in direct danger. Profession must be considered, of course, but no nanny short of Mary Poppins is going to wrestle a tiger on her master's behalf.

Even the lowliest henchman is not without his uses. While the heroes are enjoying a fine meal with their social peers, their henchmen might be dining with the servants. Out of earshot, they can pump the household servants for gossip concerning their masters. Most householders are likely to talk openly about very intimate matters in the presence of their servants. It's not that they are careless around them, simply that good servants blend into the background of the house and go unnoticed by their betters.

CAN I PLAY A SERVANT?

Note that this brief section refers to specifically to those who would be seen by society at large as servants or firmly rooted in the lower class. An astronomer player character who has the Patron Resource is already a sort of henchman, albeit a tradesman or peer rather than a menial lackey. Similarly, no player character can be a common criminal. Globetrotters who desire to walk a larcenous road do so as criminal masterminds, not common burglars, pickpockets, or cracksmen.

The main drawback of playing a true servant is that much of society frequented by typical globetrotters is firmly closed. Unless he is a master of disguise and fast talk (in which case perhaps playing a spy is a better option), he will never be invited to join a League except as a worker in the clubhouse, attend a foreign dignitary's grand ball, be approached by a government in search of help, personally invited to give lectures to a League, and so on. His position is with the other servants.

Worse, if the other players are playing their characters properly, they won't treat him as anything other than his social class deserves. Treating him as a friend will tarnish their reputations, and within the Leagues, reputation is very important.

Of course, playing a servant posing as something he is not can be a lot of fun, especially if only the player and GM know the truth. Once his true status is revealed, as it surely must be at some point if the deception is to be any fun in the long term, he can expect to be stripped of any titles or awards, cast out from the high society he was enjoying, and otherwise ruined. Such a destroyed reputation is not irredeemable, though. The Eccentric Club might be amused at his gall and guile, and offer him membership. Perhaps the government decides a man of such talents would make a good spy and offers him work and a steady salary. The servant may fall a long way, but he can not only climb back, he can reach the dizzying heights of society he so envies on his own merits.