

BARLEY KEEP RULEBOOK

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Welcome!

Barley Keep is a hybrid, accessible, fantasy LARP that takes place in Central Massachusetts.

What is BOFFER LARP?

BOFFER LARP is improvisational theater meets childhood games of Cops and Robbers by way of storytelling. A group of people write the background and plot for a story. They are the CAST MEMBERS. They will also play all the bit and background roles in the story, from Orc#7 to the Grand Vizier, or the equivalent in that story. The PLAYERS are the main characters of the story. Their characters already live in the game world, but when you start playing your character, their life changes. You are walking into the opening scene of their story, as are 15-150 other characters.

Most Boffer LARPs meet for a weekend, Friday to Sunday, 2-8 times per year. Boffer LARP usually revolves around combat with padded weapons mixed with intrigue and roleplaying. They often take place at camp sites, with a few indoor buildings for MODULES, or places where a different location is simulated. You generally pay for the site, which includes cabins or space for tents for camping. Rule systems range from simple to incredibly complex. Food may or may not be included. You make up a character according to the rule system, develop relationships in game, and advance as your character into new knowledge and

abilities. Costuming ranges from Goodwill (A long shirt with a belt makes a tunic!) to worthy of awards, often within the same LARP.

What is Parlor LARP?

A PARLOR LARP tends to be 2-4 hours, set in a small location, with a smaller number of players. The focus is on a plot, often emotionally intense, that brings out a variety of emotions and strong roleplaying in a limited, one time only format. Some involve incredible costuming while others just use street clothing. Some take place at convention centers with many different ParlorLARPs offered over a weekend and have related costs, and some will be in one person's home and be free. Food is usually not included. Rules are usually minimal. Characters are usually pre-written and assigned, so that you know your background and motivations for the scene.

Then what the heck is Barley Keep?

Barley Keep is a hybrid LARP. It builds a storyline over time with character and world continuity, like a Boffer LARP, but with a focus on role playing and interactions like Parlor LARP. You will create a character, choose skills, then dive in to meet the other players and the world.

How you and your new fellows interact with the world and the NONPLAYER CHARACTERS (NPCS) played by cast members will shape the story, and ultimately the world.

Most of the time in this world you will be affecting the story by your words and interpersonal actions, but there will also be SKILLS that you can use to affect how the story unfolds. Combat will be optional, taking

place in Modules only to make sure that only those who want to participate, do. There will be puzzles to figure out, plots to untangle, and an Empire to defend.

Barley Keep will be 10 am to 6 pm, 4 Saturdays per year, planned for 3 years with a possibility of future arcs after that. A simple lunch will be provided, or you can bring your own. Costs will depend on the site we find best suited weighing location, parking, interior accessibility, and versatility of the space.

What is Consent Culture? What is PVP?

Consent Culture simply means that everyone gets permission before imposing, whether by touching someone or raising a voice at another player. PVP, or Player vs Player mentality, is discouraged. You are all on the same side in defending the Empire. That doesn't mean that you won't have disagreements with other characters, but what a CHARACTER is feeling is NEVER justification for making a PLAYER uncomfortable.

So, let's consider Chris and Andy, whose characters, Tyr and Mobic, disagree about a potential ally. Tyr thinks the ambassador comes in good faith, while Mobic is convinced that they are a spy. Chris catches Andy alone and says out of game (OOG) , "Hey, would you like this disagreement to get heated?" Andy considers a bit and agrees. They decide to have the disagreement take place after lunch, to catch a good audience to keep everyone aware of the issue. They negotiate the scene, agreeing on the outcome. As they approach each other after returning their dishes, Chris gives Andy a thumb sideways gesture--You Good?

Andy responds with a thumbs up, which Chris returns, and the scene plays out until they both storm out in opposite directions.

Why so careful? This way, Chris and Andy know that they're both onboard. They know that they are still friends, and that they will still be friends after the scene, and that they will both enjoy it.

Emotional Safety

Emotions can be strong in a LARP. Bleed (transfer of emotions) from real life to LARP or vice versa can also be strong. Your emotional safety is just as important as your physical safety. If you are having a one on one interaction that feels emotionally unsafe, make a thumbs down gesture and hold it. If the other person does not respond, say "CAUTION" and repeat the gesture. If this is ever not respected, leave the encounter immediately and tell a staff member as soon as you feel up to it.

If someone gives you a thumbs down gesture, back up a step, and quietly break character to see what they need. They may need to change the topic, or just bring down the intensity. They may need to step away. It's important to calibrate the encounter to everyone's comfort.

If you are not sure if someone is comfortable, hold your fist at chest level with your thumb out horizontally and wiggle it slightly to check in with them. They should respond with a thumbs up if they're okay. If they give a thumbs down or mirror the gesture back at you, react as above.

To leave a group encounter or a one on one encounter, put your fist on top of your head, and walk to the decompress area. This gesture indicates that you are no longer present in the game. Take as long as you need until you feel ready to rejoin.

A few words on Accessibility

Our goal in Barley Keep is to provide as accessible an experience as possible. Physical challenges will all be optional, and our building is wheelchair accessible. We are also aiming to be accessible in terms of time, with the awareness that anything more than a single day commitment may be difficult for people. By setting our events from 10 am to 6 pm, we hope to be more accessible for people from a bit further away to be able to make the commute, and also for parents who may need to drop off kids and pick them up again.

One place we are working on accessibility is in math. While some of us love math (and at least one does math problems for fun), some of us are more math averse. Our goal is to provide easy rules with minimal calculations. We have one stat, Inspiration, which represents both our physical breath and mental effort. This gives you only one number to keep track of. You will spend inspiration to do things in game, or if you get hurt. You will gain it back at 2pm each day, through some activities, and through some skills.

Another place we are working on accessibility is the amount of information you, the player, have to learn and remember in order to play. Our Core Rulebook is small, with supplements for people who want to go more in depth on the world.

A few words on Covid and other illnesses

Covid is unfortunately still a reality, and doubly so for those with lung disease, chronic illness, or immune problems. Currently we have the following policy:

- 1) If you are sick, stay home. We will refund your money for the event. In the unlikely event that someone knowingly plays while ill, they will be banned from the LARP.
- 2) If you are having allergies, you must mask while indoors. Early symptoms of Covid, flu, and RSV are all similar to allergy symptoms, and most of us know someone who became ill from someone who was certain they only had allergies.
- 3) A negative rapid (home) Covid test is required within 36 hours before the game begins. Do not come to the site until you have done your test. There is a CVS on the same road as the site, so if you were not prepared you can buy one there and perform it in your car.
- 4) If you are medically unable to be vaccinated against Covid, please mask except when eating. We strongly recommend annual vaccinations for both flu and Covid. (New studies show they decrease your risk of dementia. What's not to love?)
- 5) Our main area will be mask optional if the weather permits us to keep the windows open. Our module area, because it is smaller with fewer windows, will require masking.
- 6) For lunch we will work on reducing the risk to everyone. Plan to mask while in line for food.
- 7) Because you will have to mask at some point, look into N-95 masks or similar that complement your costume. They are

now available in dozens of colors and styles! Please, nothing that resembles a religious face covering.

Remember, ‘just a cold’ for you could be life threatening for someone else, and ‘just a stomach bug’ could get everyone miserably ill.

Background

The Empire of Vestalia has been at peace for the past 25 years with its neighbors of Acier to the East, Cascalon to the South, and Innox to the West. The Northern border is wilderness ending in the Great Northern Sea, the waters and cliffs inhospitable and the wilderness more so, so no threats have come from that direction.

With the recent death of Empron Kai Sellaris the first, the young Empress Livietta and her wife Empress Parrice have ascended the throne. The Dowager Empress Erydice, rumored to have been the Empron’s spy master during their life, has taken herself off far to the North, on the edge of the Wilderness, to a modest palace called Barley Keep, with old retainers and friends young and old. Some of the gentry and nobility, along with a few trades people and people of undefined station, make up her new court. At Barley Keep, the Dowager will keep herself out of trouble and let the next generation make their own mark on the kingdom.

Comments that a spymaster can work from anywhere are politely shushed.

Character Creation

You will create the outline of your character, but you will only truly get to know them as you play them. Ideally, play a character you would want to have as a friend--neither piously perfect nor irredeemably bad, but quirky and with potential for hidden depths.

Your character is a citizen of Vestalia. Either you were born there, or you petitioned for citizenship. Grounds for petitioning are spending the last 7 years or more of your childhood in Vestalia (11 to 18 years old), being on the Royal Tax Rolls as employed for at least 7 years in Vestalia, marrying a Vestalian citizen, raising a citizen of Vestalia for 7 years, or doing a service for the Crown. That last would involve nearly any heroic act--rescuing someone from a burning building or from drowning, defending a child from a wild beast, stopping a runaway horse and carriage, or the like.

Let's say that Narum, Pesa, their five year old Lars, and Pesa's brother Yavel all moved to Vestalia in 318 while Pesa was heavily pregnant. Pesa and Yavel work and pay taxes, while Narum stays home to raise Lars and baby Fisa. Fisa is born a citizen. By 325, all three of the adults can also choose to be citizens. Lars won't be a citizen until he is 18, in 331. If he is taken back to his birth country to live (not to visit) before then, he will have to either pay taxes for seven years or raise a child born in Vestalia for 7 years to become a citizen, unless he does something heroic in the meantime.

You are human. Everyone is human. You don't really believe all those stories of mysterious beings living in the wilderness, do you? Look, yes, there are stories, stories of mysterious creatures, talking trees, rooms that

remember the secrets they once held, but rational adults in the year 326 of the Empire don't take them seriously.

You have chosen to go to Barley Keep, essentially into exile if you are from the Capital city of Farza, but quite cosmopolitan if you are from a small town. Perhaps you worked for the Royal Court as a scribe or a tailor, or you were recently attached to an embassy in one of the neighboring countries. Perhaps a family member worked for the Dowager Empress, publicly or in secret. Perhaps your family can't afford a Season for you in Farza, but this will be an opportunity to make a suitable match. Whatever your own goals, you are going publicly to support the Dowager, and you are quite aware that you also secretly serve Vestalia.

Five questions for Character Creation

--Who is your character? A servant, a noble, a tradesperson, a scholar?

--Why are they here? Do they seek intrigue, social advancement, or just to live down what happened at that last ball?

--What do they want? (And what do they fear?) Are they proving something to themselves or someone else? Do they want to avoid a loveless marriage, learn to be an assassin, protect the kingdom?

--What are they good at? A game skill, or household management, higher mathematics, philosophy, baking?

--How do you want to see them grow and change? Do they need to listen more to their heart, or mind? What do they need to let go of from the past, and what do they need to risk?

Bonus Question: Is it going to be fun to be this person for 8 hours at a time? Tragic, brooding characters who keep aloof aren't usually much fun to play in person, and they're not much fun for others to interact with. Characters very different from us can be fun, but if you are shy, playing a bouncy extrovert for 8 hours might be exhausting...or empowering! Fortunately, characters can grow and change, and you'll also have the opportunity to rework your character after your first two events if you're not happy being them.

Inspiration

Inspiration is the fire in your mind and the breath in your body. It is what powers you. You use it to activate skills, and it is used when you take wounds in combat. One hit anywhere in the body except the head is one point. (Head shots are illegal.) If you fall to zero Inspiration, you cannot do any skills until it is replenished. If you take another hit after falling to zero, you will fall unconscious. You stay unconscious for 5 minutes. If you take another hit during that time, it restarts the clock. When you wake you will be groggy and stiff and sore--Roleplay it!--and unable to use skills for 5 minutes even if your Inspiration is replenished.

You start with 5 Inspiration. There may be ways to increase your maximum Inspiration in game, but you cannot be replenished beyond your maximum.

Your Inspiration starts each event at full, and **refreshes** to full at 2 pm, whether you have used them all or not. People with Empathy can choose to refresh you, but you must talk to them in game for the required 5 minutes. You may also do one of the following refreshing rituals:

- Picking up any trash and putting things where they belong in the LARP site for 5 minutes will gain you one Inspiration.
- Drinking 8 oz of water will gain you one Inspiration.
- Spending fifteen minutes in game with a player character you haven't interacted with before will gain you three Inspiration. (You have to actually be engaging with each other, not just sitting nearby! Casual conversation in a group doesn't count, but also doesn't count as prior interaction. Go for the spirit of this!)

Skills

(Everyone starts with 2 Skills)

Roleplaying and personal interactions are your primary way of influencing the world around you, but Skills give you additional ways. In addition to the direct effects of skills, there will be tags that can be read, and/or acted on by people with various skills. The skill name will be in **Bold**: You will need a **RESOURCEFUL** person to open this, or someone skilled in **COMMUNICATION** will have heard the following rumor. If you choose to participate in **Combat**, each skill also carries a combat related activity--**Espionage** gives you the ability to trip a foe, for example, or **Intelligencer** to disarm one. Combat is not a big enough part of the game to take skills in, but each skill you do choose will have

an in-combat effect as well. This will be listed in the skill, and there is a separate listing of these after the skill section.

Communication--letters, rumors, word of mouth

- At will: You can send out letters (up to hourly, must be written during game), with responses next event. You will collect rumors at game on.
- You may spend 1 inspiration to ask any NPC who engages you in conversation for the 'latest' by calling "TELL ME MORE". (Note that they may be misinformed!)
- You can read cards marked **Communication**.
- Combat skill: **Flank**. If 2 people are attacking the same foe, the foe must attack the one calling Flank three times before doing anything else.

Deception--hiding, Fast Talk, and alibis

- You may carry a yellow cloth bag of up to 8 inches by 8 inches on your person, and everything in it is hidden and cannot be found by a search.
- You may extricate yourself and others from a sticky situation by spending one inspiration and saying, "NO WAIT LISTEN! This is all a misunderstanding! What really happened is..." and talking very quickly and confusingly for one minute. You must make your escape within 5 minutes before they figure out that nothing you said made sense.
- You may spend 1 to all of your inspiration to give another person an **Alibi**: one for something trivial, 2 for something with one witness, all (at least 5) for something serious.
 - In the first two cases, just state clearly that you're an **Alibi** for the person, and spend one minute saying where the two of you actually were.
 - In the last case you say "I'm ALL IN FOR [character's name], they were with me, and..." and spin an impassioned story for at least five minutes before calling **Alibi**. (Yes, this is a very long time, but

it's a get out of jail card for another player. You will be linked in people's minds with this person afterwards, which can have good or bad consequences depending on their future actions.) You can only use I'M ALL IN once per event, and only once ever for a specific character.

- You can also read **Deception** cards, which may tell you hints of illicit behavior or lying in others.

- Combat skill: **Feint**. Opponent must hit your weapon before they can try to hit you again.

Defense--protect the manor or allies.

- At will: You may spend 5 minutes talking with an ally about a defense related topic--situational awareness, tactics, armor, castle construction--and then **Bestow** one **Dodge** on them that will be used the next time they are attacked.

- Working with an intelligencer, you can spend 1 or more inspiration to shore up defences on the Manor or a distant group of allies, at the cost of 1 inspiration per group.

- Just before a combat module you can give a brief 'watch your back' pep talk and **Bestow Dodge** for 1 inspiration per person.

- You can read cards marked **Defense**.

- Combat skill: **Parry**. Hits against you don't count for 3 seconds, but you cannot attack during that time. (Hold your weapon raised in front of you during that time.)

Diplomacy--defusing, persuading, building allegiances

- At Will: After 5 minutes of talking with someone with an opposing point of view, you may spend 1 inspiration to call **Persuade** to have

them *consider* your view. This is the beginning of negotiations, not the end.

- At Will: After 5 minutes of listening to two sides arguing without taking sides yourself, you may call **Calm--Common Ground**. If you can point out any way in which they share a goal, they will agree to consider working together. This may be needed repeatedly during contentious negotiations, and their cooperation may be grudging.

- After you have successfully used **Calm** or **Persuade** on someone, every new meeting you can spend on 1 point of inspiration to call **Persuade--Alliance** to have them consider making an alliance with you or with the Enclave. The effect of this is cumulative as long as you do nothing they consider hostile or deceptive.

- You may read cards marked **Diplomacy**.

- Combat Skill: **I Can Offer Better Terms**. As long as you don't attack, you can offer to have the foe fight for you, and they won't attack until they say yes or no. This causes a brief pause in the fight between the two of you as you offer your bribe and they accept (and switch sides) or refuse and attack again.

Divination--predicting the future, having premonitions

- At will: You must use some form of Divination in game. You can be as low key or over-the-top as you like. You may use any form that works for you--cards, runes, tea leaves, anything that gives you information to give your subject. You may be a skilled card reader in real life, you may have a system that gives you random results, or you may make up your readings, and all of these options are fine. You must record and report all readings predicting the future to staff after the event; some of them will come true. If your cards/crystals/tea leaves predict great harm from the past, a difficult choice, or a financial windfall, we'd like to know.

- You may spend 1-5 inspiration to receive premonitions from staff that

you should announce publicly, as calmly or dramatically as you like. The method to receive premonitions will be clearly indicated.

- You can read **Divination** cards.
- Combat skill: **I Saw That Coming**. You can resist any called combat skill (but not regular hits).

Empathy--personal connections, understanding intentions

- At Will (no inspiration cost): if you listen to someone for 5 minutes without trying to fix anything, argue, or deflect, you may call **Calm**, **Comfort**, or **Inspiration**.
- For 1 point of inspiration you may call **Calm** after talking for one minute.
- After 5 minutes of talking to someone you may spend one point of inspiration to call **Sense Motive** or **Sense Emotion**. This will be responded to with a one word answer which is out of game (OOG). Subject will be unaware of what you now know.
- You may read tags marked with **Empathy**.
- Combat skill: **You Don't Want To Hurt Me**. Enemy must take 3 steps back, then can choose to attack you or someone else.

Espionage--causing 'mishaps' among enemies.

- At will: You may disarm or reposition popper traps in modules.
- You may spend 1 inspiration to arrange a trap for enemies on the map (you will need to work with an intelligencer if you are not one.)
- You may spend 5 inspiration to arrange a MAJOR trap.
- You may read **Espionage** cards.
- Combat skill: **Trip**. Foe must take a knee.

Map/Intelligencing--after the Dowager's Mages cast their great spell in event 1, there will be a map that will show threats to the kingdom on it, and allies and other forces at work.

- At will: Intelligencers can decode the map at will.
- You can spend 1 inspiration to learn more about specific threats or forces.
- You can spend 5 inspiration to remove blocks caused by enemies.
- You can read cards marked **Intelligencer**.
- Combat Skill: **Disarm**. Foe must drop (1) weapon.

Resourceful--can improvise tools, devices, and fixes. You can carry 4-5 odd looking items that become whatever is needed. Note that this is intended for lock-picks, crafting tools, musical instruments, dowsing rod, compass, smelling salts, bandages or bonds, and not for McGuffin, plot-averting Deus Ex Machina, or magic.

- At will: Escape from restraints.
- At will: You can spend 5 minutes roleplaying with your tools to open a lock once an event.
- You may spend 1 inspiration for a hint for a puzzle in a module.
- You may spend 2 inspiration to solve a puzzle in an escape room.
- If you can subvert an obstacle in the spirit of the game, go for it. Roleplay with your tools for one minute, give an explanation for why it works, however improbable ("My flute's notes jostled the latch!"), call "EUREKA!", and spend 5 inspiration to remove a physical obstacle (example: Open a sealed envelope without trace or move a heavy stone).
- You can read cards marked **Resourceful**.
- Combat skill: **Blind**. Player mimes throwing a handful of light or a flare at their opponent. Opponent must roleplay being blinded for the count of 5 (3 seconds).

Combat

Combat is a free skill. Anyone can wield a stick, sword, or 'fist' (a short red boffer between 4" to 6" in length meant to simulate a fist or claw attack.) This is opt in only, and will not be enough of a focus to spend a skill on. However, to add flavor and fun, each skill that you do take gives you a limited combat ability.

Every Combat skill costs 1 inspiration each time you use it.

- **Communication: Flank**--if 2 people are attacking the same foe, the foe must attack the one calling Flank three times before doing anything else.
- **Deception: Feint**--The opponent must hit your weapon before they can try to hit you again.
- **Defense: Parry**--Hits against you don't count for 3 seconds, but you cannot attack during that time. (Hold your weapon raised in front of you during that time.)
- **Diplomacy: I Can Offer Better Terms**--as long as you don't attack, you can offer to have the foe fight for you, and they won't attack until they say yes or no. This causes a brief pause in the fight between the two of you as you offer your bribe and they accept (and switch sides) or refuse and attack again.
- **Divination: I Saw That Coming** --can resist any called combat skill (but not regular hits)
- **Empathy: You Don't Want To Hurt Me**--Enemy must take 3 steps back, then can choose to attack you or someone else.
- **Espionage: Trip**--foe must take a knee.
- **Map/Intelligencer: Disarm**--foe must drop (1) weapon.
- **Resourceful: Blind**--player mimes throwing a handful of light or a flare at their opponent. The opponent must roleplay being blinded for the count of 5 (3 seconds).

SAFETY FIRST! Combat will always be intentional, consensual, and as safe as possible. If you take enough damage to fall unconscious, you need to remove yourself from combat for your own safety and the safety of others. You may indicate that you are unconscious in one of two ways: lower your weapon, put your free hand in a fist on top of your head, and move without fanfare to a safe place by a wall where you can stand or sit, OR lower your weapon, hold your free hand to your middle as though you have been grievously wounded, moan, and stagger carefully to a safe place by a wall, where you may dramatically collapse if you wish.

Character Progression

All Characters start with 2 skills. When certain conditions are met in game, every character will get a third skill, representing things you have learned over time.

While traditional magic is off the table (because your character does not have ten years to learn to do their first spell), magic will be something all characters can learn as the game progresses. As your characters as a group change the world, there will be global benefits. (Downsides? Nonsense. All fluffy bunnies and picnics here. Pay no attention to the bunnies' fangs.)

Donations

If you want to help out the LARP with labor, money, or props, there will be personal benefits (extra single use skills, rumors, information, a temporary extra point of inspiration, goodie bags, etc) as well as

cumulative group benefits. Our goal is to have everyone on a reasonably even footing, whether they can attend one event per year or four, and whether they start during year one or year three.

Sample Characters

Let's go back to Chris and Andy from our example on safe conflict. How did they come up with Tyr and Mobic?

Chris started with a character concept. They decided they wanted to play a gender-switched classic Regency heroine, a young man who is feeling pressured by family towards an arranged marriage to an older, higher ranked woman who he has no feelings for. As a sheltered aristocrat, Chris decided that some skills were not realistic for Tyr, so they quickly ruled out Deception, Defense, Espionage, and Resourceful. This leaves Communication, Diplomacy, Divination, Empathy, and Intelligencing. Chris reluctantly decides that Divination does not fit with Tyr's history, but keeps it as a consideration for when everyone gains a third skill later in the campaign. Chris narrows it down further by deciding that Tyr doesn't have the contacts for Communication or Intelligencing, and settles on Empathy and Diplomacy as the best matches for the character.

Andy fell in love with Deception; Andy can talk well under pressure, and loves the idea of Alibi and Fast Talk, and the ability to hide objects in game. Espionage appeals similarly, and Andy decides that Mobic has to be a rogue. Andy decides that Mobic is nonbinary, orphaned early, and grew up on the streets before being rescued by one of the Dowager Empress's agents. Mobic is fiercely loyal to the Dowager Empress, on

the suspicious side, and a little hot tempered when they feel safe enough to reveal their feelings.

Game Effects

ALIBI: Gives another character an alibi for a crime. If there was more than one witness, you'll need I'M ALL IN.

BESTOW DODGE: Target gets one Dodge that will be used on the next attack.

BLIND: Subject mimes being blinded for 3 seconds.

CALM: Subject will feel more in control of their emotions and negative emotions like anger and fear are lessened.

COMFORT: alleviates emotional pain to a mild level--not gone, but better.

DISARM: Target drops 1 weapon

DODGE: the attack missed

EUREKA: With resourceful use of tools, you overcome a physical obstacle.

FEINT: Opponent must strike your weapon before trying to hit you again.

FLANK: When two people are fighting the same foe, the foe must concentrate solely on the one calling Flank for 3 seconds.

I CAN OFFER BETTER TERMS: as long as you don't attack, you can offer to have the foe fight for you, and they can't attack until they say yes or no.

I'M ALL IN FOR X: When trying to give an alibi for someone who was seen by multiple people or with compelling evidence, you must give your max inspiration. If you are down one from full, you can still do it, but you'll fall unconscious from the strain afterwards.

INSPIRATION: Target is returned to full Inspiration.

I SAW THAT COMING: Avoids called effect, does not work on uncalled shots.

NO WAIT LISTEN: Target is befuddled by 5 minutes of Fast Talk, allowing the rest of the player group to escape or pull off an act of deception.

PARRY: Person calling this holds their weapon in front of them, and cannot attack, but hits against them don't count for 3 seconds.

PERSUADE: After 5 minutes of talking with someone with an opposing point of view, you may spend 1 inspiration to call **Persuade** to have them *consider* your view. This is the beginning of negotiations, not the end.

SENSE EMOTION: Subject will respond with a one word answer OOG.

SENSE MOTIVE: Subject will respond with a one word answer OOG.

TELL ME MORE: When engaged in conversation by an NPC, this will cause them to tell you the latest gossip.

THIS IS ALL A MISUNDERSTANDING: As long as no one in your group is attacking and you can talk for one minute, you can talk your way out of trouble. Effect only lasts 5 minutes.

TRIP: Target must take a knee

YOU DON'T WANT TO HURT ME: Enemy must take 3 steps back, then can choose to attack you or someone else

COSTUMING

If you are from **Vestalia**, generic medieval to renaissance European clothing is appropriate, from a simple belted tunic over nondescript pants to a fancy or intricate costume. If you were initially from one of the nearby countries, **Innox** tends more toward furs and leather, **Acier** to flowing garments, scarves, and plentiful jewelry, and **Cascalon** to extremes of fashion (A fake bird in your hair? Why not?). Avoid

obviously modern clothing. Shoes are hard; go for safety and comfort first, and black sneakers are preferred over louder colors but not mandatory. Boots are often a good choice. Never forget the flair the right hat can provide! (Note: avoid using anything for costuming with real world religious connotations, please.)

Stickering

You may find objects in the game that have round colored stickers on them. Here are the meanings for the colors:

Red: This object cannot be moved.

Red with a number written on it: This object is heavy but can be moved with this number of people working together.

Yellow: This is an in-game item and can be taken, sold, traded, etc.

Blue: This item is a prop and should be left in the room.

If there is no sticker, assume it would be blue for a prop.

History & Lore

Vestalia

The Duchy of Vestalia predated the Cascalian Empire. With most of its temperate woods and plains wild at the time, the Duchy was granted to the first Duke for heroism against some monster. Records are flowery and make it sound like Duke Gandry I defeated something supernatural,

although scholars believe it was likely a large bear, possibly rabid, from the accounts.

The Kingdom of Mirrod, which contained the Duchy of Vestalia, fell to the Cascalian Empire a few centuries later. The Duchy did not. Fairly isolated and well defended both by wilderness and strong walls, they persevered. They joined with a few other fragments of the Kingdom, and Duchess Elandin the second proved to be an excellent strategist. Having strengthened her own position, she started to make allegiances across the continent. She increased the duchy to a Kingdom, and was recrowned in her seventies as Queen.

More and more countries desiring to escape Cascalon's grip turned to this bulwark in the storm. Elandin's great grandchild was the first Empron. The age of the Cascalian Empire was over. The Vestalian Empire had begun.

Acier

Acier has the most useful sea coast of the continent, and the best trade routes. This made them, long centuries ago, the first area conquered by the Cascalian Empire, back when they were a dozen thriving and competing nations. They did not band together when the Cascalian Empire began to pick them off one by one, and so they fell like a column of tiles, each one's fall making the next easier to defeat.

When the Empire was busy fighting the Innox and the Duchy of Vestalia, leaders of the deposed countries began to meet and plan. When the Empire started to lose battles, then territory, they began to marshall supplies and secret armies. When most of the fighting force of the

Empire was elsewhere, they struck. Twelve together could do what each alone could not. The Empire lost its sea advantage and a third of its land in one harrowing month.

For the first century or so, Acier held its grudge against the fading Empire, but with Cascalon reduced to the size and power of its neighbors, and with no one left living who had spoken to someone alive under their rule, profit outweighed prejudice.

Cascalon

The former Cascalian Empire lingers on in the imaginations and customs of the much reduced Cascalon. Once a military and cultural powerhouse, its rise and fall is as much the province of myth as of history.

The people of Cascalon feel robbed of their prior glory, and still largely believe themselves better than the rest of the world. They steal voraciously from the arts and culture of others, but driving it to a place beyond the limits of tradition--or, some say, of taste. No feat of architecture or style of dress is too far, however impractical it might be.

People who leave Cascalon for good tell of grave imbalances between rich and poor, powerful and weak. Even the poorest of those who stay however believe their lives to be infinitely richer by association. National sentiment runs particularly strong here.

Innox

The people of Innox share with the original Duchy of Vestalia the distinction of being the only ones never conquered by the Cascalian Empire. Their climate is cold, their people largely nomadic, and they were ruthless, more than once tricking an army into an evacuated city and burning it around them. They value connections much more than possessions, and it is a proverb that to own more than one can carry is the mark of a fool. While they have built up a handful of cities in the centuries since the Cascalian empire fell, buildings in them are not owned, and residents rarely stay longer than a few years.

Clothing is utilitarian, but often with small embellishments to make it distinctive. Jewelry is also utilitarian, with hair clips doubling as weapons, bracelets as tools for skinning or working hides, and necklaces strung with small tools or a packet of herbs. Tools tend to be distinctive and beautiful. Leather and furs are favored, with lighter fabrics during the brief summers.

The Wider World

Traders come from beyond the seas, and while the ships come to Acier, individual traders range throughout the lands, buying and selling story and song as well as material goods.