PENUMBRA

DYNASTIES AND DEMAGOGUES

THE SOURCEBOOK OF POLITICAL INTRIGUE

BY CHRIS AYLOTT

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CREDITS

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

By day, Chris Aylott is a mild-mannered owner of the Space-Crime Continuum bookstore, but at night he turns into a crazed writer who never quite got over losing that election for 9th-grade class treasurer. He lives in western Massachusetts with his wife Deb and two cats, and can be reached at **www.spacecrime.com.**

SPECIAL THANKS

To Deb Tomaselli, for helping me get this from my head to the page.

For my mom and dad, for never being worried that I might fail.
— Chris Aylott

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WHAT ARE POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS?

Five minutes, Hamlin thought. Five minutes to complete a decade's work.

He stood at the end of a shrinking line of petitioners. The emperor didn't like long audiences — making decisions interfered with his drinking. He liked short speeches, snap decisions, then off to the thirty-course banquet. His flatterers called it "efficient."

Hamlin shuffled a few steps forward and remembered conspiring with his fellow students over pints of ale, nights that ended with him fleeing through the alleys of Lofdornen from an acrid cloud that called his name. He escaped the roundup, left the city, changed his name and wandered the land. He saved lives, made friends.

He remembered the deal with the dragon, and the betrayal that followed. As the emperor rejected a failing farmer's plea for the services of a weather wizard, Hamlin remembered coming home a hero, standing for election, and watching the roses pile up in front of him as the voters made their choice.

It had been good to be a senator, good to make some of the changes he and his friends had dreamed of. He championed laws and solved problems. He led missions to the farthest reaches of the empire. And when the troubles came to Lofdornen, he found a way to replace the mad old governor and restore peace while he made his alliances.

Ten years to get to the step he was standing on now. Five minutes to convince a capricious man to grant his plea. As he made his bows, Hamlin remembered his meeting with the empress two nights ago. She had offered him any position, any reward, anything he wanted in exchange for giving up the matter of Lofdornen. Her family came from that province; if Hamlin succeeded it would be a great blow to her power in the Imperial household.

The emperor yawned and wiggled a finger at his officiate, a barbarian from the Wildlands named Garnal. With a sepulchral grunt, the brute hefted a timeglass and turned it over. Brightly colored sands raced down the sides of the glass.

"Speak," Garnal said.

Hamlin took a deep breath, turned to the audience, and opened his scroll. Five minutes to change the world, he thought.

"Most Glorious Emperor, most elegant court," he began. "Today I ask that your attention turn to a most serious matter. The people of my province seek independence ..."

WHAT'S IN THIS BOOK

Genghis Khan built an empire. Nero fiddled while Rome burned. Queen Elizabeth protected her throne with wiliness, charisma, and a puny fleet of armed merchant ships. Rulers make history.

Dynasties and Demagogues will help you make some history of your own. If you're a game moderator, you'll find political settings, character ideas, and lots of help constructing adventures and campaigns. If you're a player, you'll find feats, spells, magic items, and prestige classes that will help your character rise to a position of power. PCs can become ambitious leaders on a quest for personal power, or dedicated rulers trying to guide a troubled nation. They can be revolutionaries out to overthrow the system, or the agents assigned to defend it. A political game can have whatever mix of physical action and personal interaction you like — but the fiercest battles may be fought with words rather than swords.

Dynasties and Demagogues is divided into three sections:

The first section discusses the basic features of political campaigns by walking players and GMs through a sample political adventure. It then presents eight political systems, shows how their weaknesses and strengths can affect the campaign, and explores how political systems change when you add fantasy races and magic to the mix.

The second section focuses on political characters. It includes construction guidelines and a wide variety of skills, feats, and prestige classes.

The third section presents detailed rules for debates, votes, and elections. It shows how to develop political ideas into adventures and campaigns, and how to develop power-hungry villains that players will love to hate.

WHAT ARE POLITICAL ADVENTURES LIKE?

Political adventures have fewer combats and more attempts to influence other characters than other fantasy adventures. Investigation is often crucial, since it's hard to protect yourself against a rival's plans unless you know what those plans are.

In a political adventure, most challenges come from rivals and other non-player characters. Personal connections drive political games — the PCs must figure out what the other characters want and how to turn that information to their own advantage. They may be able to launch a counter-plot that foils a rival's plans, or turn that rival into an ally by offering a mutually beneficial deal. Words accomplish a lot in political games.

That doesn't mean there's no action. Player characters often sneak into dangerous situations or fight their way out of them. Assassinations, duels, and other physical challenges settle many political disputes, so the PCs must be ready for anything.

Choices matter in political adventures. Deals and allegiances are like the different passages of a dungeon — each decision takes the story down a different route. And just like dungeons, political plots are full of traps and pitfalls. Steering around them requires careful thought, cunning, and a bit of foresight.

The short adventure below highlights some of the differences between a traditional fantasy adventure and a political adventure.

HEY! SHOULD I BE READING THIS ADVENTURE?

In a word, "yes." If you're a player, you might want to check with your GM to make sure he isn't running this next week. Unless that's the case, though, there's some useful advice here for you.

DECEPTION AT VILLA ZARIOS

Villa Zarios (ZAHR-ee-ohes) is a comfortable estate in the wine country of Dellaria (DELL-uh-ree-uh). The estate owes fealty to Dona Carlotta Ricella (DOEN-a car-LAHT-uh ree-CHELL-uh), second cousin to the queen. Villa Zarios is one of the dona's favorite places — she spent much of her childhood there, and she only entrusts stewardship of the estate to her most favored vassals.

The villa produces three excellent wines, one of which has been favored with the Queen's Mark. It also offers another, more important advantage to Dona Carlotta — a good view of the lands of her greatest rival, Don Miguel Pastoli (DAHN mee-GELL puh-STOLE-ee). Pastoli and Ricella constantly compete for prestige in the court and control of the wine business — and neither is afraid of dirty tricks.

Until recently, the estate was controlled by Vincenzo (vihn-CHEHN-zoe), a knight with over twenty years of service to Dona Carlotta. Vincenzo has mismanaged the estate for years, however, and the quality of the Zarios wines is slipping. Carlotta is fed up, and has arranged a quiet retirement for him.

Carlotta wants the player characters to take charge of the villa. She suspects that Don Miguel is sabotaging the crops, and would like that problem solved. Carlotta would also be pleased if Pastoli encountered a few problems of his own.

The player characters are 5th-level characters who owe allegiance to Dona Carlotta.

They may have rescued her from a previous intrigue or been hired to carry out a task for her. One or more characters might also be a relative or heir of the dona. The specifics of the relationship should be established when the adventure begins, but are only important insofar as it justifies Carlotta's decision to entrust the estate to the PCs.

GM Notes: People are the most important part of a political adventure, so the first task is to sketch out the relationships between the major NPCs. We've chosen a feudal setting, one where lords and vassals owe allegiance to each other in a complicated web of mutual obligation. Loyalty and trust is an important part of feudalism, so we'll be creating encounters that test those qualities. Don Miguel should be a challenging rival for the player characters, and we've got the queen as a wild card in the plot.

We've also used the Italian countryside as an inspiration for the setting. Italy is renowned for sun, wine, and intrigue, all of which add atmosphere to the adventure. The names and scenery should orient the players and get them in the mood, even if they're playing traditional fantasy characters like elves and gnomes and sorcerers. The Italian names aren't necessary (and can be changed if they don't fit the campaign), but the sound of the names creates expectations about the adventure.

By the way, this adventure refers to two new prestige classes: the information mage and the politician. You can find more information about these in Chapter Four.

Player Notes: Take a look at what's defined so far. There's a lot of room for different character concepts — any class or race is fine — but the scenario requires the characters to be on good terms with each other and with their patron. This may not be the best

time to play your insane lone-wolf, half-orc assassin. It also doesn't hurt to pick a name and character history that fits in with the rest of the setting.

In the same way, relatives and heirs can present some problems. Relationships are important in a political game, and setting up a strong relationship with an NPC leads to lots of plot and roleplaying opportunities. However, it's important to remember that having a special status in the game does not translate to a special status at the game table.

PART ONE: BREAKFAST WITH DONA CARLOTTA

The adventure begins at the city residence of Dona Carlotta. The PCs have been invited to breakfast with the dona, something she only offers when she wants to speak about important matters.

They arrive just in time to see Vincenzo being led out of the breakfast room. Carlotta has removed him from his position as steward of Villa Zarios, and he is in

tears. As he passes the PCs, Vincenzo tells them, "Beware of her! She will use you and discard you as she likes. Twenty years of service, and I am turned out with ten words!"

Any character may make a Knowledge (nobility and royalty) check (DC 10) to know that Vincenzo is the steward at Villa Zarios and understand that Carlotta has removed him from his office.

Vincenzo is exaggerating when he says he has been turned out, as Carlotta has provided him with a small cottage and a pension. Carlotta will tell the PCs this if asked.

A guard hurries Vincenzo down the corridor, and the PCs are admitted to the dona's breakfast room. It is a cheerful space on a warm summer morning. The white stucco walls are painted with flowers, and sunlight streams in through a large bay window. Bees hum in the garden, and there is a smell of honeysuckle. Dona Carlotta is sitting at a table near the window, which is laid out with sweet cakes, coffee, tea, toast and jam. A tall man with a military bearing and long white mustachios stands at the foot of the table waiting for the PCs.

Dona Carlotta welcomes the PCs, gives them leave to sit, and introduces them to Antonio, the major-domo of Villa Zarios. (He remains standing.) Antonio manages the day-to-day affairs of the villa, and has done so since his retirement from the army seven years ago. He is formally polite, always speaks briefly and to the point, and clips off the ends of his words.

What Dona Carlotta and the PCs do not know is that Antonio is secretly in the pay of Carlotta's rival, Don Miguel. He has sabotaged the operations of the villa for years, and is the true cause of Vincenzo's and Dona Carlotta's troubles.

As they eat breakfast, Dona Carlotta tells the player characters about Villa Zarios, its troubles, and Don Miguel. She refers questions about the villa to Antonio, who accurately describes its layout (see map), resources (excellent, everything needed for great wine), and staff (about 30 farmers and household laborers, all demoralized). Feigning loyalty to Vincenzo, Antonio reluctantly "admits" that the household's problems were due to the old knight's indecisiveness and wandering mind.

Any character may make a Sense Motive check (DC 18) to notice contempt simmering under Antonio's polite demeanor.

As breakfast concludes, the dona asks the player characters to take over Villa Zarios. They have three months to fix the estate's problems and harvest the best crop they can. If the characters can do this, they may continue to hold the estate for her, providing them with a base of operations, a source of income, and chance to become part of the land's nobility. The villa is several hours journey outside the city; Carlotta wants the characters to leave by noon so they can be there in the early evening.

GM Notes: This first scene introduces the characters and the situation. It presents the PCs with an opportuni-

ANTONIO, CORRUPT MAJOR-DOMO

3rd-Level Human Rogue/2nd-Level Fighter

CR 5; SZ M (humanoid); HD 3d6+2d10+5; hp 40; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (Dex); Atk melee +5 (1d6+1, 18–20/x2, rapier) or melee +4 (1d4+1, 19–20/x2, dagger); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SA Sneak Attack +2d6; SQ Evasion, Traps, Uncanny Dodge; AL CN; SV Fort +5, Ref +5, Will +1; Str 13, Dex 15, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 11, Cha 13

Skills: Appraise +7, Bluff +8, Climb +5, Forgery +8, Gather Information +4, Handle Animal +6, Jump +6, Profession (steward) +7, Ride +7, Sense Motive +2, Spot +2, Swim +5

Feats: Dodge, Mobility, Sweet Voice of Reason (see Chapter Four), Weapon Finesse (rapier)

Possessions: Antonio has 6 doses of blue whinnis poison that he can apply to his rapier or his dagger. Blue whinnis poison requires Fortitude saves (DC 14) to prevent 1 point of temporary Constitution damage (primary damage) and unconsciousness (secondary damage).

Evasion (Ex): If exposed to any effect that normally allows a character to attempt a Reflex saving throw for half damage, Antonio takes no damage with a successful saving throw. Evasion can only be used if the rogue is wearing light armor or no armor.

Sneak Attack: Any time Antonio's target would be denied a Dexterity bonus to AC (whether the target actually has a Dexterity bonus or not), or when Antonio flanks the target, the rogue's attack deals extra damage. Antonio's extra damage is +2d6. Ranged attacks can only count as Sneak Attacks if the target is within 30 feet.

Traps: Rogues (and only rogues) can use the Search skill to locate traps when the task has a DC higher than 20. Finding a nonmagical trap has a DC of at least 20, higher if it is well hidden. Finding a magic trap has a DC of 25 + the level of the spell used to create it. Rogues (and only rogues) can use the Disable Device skill to disarm magic traps. A magic trap generally has a DC of 25 + the level of the spell used to create it.

Uncanny Dodge: Antonio retains any Dexterity bonus to AC if caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible attacker.

ty — if they can make the vineyards into a success, they'll gain wealth and power.

In a political game, exactly how much money you have is less important than the fact that you have it. The villa is a symbol of wealth; exactly how much income it provides is unimportant. (If you want to keep careful track of the wealth it provides, set a figure that is appropriate for the economics of your campaign.) You can use specific prices to dramatize the differences between characters, also. "Noble" characters like Dona Carlotta affect a disinterest in money, and disdain to discuss specific figures — this doesn't mean they don't care about money, just that they don't consider it a polite topic of conversation. Other characters are more grasping, and want to talk hard figures. Later on in the adventure, the druid Leesa provides an example of a character who likes to talk money, while Don Miguel's offers of cash to the PCs show a subtle lack of respect for them.

The breakfast establishes the social ranks of the characters in other ways, as well. As the ranking character, Carlotta remains sitting throughout. By bidding the characters sit, she establishes her power and shows that they rank higher than Antonio, who remains standing. Antonio's role as information provider makes him a subservient but valuable resource.

At the same time, this scene undermines the social relationships. Vincenzo's bitter exit shows that the dona is not always benevolent to her followers, and suspicious players may gather hints of Antonio's treachery.

Player Notes: As you see, there's a lot to be learned from this scene. In a political adventure, you need to examine people with the same care with which you examine a trap in a dungeon adventure. How the other characters stand and sit and speak can be important clues to their natures and agendas — if GM isn't describing these things to you, ask about them! Put your character's senses to work by paying attention to descriptions and dialogue.

PART TWO: OVER THE HILL AND THROUGH THE WOODS

After gathering their possessions, the PCs and Antonio set off for Villa Zarios. The party makes good time, and is only a few miles away at sunset.

The road the party is on leads through a wood and over several steep hills. The footing on the slopes is uncertain and requires careful attention, which makes this part of the road perfect for an ambush. Several local bandits are lying in wait for just this purpose.

Any PC may make a Spot check (DC 12) to avoid being surprised by the bandits. Due to the poor footing, any mounted PC must also make a Ride check (DC 12) to avoid being surprised.

As the party walks down a hill, six bandits walk out of the woods with swords drawn and surround the PCs. A seventh steps in front of the PCs, bows, and says, "Please drop your weapons and give us your gold, please." Five more bandits hide in the trees, ready to pepper the party with crossbow bolts.

The bandit leader is named Carlos, and he prefers to avoid violence. If the PCs hand over their purses, he thanks them and lets them go. If they resist, he and his men fight them only so long as the bandits have the upper hand. The bandits retreat into the woods as soon as the battle turns against them.

The bandits have placed a fallen tree trunk across the road ahead and dug a hole on the far side. Any character who jumps over the log discovers that the drop on the other side is longer than expected, which may lead to a nasty fall for the character or his horse.

Any character who jumps over the log must make a Jump check (DC 15) if on foot or a Ride check (DC 20) if mounted. If the Jump check is failed, the character falls prone on the ground and suffers 1d6 subdual damage. Any character who fails the Ride check suffers 1d6 normal damage instead.

If the party captures some of the bandits, they admit to having a "freehold" in the hills. The bandits have no ties to Don Miguel, though the PCs may not believe them if they say so. What the bandits don't know is that Antonio is aware of their presence and the location of their freehold. He's chosen to ignore them so far.

Any character who pays attention to Antonio's reactions to the attack may make a Sense Motive check opposed by Antonio's Bluff check. If the character succeeds, she notices that Antonio is neither surprised nor worried by the sudden appearance of the bandits. However, he becomes concerned if any of the bandits are captured and interrogated.

If the PCs capture any bandits, they must decide what to do with their prisoners. The queen's law states that bandits should be held until an inspector judges their crimes. The party can do this, but the PCs will have to make arrangements for the bandits to be held under guard at the villa until an inspector can be summoned. The PCs can also make a deal with the bandits — possibly enlisting them as allies — or mete out their own rough justice. Antonio does not object to any unusual action the characters take, but he may blackmail or betray the characters at a later date.

If he thinks it will help his situation, Carlos offers to trade some information for his freedom or a promise of better treatment. The bandits aren't the only people lurking in the woods — Carlos has spotted others moving around near his freehold.

This is the information that Antonio is concerned about. He and some cronies have hidden some of the villa's best wines in a cave near the bandits' camp, and he is worried that the bandits have seen him. Fortunately for him, the bandits can't identify the people they saw and have not discovered the cache of wine.

GM Notes: The bandits serve several purposes. They add an action scene to the plot. They are a red herring for players who are too eager to connect every part of the plot to Dona Carlotta's rival. They can also provide a clue that may lead the PCs to the traitor in their midst. Finally, the PCs may be able to turn them into useful allies.

PART THREE: GOOD HELP IS HARD TO FIND

The PCs arrive at the villa an hour after nightfall. The main building is large, built low and sturdy in a Mediterranean style. There's an inner courtyard with a garden, and the smells of the night blossoms are sweet.

The estate is a little shabby, though. The bushes are poorly trimmed, and dust covers too many surfaces within the house. Dinner is a lukewarm and greasy lamb stew served by a dour cook named Luisa (loo-EE-suh). The mattresses need airing.

If the characters inspect the premises, they discover that housekeeping isn't the estate's only problem. The grape vines are neglected, weeds are springing up in the gardens, and the farmhands are sullen and dispirited. Nobody seems to care if the day's work gets done.

Four farmhands stand out from the rest. These beefy ruffians answer only to Antonio, and are actually henchmen provided by Don Miguel. Their size and strength make

them essential for some of the heavier work on the estate, but they are secretly helping Antonio steal or destroy everything of value.

There's nothing fundamentally wrong with the estate. However, it's too big for the PCs to run by themselves. They need the help of the farmhands and the household staff, and they have to exercise some charm and leadership to get it.

The grapes need special attention to resume their normal growing pattern; any character may make a Knowledge (nature) check (DC 15) to adjust the irrigation of the vines and get the best growing conditions.

Any PC who inspects the estate's records must make an Appraise check opposed by Antonio's Forgery check. Any character who succeeds at this check notices that wine production should be much higher than what is shown in the books. For the last five years, the grape harvest has been too low for the acreage planted and the weather conditions recorded. Something's wrong here.

Most of the staff has an Unfriendly attitude towards the PCs. Improving that attitude requires a Diplomacy check — Indifferent is DC 15, Friendly is DC 25, and Helpful is DC 40, while a roll of less than DC 5 lowers their attitude to Hostile. To succeed at their mission, the PCs must change the staff's attitude to Friendly or Helpful.

The four ruffians have a Hostile attitude. They won't pick a fight with the PCs, but they do their best to sabotage any progress the party makes. If a combat situation develops, they have the same statistics as the bandits above. The Charisma checks to improve a Hostile attitude are as follows: Unfriendly is DC 20, Indifferent is DC 25, Friendly is DC 35, and Helpful is DC 40.

Note that the Charisma checks required to improve an attitude change when the attitude does. To improve an Indifferent attitude, a Charisma check DC 15 is required for improvement to Friendly,

CARLOS AND HIS MEN, BOTHERSOME BANDITS [12]

2nd-level Human Fighters

CR 2; SZ M (humanoid); HD 2d10+4; hp 15; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+1 Dex, +2 leather armor); Atk melee +4 (1d6+2, shortsword) or ranged +3 (1d8, 19–20/x2, light crossbow); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; AL CN; SV Fort +5, Ref +1, Will +0; Str 15, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 11, Cha 12

Skills: Climb +6, Hide +2, Jump +6

Feats: Dodge, Improved Initiative, Point Blank Shot, Precise Shot

Possessions: Carlos has two potions of *cure light wounds*.

The Villa Zarios
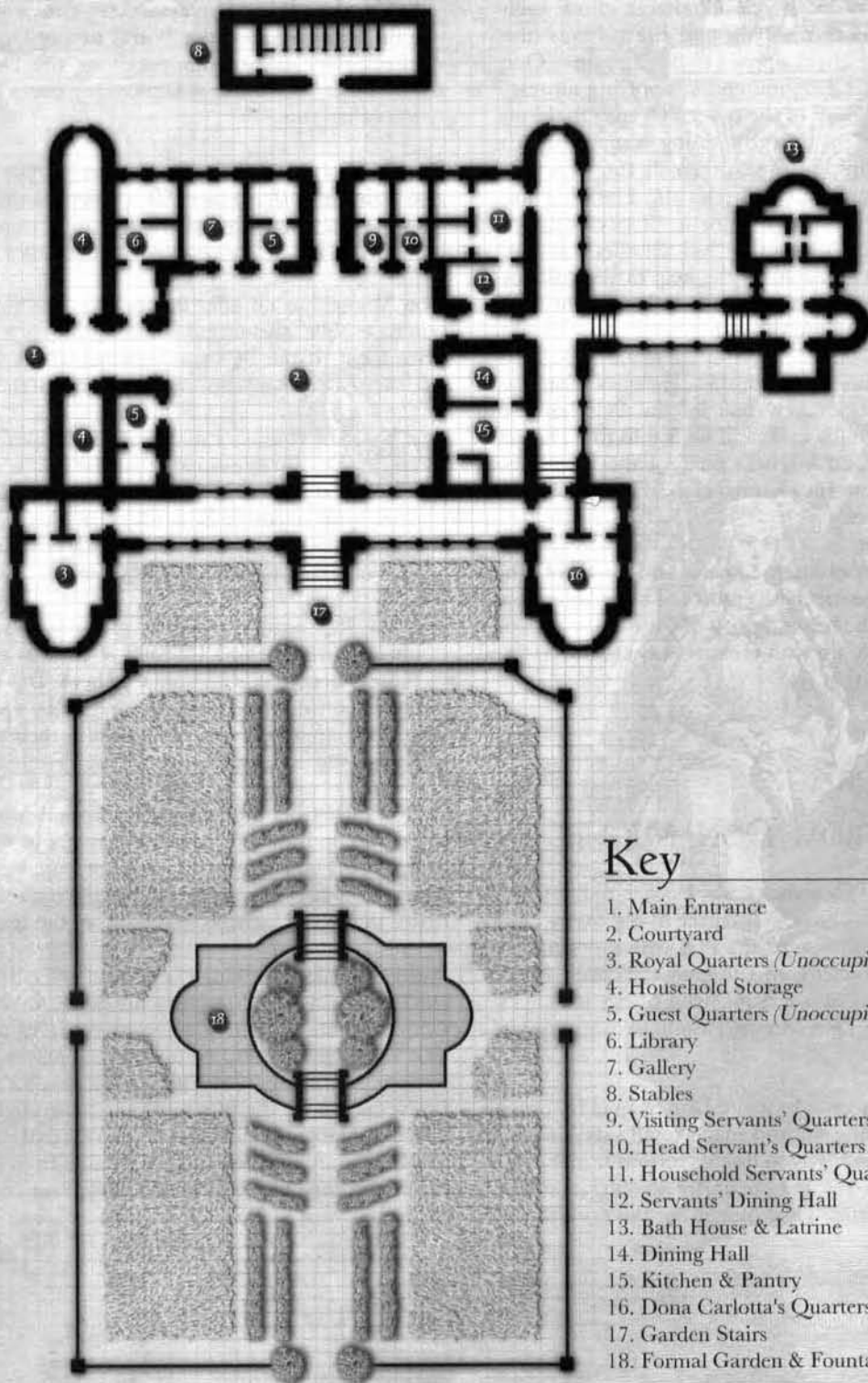
Key

1. Main Entrance
2. Courtyard
3. Royal Quarters *(Unoccupied)*
4. Household Storage
5. Guest Quarters *(Unoccupied)*
6. Library
7. Gallery
8. Stables
9. Visiting Servants' Quarters *(Unoccupied)*
10. Head Servant's Quarters
11. Household Servants' Quarters
12. Servants' Dining Hall
13. Bath House & Latrine
14. Dining Hall
15. Kitchen & Pantry
16. Dona Carlotta's Quarters
17. Garden Stairs
18. Formal Garden & Fountain

1 Square = 5 feet

and DC 30 for Helpful, while a roll less than DC 1 reduces the attitude to Unfriendly. See the standard D20 System Influencing NPC Attitudes tables, which are also included in Chapter Four.

The party may make one Charisma check each week to influence the help and the ruffians (the same influence check applies to both groups). One PC makes the Charisma check, applying all relevant bonuses. Each of the other PCs may make an "aid another" action by doing something to befriend and inspire the workers at the villa; this requires a Charisma check (DC 10). The PC making the influence check gains a +2 circumstance bonus for each successful "aid another" action. Each PC who antagonizes the help or the ruffians causes the character making the influence check to suffer a –2 penalty to the roll.

Antonio maintains a low profile. He goes along with whatever requests or new policies the PCs have, and even turns out troublemakers if he is told to. (The ruffians go back to Don Miguel's estate if they are thrown out.) Antonio wants the characters to trust him so that he can act freely later.

Player Notes: Winning the hearts and minds of others is important in political adventures. This is an opportunity to show off the better aspects of your character's personality and come up with creative ways to impress and inspire the workers.

PART FOUR:
A VISIT FROM DON MIGUEL

A week after the PCs arrive, a black coach pulls up at the front door of Villa Zarios. A driver in red livery climbs off the coach and presents the PCs with a calling card. (If no player character comes to greet the coach, the driver gives the card to a servant, who brings it to a PC.) The card is from Don Miguel Pastoli, who is waiting in the coach.

The proper etiquette is to invite Don Miguel in, provide him with refreshments, and make small talk until both guest and host are ready to discuss serious business. The PCs are aware of this, but are under no obligation to follow proper etiquette. They may invite the don in, speak

with him at the front door, or send him away. They have control of the situation, but their politeness affects the Don's opinion of them.

Don Miguel respects polite behavior. If the player characters are courteous, they gain a +2 circumstance bonus to any Diplomacy check they make while receiving the Don. Any character may make a Diplomacy check (DC 10) to realize this.

Don Miguel is an energetic man in his 60s with curly gray hair and a sharp face. He speaks quietly and smiles a lot — even when other characters are turning down his best offer — but he always exudes a faint aura of menace.

Don Miguel has an offer for the PCs. He would like to purchase Villa Zarios and is willing to pay a handsome price for it. If the PCs can convince Dona Carlotta to sell, they can split a "commission" of 5% of the sale price.

Any character may make an Appraise check (DC 15) to estimate that the villa is worth at least half a million gold pieces. However, any character who makes a Sense Motive check (DC 10) realizes how furious the dona is likely to be at the idea of selling her childhood home.

If the PCs agree to Don Miguel's proposal, they must return to Dona Carlotta to present the offer. If they succeed at a Diplomacy check (DC 40), they convince Carlotta to sell. If they fail by more then ten, she angrily removes them from their position, ending the adventure.

If the PCs decline the Don's offer, he makes a more personal offer to them. "The estate may not be for sale," he says, "but I am always looking for capable men and women. Perhaps your interests and my interests coincide better than your interests and those of the dona?"

If the PCs decline Miguel's second offer, he takes his leave of them and continues his plans to wreck Dona Carlotta's estate. If they agree to enter his service, the don will offer each PC up to 100 gold pieces per month to steer the resources of Villa Zarios into his hands. His first request is for the PCs to allow his men to harvest the grapes in the south vineyard. If the PCs make a deal with the Don, they have no further trouble from Miguel for the rest of the adventure — but they must conceal their treachery from their original employer!

NEW COMMUNITY: VILLA ZARIOS

Size: Thorp; **Power Center:** Conventional (feudalism); **Power Center Alignment:** Lawful Good; **GP Limit:** 40 gp; **Assets:** 60 gp; **Population:** 31, all human

Authority Figures: Currently, the player characters.

Important Characters: Antonio, the major-domo; Luisa, the cook; Giovanni, a ruffian.

GM Notes: Don Miguel is the villain of this adventure. He takes no direct action against the PCs, but he hires and instructs the people who do. Since the players won't see much of the Don, this scene introduces them to his personality and goals.

The week that passes between the characters' arrival and Don Miguel's is also typical of political adventures, which can take place over weeks, months, or even years.

Player Notes: Loyalty continues to be a major theme of the adventure, and the choices here aren't as obvious as they seem to be. Sure, most PC groups will remain loyal to their patron and reject Don Miguel's — but you don't have to.

This is a moment when you have a lot of control over the plot. The relationships you choose are just like the branching passages of a dungeon. Each choice leads you to different challenges and dangers. However, most game moderators don't map out a plot as thoroughly as they would map out a dungeon. They figure out the major branches, but most plots have too many variations to explore every possible twist.

That doesn't mean you shouldn't follow an unusual plot twist that pleases you. However, it does mean that you should be ready to cut the GM some slack if he has to improvise a response.

In the interests of simplicity, we're only going to follow the most likely plotline for this adventure. Just keep in mind that there are always other possibilities.

PART FIVE: TIT FOR TAT

Having failed to buy what he wants, Don Miguel sets out to ruin Villa Zarios. The unsentimental don does not understand Dona Carlotta's attachment to the estate, and believes that she will sell it if it becomes worthless to her.

Don Miguel has hired a druid named Leesa (LEE-suh) to enhance his crops. (Druids normally have little interest in agriculture, but Miguel has promised to speak to the queen about expanding her order's sacred groves.) What druids give, they can take away, so Miguel instructs her to hinder the growth of the vineyards at Villa Zarios.

The first indication the PCs have of this is when the farmhands report blight in the southern vineyard. If they examine the vines, they see that the leaves and grapes have become small and sickly overnight.

A Knowledge (nature) or Wilderness Lore check (DC 12) determines that the vines are free of disease and have been stunted by a magical effect. A Spellcraft check (DC 18) identifies the spell as *diminish plants*. The spell can be reversed with a *plant growth* spell.

Leesa blights another part of the vineyard that night and for at least three nights following, doing serious damage to the crop if she is not stopped.

The PCs can keep watch and attempt to intercept the druid, but Antonio and the four ruffians are keeping tabs on them. Unless the PCs conceal their activities, Antonio

DON MIGUEL PASTOLI, UNSCRUPULOUS NOBLE

5th-Level Human Aristocrat/3rd-Level Politician

CR 7; SZ M (humanoid); HD 5d8+3d4+8; hp 37; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk melee +4 (1d6, 18–20/x2, rapier); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Compelling Promise, Matching Speech, Personal Touch, Sense of the Room; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +2, Will +9; Str 11, Dex 10, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 13, Cha 15

Skills: Bluff +9, Diplomacy +14, Gather Information +6, Knowledge (local) +8, Knowledge (nobility) +8, Perform (oratory) +10, Ride +4, Sense Motive +13

Feats: Dangerous Insinuations (see Chapter Four), Expertise, Iron Will, Leadership

Compelling Promise: Don Miguel gains a +2 influence bonus to Diplomacy checks when he makes a promise to be fulfilled later. He is not required to fulfill the promise.

Matching Speech: Don Miguel inspires confidence and trust by talking in the same way as the person he is trying to influ-

ence. This gives him a +2 reaction bonus on Bluff, Diplomacy, Disguise, and Perform (oratory) checks.

Personal Touch: When Don Miguel greets someone, the politician may make a Knowledge (local) check (DC 15) to remember a flattering fact about him. Don Miguel may make this check for each character he meets, but he may only make it once every 24 hours for any specific character. If he succeeds at the check, he may mention this fact in his greeting and gain a +2 bonus to one Bluff, Diplomacy, or Sense Motive check involving that character. The bonus must be used within one hour after it is received.

Sense of the Room: Don Miguel may make a Sense Motive check (DC 18) to learn the needs and goals of a group of people. Each attempt requires ten minutes of conversation with the members of the group. If the check is successful, he understands what each person in the group hopes to accomplish and why. He is aware of any differences in agenda between the members of the group, and which members of the group (if any) are withholding relevant information.

warns the Don, who instructs Leesa to postpone her visits. Don Miguel sends Leesa out again after the PCs give up waiting, which should drive them up the wall.

There are several ways that the player characters can stop Leesa. Killing her is legal (she's a dangerous trespasser) and will obviously prevent further visits. Seriously injuring or frightening her is just as effective, since Leesa has no reason to risk her life for this job. The PCs may also try win the druid's loyalty by offering her a better deal.

To buy Leesa's loyalty, the character making the offer must make a Diplomacy check opposed by her Appraise check. Every 50 gp the characters offer provides a +1 bonus to the Diplomacy check.

Once the situation with Leesa is dealt with, Don Miguel launches his next plan. He calls his men together to hunt an owlbear that has made its lair in the woods near the villa. After locating the owlbear, he and his men herd it into the vineyards of Villa Zarios.

The hunt is held on a fine summer day as the harvest begins. Almost everyone in the estate is picking grapes in the vineyards, including the player characters. (There should be at least one PC on the scene, even if the character is only stopping by to make a routine check on the picking.) The characters hear horns and the sounds of hounds in the woods, and may notice that they're getting closer as the morning wears on.

Any PC may make a Listen check (DC 15) to notice that the hunt is getting closer. When the owlbear appears, each PC must succeed at Spot check or a Listen check (DC 15) or be surprised.

As the harvesters work, there is a shrieking noise and a baying of hounds. A full-grown owlbear bursts out of the trees. The farmhands flee screaming as the owlbear rampages through the vineyard.

LEESA, OPPORTUNISTIC DRUID

6th-Level Elf Druid

CR 6; SZ M (humanoid); HD 6d8+6; hp 33; Init +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+1 Dex, +3 hide armor, +2 large wooden shield); Atk melee +4 (1d6, x2 cudgel); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SA Spells; SQ Animal Companion, Elven Traits, Nature Sense, Resist Nature's Lure, Spells, Trackless Step, Wild Shape, Woodland Stride; AL N; SV Fort +6, Ref +4, Will +7; Str 11, Dex 14, Con 13, Int 11, Wis 14, Cha 10

Skills: Appraise +4, Animal Empathy +2, Concentration +7, Handle Animal +2, Knowledge (nature) +6, Spellcraft +6, Wilderness Lore +8

Feats: Combat Casting, Dodge, Improved Initiative

Animal Companion: Leesa's animal companion is a wolf; see the spell *animal friendship* and the standard D20 System stats for a wolf.

Elven Traits (Ex): Elves are immune to magic *sleep* spells and effects, have a +2 racial bonus to Will saves against enchantment spells or effects, have Low-light Vision that lets them see twice as far as a human in starlight, moonlight, or torchlight, and an elf who merely passes within five feet of a secret or concealed door is entitled to a Search check as though actively looking for it.

Nature Sense: A druid can identify plants and animals (their species and special traits) with perfect accuracy. The druid can determine whether water is safe to drink or dangerous.

Resist Nature's Lure: A druid gains a +4 bonus to saving throws against the spell-like abilities of fey.

Spells: (5/4/4/2) Leesa has prepared the following spells. The DC to resist her spells is 12 + the spell level.

0 Level — *detect magic, detect poison, flare, know direction, light*
1st Level — *detect snares and pits, obscuring mist, pass without trace, entangle*
2nd Level — *barkskin, hold animal, summon swarm, tree shape*
3rd Level — *diminish plants, poison*

Trackless Step: A druid leaves no trail in natural surroundings and cannot be tracked.

Wild Shape (Sp): Leesa has the spell-like ability to *polymorph self* into a Small or Medium-size animal (but not a dire animal) and back again twice per day. Unlike the standard use of the spell, however, the druid may only adopt one form; Leesa can take the form of an eagle. As stated in the spell description, the druid regains hit points as if he or she has rested for a day. The druid does not risk the standard penalty for being disoriented while in the wild shape.

Woodland Stride: A druid may move through natural thorns, briars, overgrown areas, and similar terrain at her normal speed and without suffering damage or other impairment. However, thorns, briars, and overgrown areas that are enchanted or magically manipulated to impede motion still affect the druid.

Note: Leesa is also accompanied by two 2nd-level fighters, who use the bandits' stat block from Part Two.

After the PCs have dealt with the owlbear, Don Miguel and his hunters emerge from the forest. He apologizes for disrupting the harvest, thanks the characters for dealing with such a dangerous creature, and then takes his leave of them.

Don Miguel's final move against the PCs, described below, is a desperate one. His previous plans could be denied or explained away, but this action is direct assault. If any witnesses survive to bring testimony to the queen or her inspector, Miguel will be ruined.

Late one evening, Miguel and his men sneak up to the villa. They are met by Antonio and the four ruffians (assuming Antonio and the ruffians have not been exposed by the PCs), who incapacitate any characters on watch.

They pile brush and dried vines against the windows of the villa, hammer spikes into the window and door sills, set the brush alight, and toss flasks of alchemist's fire through the windows.

The stucco walls of the house resist the blaze, but smoke spreads rapidly through the interior of the house. The PCs must either put the fire out or get themselves and the servants out of the villa. If they do so quickly enough, they may be able to confront and capture Don Miguel.

There are 26 servants in the villa. Each round, 1d4 servants collapse and are incapacitated by the smoke. The PCs can carry the servants out themselves or make Heal checks (DC 12) to revive them. Each Heal check is a move-equivalent action, and it takes two rounds to carry a person to safety.

Each PC must make a Fortitude save (DC 15 + 1 for each successive check) each round or spend the round coughing and choking from the smoke. After the first round of coughing, each round of coughing does 1d6 subdual damage.

The doors and windows have been nailed shut. Breaking them open requires a Strength check (DC 20). A character may smash the glass of a window with an easier Strength check (DC 12), but climbing through the

A LARGE AND ANGRY OWLBEAR

Large Beast

CR 6; SZ L; HD 8d10+32; hp 75; Init +1; Spd 30 ft.; AC 15 (–1 size, +1 Dex, +5 natural); Atk melee +10 (1d6+5, 2 claws), melee +5 (1d8+2, bite); Face 5 ft. x 10 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SA Improved Grab; SQ Darkvision, Low-light Vision, Scent; AL N; SV Fort +10, Ref +7, Will +3; Str 21, Dex 12, Con 19, Int 2, Wis 12, Cha 10

Skills: Listen +10, Spot +8

Beast: Beasts have Low-light Vision and Darkvision with a range of 60 feet.

Improved Grab (Ex): If the owlbear hits an opponent of at least one size category smaller than itself or smaller with its claw attack, it deals normal damage and either attempts to start a grapple as a free action without provoking an attack of opportunity, or it pulls the opponent into its space without provoking an attack of opportunity and holds him with a –20 penalty to grapple checks, using its remaining attacks against other opponents. A successful hold does not deal any additional damage. Each successful grapple check it makes during successive rounds automatically deals claw damage.

Scent (Ex): Creatures with Scent can detect opponents within 30 feet by sense of smell, and can pinpoint the source of a scent if it is within 5 feet. They can follow tracks by smell, making a Wisdom check DC 10 + 2 per hour that the trail is cold.

smashed window requires a Reflex save (DC 15) to avoid cuts from the glass. Any character failing this save takes 1d6 damage.

Any PC who exits the house within 8 rounds of the beginning of the fire may make a Spot check (DC 15) to see Don Miguel and his men attempting to sneak away into the night. Don Miguel's men use the bandit statistics above.

Throughout this scene (actually a group of several related scenes), the player characters may launch their own plots against Don Miguel. Each time the don takes action against the PCs, the characters have a chance to respond before another action is taken.

What the PCs do is up to them. They could visit Don Miguel and negotiate with him. They can attempt to hire away his help, starting with the druid Leesa, or sabotage his crops. They could even sneak onto the estate and sabotage Miguel's winemaking by adding an alchemical concoction like winebane to the fermenting vats.

Any actions the PCs take against Don Miguel infuriate him, inspiring him to take his next action against the PCs. If the PCs respond in kind, this series of scenes escalates the conflict between them and the Don, leading to the Don's final assault on the villa.

GM Notes: These three action sequences provide a framework for the rest of the adventure. Players who like running and jumping and hitting things will have plenty to do during these scenes, and they provide opportunities for the PCs to interact with Don Miguel and the other characters.

Note that opposed Diplomacy versus Appraise checks, as are required to sway the druid Leesa to the PCs' side, are a good way to negotiate bribe prices. This represents buying a character's service rather than inspiring it. The NPC attitude rules represent a true change of heart, in which what the character believes is more important than what she is offered. In this case, Leesa has a Hostile attitude.

PART SIX: EXPOSING ANTONIO

During the events above, Antonio is as unhelpful as possible to the player characters. He misplaces their gear, forgets to send help, and passes any information he learns to Don Miguel.

If the players become suspicious of Antonio, their characters may make Sense Motive checks opposed by Antonio's Bluff check. A success reveals that Antonio is intentionally sabotaging their plans.

When Antonio learns information that may interest Don Miguel, he excuses himself and sends a ruffian to pass the information on. The PCs may follow him and observe this. The player characters may also search his room and find a crude map of a trail through the woods. If they follow the trail, they discover a small cave full of fine wines that Antonio has stolen.

The cache of wine is worth 1600 gold pieces on the open market. If the characters recover the wine and figure out who hid it, Dona Carlotta gives it to them as a reward. Less scrupulous characters may simply keep the wine for themselves.

Once the characters have discovered what Antonio is up to, they have several options. They may keep him in place and feed him disinformation to confuse Don Miguel. They may turn him out of the household, in which case he goes to the Don's estate. Arresting him presents complications, since the PCs will have to keep him under lock and key and prove his misdeeds to the queen's inspector. (This is easiest if they have the map leading to the stolen wine.)

The characters can also murder Antonio, but they'll have to conceal their crime. Scaring him off with threats is a better option. If the characters frighten Antonio enough and then let him go, he leaves the area and is never heard from again.

GM Notes: Antonio's treachery explains why the player characters have inadequate information and resources. It also gives them a mystery to solve and a treasure to find.

The value of the treasure is based on Antonio's challenge rating.

NEW ALCHEMICAL POTION: WINEBANE

Winebane is a black, foul-smelling liquid that accelerates the fermentation process and turns new wine into vinegar. One small flask costs 50 gp, and its contents destroy up to 10 barrels of wine. Winebane is made with an Alchemy check (DC 20). Detecting its presence in spoiled wine also requires an Alchemy check (DC 20). There is no way to reverse the process, though you can make a darn fine balsamic vinegar out of what's left.

PART SEVEN:
THE QUEEN'S INSPECTOR

Sometime during the events of Part Five, an inspector arrives from the queen. His mission is to appraise the estate's tax value. If the PCs captured the bandits from Part Two, Inspector Cardoni (cahr-DOH-nee) comes with a squad of troops to transport the bandits to the queen's judgment. He'll send the troops back to the capital with the bandits and remain behind to deal with his other business.

Cardoni is a thin half-elf with a hawk-like nose. He favors his human side, but his ears are slightly pointed and there is a glint of stars in his eyes. He can be kind, but he has heard rumors that Villa Zarios is concealing taxable assets. (The rumors were spread by Don Miguel.) He maintains a forbidding demeanor until he's convinced of the player characters' honesty — which may not happen, given that Antonio *is* cooking the estates' books.

GM Notes: The success of Cardoni's investigation depends on what the players are doing, not his own skills;

introduce him in response to story considerations, not die rolls. If the players already have their hands full dealing with Don Miguel, there's no reason to throw them more than they can handle. If the players have everything under control, then Cardoni can provide an extra challenge for them, discovering Antonio's deception at an inopportune moment.

Player Notes: Yes, the rumors are true. GMs really do love to throw extra challenges at players who are doing well. The good news for you is that good challenges also present opportunities. Cardoni is a potential problem for your characters, but he can also become a powerful ally.

If Cardoni discovers Antonio's creative bookkeeping, he confronts the PCs about it, asking for their word as gentlemen and ladies that they are not responsible. Each PC must make a Diplomacy check (DC 12). If more than half the PCs succeed at the check, the inspector is convinced of their honesty.

If the PCs have discovered what Antonio is up to and tolerated it — or if they are up to schemes of their own — then any character engaged in or aware of dishonest behavior must make an addi-

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⊚ INSPECTOR CARDONI, AGING SPY

7th-Level Half-Elf Wizard/2nd-Level Information Mage

CR 9; SZ M (humanoid); HD 9d4–9; hp 23; Init +6 (+2 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 14 (+2 Dex, +2 *ring of protection +2*); Atk melee +3 (1d6–1, 18–20/x2, rapier); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SA Spells; SQ Half-Elven Traits, Identify, Spell Mastery (Divination), Spells, Summon Familiar; AL CG; SV Fort +5, Ref +7, Will +9; Str 9, Dex 15, Con 9, Int 16, Wis 13, Cha 14

Skills: Alchemy +9, Craft (jewelry) +9, Concentration +2, Decipher Script +5, Disguise +6, Gather Information +10, Hide +4, Knowledge (arcana) +9, Move Silently +6, Ride +3, Sense Motive +6, Scry +7, Spellcraft +13

Feats: Brew Potion, Craft Wondrous Item, Expertise, Improved Initiative, Information Network (see Chapter Four)

Possessions: Cardoni bears a *queen's shilling* and carries eight more to give to new agents. He also has an *echo gem* (see Chapter Three) and a *ring of protection +2*.

Half-Elven Traits (Ex): Half-elves are immune to magic *sleep* spells and effects, have a +2 racial bonus to Will saves against enchantment spells or effects, and have Low-light Vision that lets them see twice as far as a human in starlight, moonlight, or torchlight. For all special abilities and effects, a half-elf is considered an elf.

Identify (Sp): Cardoni can cast *identify* once per day as a spell-like ability.

Summon Familiar: Cardoni has a small white rat named Sam as his familiar. Sam's stats are given at right; note that Cardoni gains a +2 modifier on Fortitude saves versus disease because his familiar is a rat.

Spell Mastery (Divination): Cardoni's spell mastery allows him to prepare the following spells without referring to his spellbook: *absorb information*, *detect thoughts*, and *scrying*.

Spells: (4/5/5/4/2/1) Cardoni knows the following spells; those prepared are marked with asterisks. The DC to resist his spells is 13 + the spell level.

0 Level — all, including *daze**, *light**, *mage hand**, and *detect magic**

1st Level — *charm person**, *change self**, *comprehend languages*, *cryptic mark* (see Chapter Three), *identify*, *mage armor**, *magic missile**, *spider climb**

2nd Level — *detect thoughts**, *knock**, *invisibility**, *web***

3rd Level — *absorb information** (see Chapter Three), *dispel magic**, *fly**, *haste**

4th Level — *confession's hand* (see Chapter Three), *confusion*, *secure shelter**, *scrying**

5th Level — *prying eyes**, *sending**

tional Bluff check opposed by the inspector's Sense Motive check to fool the inspector into believing nothing is wrong.

Should Cardoni come to trust the player characters, he pays careful attention to how they handle the conflict with Don Miguel. An inspector is the queen's eyes and ears, and one of Cardoni's responsibilities is to develop a network of allies and agents. If Cardoni likes what he sees of the player characters, he offers them a *queen's shilling* (see Chapter Three) at the end of the adventure.

A *queen's shilling* is a token that marks its bearer as an agent of the queen. Such agents are expected to look after the Crown's interests and report or eliminate threats to the nation. This can be a dangerous job, but the queen rewards her agents with lands, titles, and important positions.

It's possible for the characters to serve both Dona Carlotta and the queen, but Cardoni warns them that the day may come when they must betray one to serve the other. The characters must decide if they're willing to take that risk, because only death or the permission of the queen can free them from her service once they take the shilling.

Cardoni does not pressure the characters to take the shilling, but he is pleased if they do. He asks them to swear an oath to the queen, then puts the token into each character's hand. After that, he becomes almost avuncu-

lar — as far as he is concerned, the characters have joined the club.

GM Notes: As mentioned, the queen is the wild card in the deck. The inspector is her representative, and offers the player characters one more choice of loyalties.

Taking the shilling doesn't offer the characters any immediate reward, but it gives them contacts that will benefit them later. Contacts can be just as useful as a magic sword as long as you provide opportunities to use them.

The inspector's authority has other uses. If the player characters are up to no good, they must conceal their misdeeds from him. That adds tension to an adventure that might be deflated if the players decide that their characters are better off working with the villain than against him. Cardoni also helps wrap up the plot once Don Miguel takes overt action against the PCs. After the characters have confronted and defeated the don, they can simply turn him over to the inspector.

PART EIGHT: WRAPPING IT UP

The adventure ends when the characters have dealt with the problems posed by the estate, Antonio, Don Miguel, and Inspector Cardoni. To keep their position, the PCs must either defeat Don Miguel or settle his differences with Dona Carlotta; they must also convince Inspector Cardoni that they are running the estate honestly and properly. If they fail to accomplish these goals, they may

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SAM, CARDONI'S RAT FAMILIAR

Tiny Magical Beast

CR —; SZ T (magical beast); HD 9; hp 16; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft., climb 15 ft.; AC 18 (+2 size, +2 Dex, +4 natural); Atk melee +6 (1d3–4, bite); Face 2 1/2 ft. x 2 1/2 ft.; Reach 0 ft.; SA Share Spells; SQ Alertness, Empathic Link, Improved Evasion, Scent, Speak with Master, Speak with Rodents, Touch; AL N; SV Fort +2, Ref +7, Will +9; Str 2, Dex 15, Con 10, Int 9, Wis 12, Cha 2

Skills: Balance +10, Climb +12, Hide +18, Move Silently +10

Feats: Weapon Finesse (bite)

Alertness: While in the presence of Sam, Cardoni gains the Alertness feat, giving him a +2 bonus to Listen and Spot checks.

Empathic Link (Su): Cardoni and Sam can communicate telepathically to a distance of up to one mile.

Improved Evasion (Ex): If subjected to an attack that allows a Reflex save for half damage, Sam takes no damage if he makes a successful saving throw and half damage even if the saving throw fails.

Scent: Animals with Scent can detect opponents within 30 feet by sense of smell, and can pinpoint the source of a scent if it is within 5 feet. They can follow tracks by smell, making a Wisdom check DC 10 + 2 per hour that the trail is cold.

Share Spells: Cardoni may have any spells he casts on himself also affect Sam as long as the rat is within five feet of its master.

Skills: Rats receive a +4 racial bonus to Hide and Move Silently checks and a +8 racial bonus to Balance checks. They use their Dexterity modifier for Climb checks.

Speak with Rodents: The familiar can communicate with rodents, including dire variants.

Speak with Master: A familiar and master can communicate verbally as if they were using a common language, though others cannot understand the communication without magical help.

Touch: Sam can deliver touch spells for Cardoni.

be removed from control of the estate, turned out of Dona Carlotta's service, or — in the case of blatant misdeeds — imprisoned.

If the characters succeed at these basic goals, Dona Carlotta confirms their stewardship of Villa Zarios. This position gives them a base of operations, a steady income, and the prestige of a position among the queen's vassals. As stewards of the estate, the characters can make appearances at court and use their position to gain more power.

Other goals of the adventure include restoring the morale of the villa's servants and exposing Antonio's treachery. If the characters succeed at these goals, they win more favor with Dona Carlotta. She may present each character with a small gift, or offer to fulfill a personal request. Also, if the PCs impress Inspector Cardoni, they gain a valuable ally and favor with the queen.

If Don Miguel is captured after trying to kill the PCs, the queen assigns his estate to Dona Carlotta. Bringing that property under control is a good starting point for a new adventure. Other follow-up adventures can include dealing with bandits and monsters around the estate, performing other tasks for the dona, forming alliances and rivalries with other minor vassals, trading the villa's wines, and finding ways to advance Dona Carlotta's interests in the queen's court.

GM Notes: Political adventures often have ambiguous conclusions or intangible rewards. There's no last room of the dungeon to explore or dragon to slay, so it's harder for players to evaluate their accomplishments. That's why it's important to make the results of the adventure clear to the players.

This ending ties up the loose ends and outlines the likely consequences of the player characters' actions. It distinguishes between the major goals of the adventure — the events that are crucial to the characters' success or failure — and the minor goals that need not be accomplished but can provide rewards for the characters.

Wrap-ups don't have to be long or complicated. Most political adventures have plenty of conversation, intrigue, and complications, so a simple summary makes it easy to remind the players of their characters' achievements.

SO WHAT'S DIFFERENT ABOUT A POLITICAL ADVENTURE?

As you can see from the sample adventure, political adventures are a lot like regular adventures. Good adventures have action, interesting characters, and tough decisions for the PCs to make, and political adventures are no exception. So what's different?

Political adventures focus on gaining power and status instead of material rewards like gold or magic. Relationships are more important, which means that game moderators and players have to pay attention to the ranks and social positions of important non-player characters. Defeating a political opponent often depends on getting information and influencing other characters.

Political adventures also present more choices for the player characters. In other adventures, dragons are for fighting, princes are for rescuing, and even those adventures that ask the characters to fight princes and rescue dragons discourage characters from doing the opposite.

Political adventures don't make this assumption. Changing sides and striking a deal with the "bad guy" may be a valid strategy for an ambitious group of player characters, and game moderators must plan for this possibility. The adventure must work no matter what side the PCs decide that they are on.

POWER AND THE PLAYERS

Any GM who starts a political roleplaying campaign must first consider these questions: "Are my players going to enjoy a struggle for power? Will they create characters who are compatible with this type of game?"

Of the two questions, the first is more important. Reluctant heroes doing their best in an uncomfortable situation are a staple of fantasy, but a bored player can bring a campaign to a screeching halt. For a political game to work, at least half of the players must be excited by battles of wits and complicated intrigues. If most of the group likes politics, the GM can keep the rest of the group entertained with the events and game action they prefer. If most of the group has other interests, then the GM is better off catering to those interests instead.

In *Robin's Laws of Good Game Mastering* (published by Steve Jackson Games, 2002), game designer Robin Laws suggests that roleplayers can be divided into seven categories: power gamers, butt-kickers, tacticians, specialists, method actors, storytellers, and casual gamers. Some of these categories are more interested in political intrigue than others. Before mixing politics into your game, consider your players and what they might like about a political campaign.

- *Power gamers* like to develop their characters' abilities. They may be excited about acquiring political

power, but they are more interested in having power and using it than the challenge of getting it. A power gamer only wants to become a king if doing so is obviously useful to her character.

- *Butt-kickers* like big fight scenes and the thrill of smashing orcs by the dozen. Political games rarely thrill them, but they're happy to follow along as long as there's plenty of action.

- *Tacticians* live for planning elaborate schemes and then pulling them off flawlessly. They are often focused on combat, but can easily be interested in political conflict. For a political campaign to stay interesting to a tactician, it must provide plenty of complications and opportunities to use planning skills.

- *Specialists* like to play a particular kind of character on a regular basis. Whether they love dwarf fighters or devil-may-care rogues, they stick with the same character concept from game to game. A specialist's interest in a political game varies greatly according to the kind of character he likes to play. Specialists who enjoy charismatic or intrigue-oriented characters love political games. Others may not be interested.

- *Method actors* are fascinated by their character's personality and inner life. As with specialists, their interest in a political plotline depends on the character they play. A method actor exploring a silver-tongued politician will be thrilled by a political game, and a method actor playing a paranoid half-orc will not. If you tell a method actor you're planning a political game, he will usually develop an appropriate character for it. Once that character is created, though, you should plan to adjust the campaign to fit the character rather than requiring the method actor to alter the character to more closely fit the campaign.

- *Storytellers* want to play an exciting story, and are often willing to adjust their characters or the actions they take to make the story more fun. They're usually thrilled by political campaigns.

- *Casual gamers* play mostly to hang out with the gaming group. They enjoy the game, but don't really care what happens next. They will go along with a political game, but will not want to be at the center of the action or make serious decisions about the direction of the plot.

Political games work better with plenty of storytellers or tacticians. A method actor is happy to get involved if his character has an interest in political intrigue, and motivated power gamers can drive the group right to the top of the power structure. Other players may go along with a political game, but are unlikely to move it forward — and savvy game moderators make sure they're rewarded for their patience with encounters that play to their interests and strengths.

TEAM-MATES OR COMPETITION?

Most of the time, the PCs should work as a team. Depending on the campaign, they may or may not have an official leader. It's easy for every PC to be a congressman if that's what the game is about, but only one PC can be the Supreme President for Life. The other PCs are going to have to take lower-ranking roles, but the players still make decisions as a group.

Another option is for the player characters to compete with each other in a quest for power. This can be an exciting game, but it poses practical difficulties. Competitive political games are divisive, and not every player likes that. Don't try to force the players to do something they won't enjoy.

Competitive power games also divide the game moderator's attention. If the player characters are competing with each other, the players will want to surprise each other with tricks and unexpected strategies. This requires secret communication with the game moderator, which reduces the amount of time the GM has to spend with the other players. If a campaign gets too secretive, many players could be left sitting on their hands for long periods of time. This kind of game works better if there is an extra game moderator to keep events moving.

One workable compromise is to combine teamwork and competition. In this kind of campaign, the PCs mostly work together and occasionally further their own agendas. As long as nobody minds the occasional betrayal, this can be an excellent campaign.

POLITICAL SETTINGS

In a political campaign, the player characters and NPCs constantly interact with the society they live in. The setting shapes their skills and personalities — they live by its rules, they defend its ideals, and they exploit its weaknesses. Choosing a setting is an important first step to developing a political campaign.

Note: Many of the examples in this chapter refer to prestige classes, feats, and spells found later in the book. The spells are in Chapter Three, while the prestige classes and feats are in Chapter Four.

REAL GOVERNMENTS AND GAMING

Real governments are tangles of procedure and influence. It can take years to pass an important law, and political professionals spend most of their time doing routine paperwork. Realistic political games can be a lot of fun with the right group of players, but that's not what this book is about. The political systems described below are settings, not simulations.

What does that mean? Well, think of your game as a play. This is a dangerous metaphor — actors follow scripts and roleplayers don't — so don't get too attached to it. But pretend for a moment that your game is a production of *Macbeth*.

Macbeth is about seizing power and being undone by ambition. It's the first great political thriller, and its setting in the dreary royal court of Scotland is essential to its mood. Macbeth's lust for the crown drives the plot, and in the end the kingdom itself rises up against him in the symbolic image of "Birnham Wood come to Dunsinane."

For all this talk of kings, however, the play never gets bogged down in the workings of the Scottish government. Macbeth plots and murders and feasts and runs mad through the castle, but he never does any of the ordinary business of being a king. That's not important. Watching it would be dull, and Shakespeare never lets dull stuff get in the way of a rip-roaring tragedy. The politics of the Scottish throne exist only to provide scenery and motivation.

If your gaming group were putting on a production of *Macbeth*, you wouldn't worry about the ordinary busi-

ness of the Scottish government either. You wouldn't check to see that Macbeth has the right number of advisors or that his castle was the right shape for a Scottish castle. You'd concentrate on the fight scenes and the great speeches and the always-popular running-mad bits. If you had a map of a real Scottish castle, you might use it for inspiration in building the set, but you wouldn't ruin a good fight scene by putting a wall in the way just because the map says it should be there.

That's the approach to take with the descriptions of governments and political systems that make up most of this chapter. In your game, they're scenery. They're important when they establish the mood of the game and set up the plot. If a detail inspires you or your players, that's wonderful. But the details are only important when they make the game more exciting and fun.

BUILDING A SET

Even though governments are scenery, as a game moderator you still have to spend some time constructing the

sets. Good political adventures depend on tight plotting and lots of conflict. We'll discuss how to construct plots in Chapter Six, but conflict is something you should build into your government from the start.

Why do you want conflict? Because conflict leads to plots. If the chieftain wants to hunt mastodons and the shaman wants to move the tribe south to winter quarters, you've got the beginnings of a plot right there. How is one side going to convince the other? What happens if neither the chieftain nor the shaman gives in? Who's going to get his way, and how?

All governments are ways for humans to live together without killing each other. The most basic form of government is one big caveman with a club announcing that the next caveperson who doesn't follow orders will get a thump on the head. Most governments are more complicated than that, but the basic principles are expressed with Og the Caveman: there are rules that everybody has to live by, there is somebody who decides what the rules are, there is somebody enforcing the rules, the rules aren't always fair, and not everybody is willing to obey them. These things are part of every government, but how they're set up can either encourage or discourage conflict.

Let's go back to the chieftain and the shaman. We could say that the chieftain makes the rules, and what he says goes. We could say the same thing of the shaman. We could say the shaman throws bones and that the tribe does whatever the gods say is right. Either of these options are reasonable ways to run a tribe — but they reduce conflict rather than increase it, and that's boring.

Other options add conflict instead of subtracting it. Perhaps what the chieftain says goes, but the shaman can declare that the chieftain is too old and timid and ask the tribe to depose him. Perhaps disagreements are resolved with a duel between two champions. Perhaps the only way to get divine guidance is for a brave party to climb Mount Quintaka and face the spirits of the restless dead. These customs encourage conflict and lead to interesting adventures.

If you're looking to build a government as scenery for a political thriller, ask yourself these questions:

- *Who has the power?* Who makes the big decisions? One person? A few people? Many people?

- *Where does the power come from?* Land ownership? The law? The consent of the governed? Raw force?

- *What limits the power?* What things can't a person in power do? How is the power to make decisions divided? How can a person be removed from power?

- *How does a character without much power get more?* Marriage? Assassination? Winning wars? Becoming

popular? Buying a political office?

- *What's out of balance?* Does anybody in the political system have too much power? Does anyone have too little? Who's aware of the inequalities of power, and what's being done about them?

- *Who's inside the system? Who's outside?* What does an "insider" use to influence those in charge? Does it involve money? Favors? Blackmail? How can an "outsider" gain influence and become an insider?

- *What's good about this government?* Conversely, what's bad about it? What's just weird?

There can be many different answers to these questions, even among variants of the same form of government. Use the answers to create a government that provides plenty of opportunities to entertain your players and get them involved in the plot.

PAINTING A SET

We've talked about leaving out the dull stuff. However, just because you're skimming over the daily details of a government doesn't mean you shouldn't give it some color. Rituals, costumes, and events are a great way to remind players of the drama surrounding their characters.

A little color goes a long way, so you don't have to do much with this. You're adding interest with unexpected details, not entangling the characters in tedious procedures. Sometimes all you need is a casual reference to a provincial election, or a description of barristers in their formal wigs and black gowns. Other details may be more elaborate — perhaps the senate meets at a temple for ritual purification before beginning the year's deliberations, and that's where the next scene in your game is set. These details are never crucial to the plot, but they make the game feel more like a living reality.

When you're building a government for your game, take some time to think about its quirks. Make a list of some interesting features that you can slip into the game — three to four such details are good, and five to ten are even better. Mention one of these details in each session of the game.

Don't be afraid to steal from history or fiction when you're coming up with these quirks. Some of the possibilities listed below are historical, others are fictional. Mix and match them to your heart's content.

- At every game of a popular sport, everyone in the stadium stands and sings the national anthem.

- The first royal wedding in twenty years is scheduled for next month. Commemorative coins and cups are

everywhere, and the whole city is bustling with preparations for the big day.

- For one day each year, the Archpriest trades places with a beggar. The beggar rules, while the Archpriest wanders the city asking for alms.

- On the fourth, third, and second day before a coronation, everyone wears dark clothes in mourning for the queen that has passed. On the day before the coronation, everyone wears white and gold in anticipation of the queen to come.

- Nobody in court is ever addressed by name or pronoun. Instead, the courtiers refer to each other with poetic metaphors and flowery titles.

- Only honorably discharged veterans of the military have the right to vote.

- All formal audiences with the king and queen involve an exchange of gifts. The rulers give gold or fine jewelry to their subjects. The subjects give gifts of promises, land, or their own art.

- No matter how pressing the business at hand, the senate always takes a two-hour *siesta* at noon. Most of the older members have created comfortable sleeping nests at their desks.

- The Grand Assembly was built in the shape of a pentagon, and each of the five points is associated with one of the Five-Fold Virtues. During legislative sessions, there's some jockeying among the delegates to sit near the point that expresses a favored virtue.

- For ten generations, the lord of Craddock Cove has been a dog — in particular, a purebred cocker spaniel. The current lord attends all the social events and meetings of Parliament, and is widely regarded to be the smartest and most pleasant of his peers.

- The land is buzzing about a new and controversial law: any man who accepts public charity from the government must agree to donate his body to the necromancer's guild upon his death. Right to burial advocates blame the pernicious influence of special interest politics.

- While attending official mixed-species functions, different races always enter and leave rooms in order of height, from halflings and dwarves up to elves, humans and orcs.

ANARCHY

This is the most basic state of government. Anarchy exists when organized governments collapse or never get started.

Anarchy is usually unpleasant. People need food, water, and shelter to survive. When there are many people and no government to organize them, those needs go unfulfilled. Violence breaks out as people fight to get what they need.

Most violent anarchies involve the collapse of a government. It's possible to have a society where no government ever developed — a population of especially chaotic and violent orcs might fill an area without ever organizing themselves — but it's unlikely. The more likely scenario is a large, concentrated population (such as a city) that suddenly loses its resources. Where famine or disease break out, law and order are likely to break down.

The population may shrink quickly when anarchy rules, but the resource situation rarely improves. It doesn't make sense to produce food when it's easier to scavenge or take what you need. Until order is restored, there's never enough of anything.

Violent anarchies are great for adventuring parties that like to conduct politics with swords and fireballs. Most of their rivals for power are not going to be talked into submission, though it will take leadership and diplomacy to win followers. Once the competition is eliminated, the PCs will have a delicate task ahead of them: can they restore law and order or will they be doomed to rule only by force?

EXAMPLE: THE FALLEN CITY OF GLYNQUAN

Glynquan (GLIHN-kwahn) was a small city-state in the Teross Range (TEHR-aws), comfortably nestled in a wide mountain valley that served as a major passage through the mountains. Its people lived well on mining, trade, and the therapeutic qualities of the area's hot springs.

Then Seroth (suh-RAWTH) came. A sadistic red dragon with a special interest in human flesh, Seroth claimed a wide swath of the mountain range and surrounding high plains. He took up residence in a cave overlooking Glynquan and began hunting the population of the city.

King Bayliss did battle with Seroth the next time the dragon attacked. For a few minutes, it looked like the king might win, but Seroth was an old and crafty dragon. He dispelled the king's mystical defenses and slaughtered most of the guardsmen. Then he raided the city

again, capturing many of the city's children and taking them up to his lair.

The city government collapsed with the death of the king, but many refused to leave while there was a chance they might retrieve their children. Seroth releases a child now and then, knowing that hope will keep his favorite prey within easy reach. According to the children that have been released, Seroth has enslaved his young hostages, forcing them to dig in the mines searching for gold and gems.

It has been three years since Seroth came. Glynquan is a ruin of blasted buildings and desperate people. There is no trade, no livestock. No other nation dares to try to take the city out of the grip of the dragon. The families of the lost children scratch out a bitter living from small gardens and try to avoid the notice of Seroth and roving scavengers like the King's Men (see below).

The people of Glynquan need help, but any party that tries to provide it has a difficult job ahead. Seroth must be defeated and the children rescued. The bandits must be dealt with, the people must be rallied, and the process of rebuilding begun. Finally, the nations that border Glynquan must be negotiated with or discouraged from annexing the broken city.

The King's Men

The King's Men used to be an elite unit of palace guardsmen. That changed when Seroth wrecked the city. Many of the King's Men perished defending King Bayliss; most of the survivors died in the hard winter that followed the king's defeat.

Today, there are three dozen King's Men left. They are led by "General" Robert Beston, once the most vicious sergeant in the unit, who gave himself a battlefield promotion after striking off the head of the last surviving officer. The once-proud guardsmen are unrecognizable now — their mismatched armor is covered with dirt and blood, and their eyes hold a glint of madness.

Beston is psychotic. He relishes death and chaos, and spends his days leading his men around the ruins of Glynquan, hunting down anybody he finds roaming the streets. He kills most of those he captures, and it is said

they wind up in the guardsmen's stew pot. However, it is also said that he will set free anyone who can recite the complete lineage of the last king.

Reciting the last king's lineage requires a Knowledge (royalty) check (DC 15).

Beston has no interest in restoring order to the city, but he commands the most effective fighting force left within it. Anybody wishing to end the city's suffering will have to deal with him first.

PEACEFUL ANARCHY

Not all anarchies have to be violent and chaotic. In a small community with plenty of resources, anarchy can work as a political system. An extended family or village can thrive with no formal leaders and a tradition of group decisions.

Peaceful anarchies are a more difficult setting to use than violent anarchies. Utopias are boring, and a peaceful anarchy can leave a group of players sitting around and wondering what they're supposed to do next. The GM must find some conflict in the system to keep the players occupied.

Just Visiting

Most PCs encounter anarchic utopias as outsiders. Perhaps they're passing through the area, or they have come to visit the community on a mission. Either way, they're likely to be a destabilizing influence. They may be sent by an outside government to recruit soldiers, collect taxes, or to take a respected community member elsewhere. Even if the PCs are minding their own business, they may attract unwanted attention to the community.

No matter what the characters' goals are, their presence will probably divide the community. Peaceful anarchies depend on cooperation, so all it takes is a few respected members of the community arguing with each other to cause a major crisis. If Grandfather Tom and Grandmother Jen disagree about what is to be done with the intruding PCs, the players have an opportunity to

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NEW COMMUNITY: CITY OF GLYNQUAN

Size: Small City; **Power Center:** Nonstandard (anarchy); **Power Center Alignment:** Chaotic Evil; **GP Limit:** 200 gp (equivalent to village after dragon raids); **Assets:** 800 gp; **Population:** About 800 after severe depopulation. 85% are human, 10% are dwarves, and the remaining 5% come from any or all of the other races.

Authority Figures: None

Important Characters: Seroth the old red dragon, Robert Beston and the King's Men.

resolve the conflict or gain advantage from it. The characters may also find themselves dealing with unexpected problems — such as being locked up in a root cellar while the community decides their fate!

Home Sweet Home

The PCs may also be the insiders of a stable anarchy. This creates interesting possibilities when dealing with outsiders — what do the PCs do when the king's men come to demand the community's fealty? There are also opportunities for internal conflict. The player characters can mediate disputes or start disagreements of their own, and try to win over other members of the community. Each decision that goes in their favor will increase their influence; with enough time and effort, the anarchic community might become an organized village with a player character in charge.

One disadvantage of using this kind of setting is that the stakes are low. Even if you become the village chief, your domain isn't exactly huge. Another disadvantage is that the players and their characters are more likely to disagree with each other than the NPCs. This encourages a player-competing-with-player game that may not be fun for some groups. On the other hand, some groups might enjoy a game that mixes village politics with regular battles against marauding bugbears and other raiders.

EXAMPLE: FARNHAM'S FORD

Farnham's Ford is a small community on a river that divides two rival kingdoms. It's in a strategic location — the only convenient place for an army to cross the river — and both kingdoms covet it. Farnham's Ford is sovereign territory, however, beholden to no one but itself.

The reason for this is the Archmage Perrin. Perrin retired from adventuring twenty years ago and went looking for a quiet valley with a view. The ford suited his needs perfectly, except for the constant skirmishes over it. Perrin built his tower anyway, then declared everything he could see neutral territory. The kings sent three legions to dispute the claim, but gave up after Perrin sent the armies fleeing in terror.

Since then, a trading community has sprung up around the ford. There's an inn run by two retired fighters, a general store, a smithy, and a few scattered farms. Many of the residents are retired adventurers looking for peace. Everybody minds their own business and helps their neighbors out as needed. The armies stay away and the caravans pass through; just about everyone is happy.

There is one fly in the ointment. One of the neighboring kings hasn't given up on controlling Farnham's Ford, and has sent emissaries to strike a covert deal with one of the residents. If that resident can get rid of Perrin and persuade his neighbors to rejoin the kingdom, he'll get a lucrative supply contract for the large garrison the king

🎲 ROBERT BESTON

6th-Level Human Fighter/3rd-Level Barbarian

CR 9; SZ M (humanoid); HD 6d10+ 3d12+18; hp 74; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 40 ft.; AC 16 (+1 Dex, +5 chainmail); Atk melee +11 (1d8+2, x3, longspear) or melee +12 (1d6+3, 19–20 x2, +1 shortsword); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 10 ft. (spear), 5 ft. (shortsword); SA Barbarian Rage; SQ Fast Movement, Uncanny Dodge; AL CE; SV Fort +7, Ref +3, Will +3; Str 15, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 10, Wis 8, Cha 12

Skills: Climb +8, Handle Animal +4, Intimidate +13, Jump +8, Ride +4

Feats: Cleave, Dodge, Great Cleave, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Leadership, Mobility, Power Attack, Spring Attack

Possessions: Beston wears chainmail and prefers to use a longspear in battle. He also carries a +1 shortsword, which he will use if he loses his spear or needs to fight at close quarters.

Barbarian Rage: A barbarian temporarily gains +4 to Strength, +4 to Constitution, and a +2 morale bonus on Will saves, but suffers a –2 penalty to AC. The increase in Constitution increases the barbarian's hit points by 2 points per level, but these hit points go away at the end of the rage. While raging, a barbarian cannot use skills or abilities that require patience and concentration. Beston's fits of rage last for 7 rounds. At the end of a rage, Beston is fatigued (–2 to Strength, –2 to Dexterity, can't charge or run) for the duration of that encounter. Beston can only fly into a rage once per encounter, and only once per day.

Fast Movement: Beston has a speed faster than the norm for his race by +10 feet when wearing no armor, light armor, or medium armor (and not carrying a heavy load).

Followers: Beston has a loyal cohort, a typical 6th-level human fighter named Collin Skelshaw. The rest of the King's Men follow Beston only so long as he continues to intimidate them and provide them with food and loot. There are four 4th-level fighters, twelve 3rd-level fighters, and eighteen 2nd-level fighters, all with typical stats and abilities. They are human, and have half the usual amount of treasure for their level (pickings have been slim lately).

Uncanny Dodge: Beston retains his Dexterity bonus to AC (if any) if caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible attacker.

plans to station there. The resident has accepted, and has begun plotting to discredit or kill Perrin.

REVOLUTIONARY ANARCHY

Another way to use anarchy as a political setting is to make it a subversive element within an established government. Anarchy can be a form of revolution instead of the simple breakdown of law and order.

The traditional anarchist tries to bring down an oppressive government by creating disorder. Some anarchists blow up police stations or army garrisons; others are more creative. Tyler Durden of the 1999 movie *Fight Club* is a creative anarchist, and his escalating pranks would make a great structure for a campaign.

It's also possible to take a more peaceful approach and simply ignore the laws of the land. Anarchists may collect food and distribute it without permission, sell goods in unlicensed shops that refuse to pay taxes or join guilds, squat in abandoned houses, or camp in public parks. They revolt by living their lives as if the government were irrelevant. Anarchists like this may be inspired by the ideology of leaders like Peter Kropotkin (see below), or they may simply be fed up with the existing way of doing things. In many ways, a group like this is like the peaceful anarchist communities described above, except that the revolutionary anarchist community remains involved with the larger society surrounding it.

Whether they are for or against this kind of anarchy, any group of player characters that gets involved with a revolutionary anarchy is going to have its hands full. The anarchists and the society around them are in direct conflict, and such conflicts get ugly fast. The PCs will have to choose sides, and neither side is safe.

EXAMPLE:
THE PRACTICAL ANARCHIST

Peter Kropotkin (KRUH-paht-kuhn) was a real-life anarchist with unusual ideas. This Russian revolutionary was born in 1842, the son of a wealthy army officer. He enjoyed all the benefits of an upper-class upbringing, but his interest in political economy led him to compare the squalid conditions of the Russian peasantry with the wasteful extravagance of Tsar Alexander II's court. At age 20, he asked to be posted to Siberia, where he served on a committee investigating ways to improve prison conditions.

Kropotkin studied the peasants and prisoners in Siberia and made recommendations for improving their lot, almost all of which were ignored, He became disillusioned with the government, traveled abroad to observe conditions in other countries, became involved in socialism, and was soon in and out of various prisons and political movements.

Kropotin's writings argued that human need was more important than the production of goods and services, and that the purpose of an economy was to satisfy need in the most efficient way possible. In his worldview, almost every society has more than enough resources to make its people happy, and cooperative effort is the most efficient way of creating plenty. His studies of "mutual aid" convinced him that most people would freely share with each other if the basics of life were guaranteed to them and their jobs were varied and fulfilling. Essential labor could be split fairly among everyone and done quickly, leaving everyone plenty of time to do the things they enjoyed.

Kropotkin's ideas are debatable, but he's a good example of a charismatic leader for an anarchist community.

ANARCHY IN YOUR GAME

Strengths: It's hard to corrupt what doesn't exist.

Weaknesses: All it takes is a little hunger or hate and violent chaos ensues. Most anarchies don't last very long.

How To Get Power: Provide protection and leadership to ordinary people. Make alliances with other leaders who share the player characters' vision for the future. Overcome anybody else who claims control over the area.

⊛ NEW COMMUNITY: FARNHAM'S FORD

Size: Thorp; **Power Center:** Nonstandard (anarchy); **Power Center Alignment:** Chaotic Good; **GP Limit:** 200 gp (higher than standard due to trade activities); **Assets:** 600 gp; **Population:** 22 humans, 8 halflings, and 2 dwarves as permanent residents, plus up to 30 travelers passing through at any given time

Authority Figures: Perrin the Archmage (male human 20th-level wizard)

Important Characters: Korthark and Dorthek, retired fighters running the Dragon's Hoard Inn (each is a male dwarf 8th-level fighter/3rd-level expert), Tayrel the blacksmith (female human 6th-level expert), Rosalie the horse trader (female halfling 6th-level rogue/3rd-level expert/2nd-level wizard)

Campaign Ideas:

- A group of refugees is driven into the mountains and trapped by avalanches and bad weather. They must survive a hard winter and rebuild their shattered society.

- A charismatic leader promises to "unlock the unlimited potential of the individual" and create a magical utopia where laws are unnecessary and all material needs are met. Is he an idealistic fool? A fraud? Or does he really hold the secret to a new way of life?

DEMOCRACY

Democracy may seem out of place in a medieval fantasy setting. It is an old form of government, however — one that predates the feudalism of most fantasy games. Democracy also comes in a dizzying variety of forms; any government where power rests in a large number of relatively equal citizens is a democracy.

There are many ways to gain power in a democracy. You can be appointed to public office — in American politics, Supreme Court justices serve the public interest for life, while Cabinet officials serve the White House at the President's pleasure. PCs can be hired to be part of a bureaucracy, gaining influence behind the scenes and answering only to their boss. However, most ambitious players prefer the brass ring of electoral politics. Elections are full of adventuring possibilities, so why not make the most of them?

Democratic settings are flexible. You can run a campaign in a single town or a gigantic empire. The characters can compete to become guild masters, city council members, mayors, national representatives, presidents, or even kings. Elections can be noble or vicious, fair or corrupt, evenly matched or almost hopelessly lopsided. Sometimes they're all these things, or something in between.

No matter what the particular situation is, all elections follow the same sequence of events. Each candidate must prove his qualifications to hold the office he hopes to win. A candidate must build enough support to get on the ballot and introduce himself to the voters. He must make his personality or political positions appealing, then convince a winning number of voters that he is the best candidate for the job.

Democratic political adventures often involve both personalities and issues. The characters must be charismatic and convincing, and that's easier when they stand for clear political positions. The player characters' political positions are less important than their ability to express them clearly and in a positive light.

For specific rules about running elections and political debates, see Chapter Five.

🕮 PETER KROPOTKIN

4th-Level Human Conspiracy Leader/3rd-level Fighter/ 3rd-Level Aristocrat

CR 9; SZ M (humanoid); HD 4d6 + 3d10 + 3d8 +10; hp 57; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk melee +9 (1d3+1 subdual, unarmed); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Cell Structure, Cunning Plan, Goal, Followers, Judge Loyalty, Useful Advice; AL CG; SV Fort +6, Ref +3, Will +9; Str 12, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 16, Wis 15, Cha 14

Skills: Bluff +9, Craft (writing) +16, Diplomacy +14, Gather Information +15, Handle Animal +4, Intimidate +8, Innuendo +9, Knowledge (history) +12, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +6, Perform (oratory) +8, Ride +3, Sense Motive +15

Feats: Commanding Voice, Expert Researcher, Expertise, Improved Unarmed Strike, Iron Will, Leadership, Voice of Reason

Possessions: Nothing but the clothes on his back.

Cell Structure: The DC of any Gather Information check that an outsider makes about Kropotkin's organization increases by +5 due to its cell structure.

Cunning Plan: Once per week, the Kropotkin may create a detailed plan to achieve a specific goal. Any follower that is part of this plan receives a +5 bonus on all skill checks related to this plan, as long as the followers perform Kropotin's instructions to the letter. The bonus is lost if the followers diverge from the plan, or if 48 hours elapse after the plan is begun. The conspiracy leader does not receive this bonus for his plan.

Goal: Kropotkin's goal as a conspiracy leader is to bring about a worldwide revolution that ends the oppression of property forever.

Followers: Kropotkin receives a +2 modifier to his Leadership score for recruiting cohorts and followers.

Judge Loyalty: Kropotkin gains a +2 insight bonus to any Sense Motive check he makes to determine a follower's loyalty or state of mind.

Useful Advice: Once per day, Kropotkin may give a follower useful advice about an upcoming skill check, such as setting a trap or bluffing a guard. Kropotkin must have at least 5 ranks in the relevant skill, and the follower must perform the skill check within 24 hours of receiving the advice. The follower receives a competence bonus to the check equal to either +4 or the number of ranks Kropotkin has in the skill.

CITIZEN GRISHNAK

One of the most obvious ways democracies differ from each other is in determining who's a citizen and what rights that citizen has. Every democracy has limited full citizenship to only some of its residents, and many democracies have limited citizenship to a select few.

Limited citizenship may conflict with many players' ideals, but it makes an excellent plot hook. Many societies base citizenship on owning property or performing a set of tasks, and it's easy to create citizenship conditions that lead to exciting adventures, from accumulating wealth, to slaying a mighty dragon, to becoming a lich.

Other societies restrict citizenship according to who you are, rather than what you do. These criteria aren't particularly interesting by themselves, but the possibility of changing them is. Player characters can join conflicts over political rights, either helping to expand citizenship to more of the population or trying to preserve the current political structure.

THE VIKING THING

The Vikings were among the first peoples to practice democracy, and they mixed it with a lively tribal culture. Most Vikings lived in villages run by chieftains who were both political and religious leaders. The system worked for day-to-day village life, but was useless for mediating disputes between villages. To prevent war and anarchy, the Vikings developed a legal assembly known as the "Thing" (pronounced either "ting" or "thing").

Every free man was allowed to take part in the Thing, which was held every year at the crossroads of several major trading routes. (The Thing was as important for commerce as it was for politics.) The meetings were held outdoors in natural amphitheaters, and would last for days. While the Thing was in session, the Vikings would try cases, make new laws, and elect chieftains.

In theory, each man at the Thing directly exercised one vote. The reality wasn't so simple — Viking tribes often voted in blocs, and the established leaders of each community had the most influence and authority. However, the Thing was unique in that it drew its authority more from a legal system than the individual power or wealth of its participants.

The decisions of the Thing were based on Viking law, as recorded in memory and later on paper. Precedent was important, and disputes were resolved by following whatever law was voted to be most relevant. Since Viking law was a large and haphazard body of information, a Viking argued disputes by proving that a particular law — the law that gave the result he wanted — was the most applicable to the situation he was in. The Viking Thing ruled by resolving disputes between and within villages, not by determining the future actions of an organized government.

The political debate system in Chapter Seven works well for resolving legal arguments. Any character with 5 ranks in Knowledge (law) receives a +2 synergy bonus to any Perform (oratory) checks while making arguments before an organization like the Viking Thing.

A Thing is an excellent political system for a loose collection of small communities, especially if the creatures within those communities are chaotic but good. The meetings provide social glue between the communities and opportunities for trade, and the practice of arguing cases resolves each decision according to its merits and the political skills of the parties involved. It's a stable system with plenty of opportunities for conflict and individual achievement.

ATHENIAN DEMOCRACY

Like the Vikings, the Greeks of Athens were early practitioners of democracy. Their system was not nearly as stable as the Viking Thing — which lasted centuries longer than Greek democracy did — but it had a much greater role in the daily lives of its people.

Like the Vikings, the Athenians practiced direct democracy, where each freeborn male Athenian cast one vote. The Athenian Assembly met more often than the Thing, however, and focused on making the daily decisions necessary to run a growing city. Civic affairs were the responsibility of every citizen, and every citizen was expected to do his duty making and enforcing the decisions of the government.

The government was split into two bodies. Every free citizen was a member of the Assembly, which set the basic direction of the government. There was also a Council made up of 500 citizens selected by lot. It was responsible for implementing policies and taking care of basic administrative matters. Citizens on the Council would be put in charge of specific projects as needed.

The Athenian government's great advantage was flexibility. It was a work in progress, changed whenever the Athenians thought it could be improved or their needs changed. Because there was little formal structure, it was easy for members of the Council to take on projects on

an *ad hoc* basis. There were no limits to how long a leader could serve, so brilliant leaders like Pericles (see below) could guide the government for decades.

At the same time, the experimental nature of the government left it open for abuse. The tyrant Peisistratus was able to seize control and rule for 33 years. It was hard to stop corruption and influence-peddling, and not everyone believed in the system. Athens was originally ruled by an aristocracy, and many of the former noble families wanted the old system back. They weren't organized enough to get it — the Athenians never invented political parties — but the future of democracy was never certain.

An Athenian democracy gives player characters much of the individual power that they enjoy in a Viking Thing, but expands that power to a much wider range of activities. Characters can build public works, take charge of armies, and make diplomatic or trade agreements, as well as settle legal disputes or establish laws. They can also gain prestige and influence by taking charge of specific projects. A skillful and popular party of player characters could easily establish themselves as the leaders of their city.

Ostraca Votes

Athenian democracy also had some offbeat customs, such as the ostraca vote. Every couple of months, the Athenians would gather and any citizen could scratch the name of any other citizen on his clay ballot. If a citizen received enough votes, he was forced to leave the city and live in exile for ten years. The citizen's property was safe, but his political power would be demolished. (This custom lives on today as the English word "ostracize.")

Ostraca votes were a useful way for Athenians to balance power, but they're an even better tool for a GM or a group of player characters. They're simple, they're dramatic, and they can lead to a big change in a character's fortunes. Players can use an ostraca vote to get rid of a hated enemy, and political rivals might force the departure of an entire group of player characters.

Ostraca votes can be resolved using the faction voting system in Chapter Five. A player character targeted by an ostraca vote must prevent a majority of voters from voting in favor of exile.

EXAMPLE: PERICLES

Pericles (PEHR-uh-kleez) was the central figure of Athens' golden age, and sets a model as a powerful democratic leader. He was born around 490 BCE, the son of a prominent politician, and was educated by the most prestigious teachers of the time. His first public action was the prosecution of a rival on bribery charges, a political case that had no real legal merit. He then

gained fame through his involvement in several military campaigns — not all of which were successful — and quickly became the most prominent figure in Athenian politics.

He was not the greatest statesman or general of his age, but he was the best all-around politician: brilliant, eloquent and charismatic. Unlike his predecessors among Greek statesmen, he was more Athenian than Greek. Every action he took was to further the interests of his city — under his guidance, Athens became the richest and most powerful member of the Delian League of independent city-states.

He also continued the trend of more self-government among the citizens of Athens. He built great buildings, expanded the rights of the two least-wealthy citizen classes, and introduced the idea of a public treasury that paid the salaries of soldiers, jurymen, and other public officials. His Athens still based citizenship on wealth, but the treasury made the obligation of serving the government more affordable for less-wealthy citizens.

Pericles was by no means perfect. As a young man, he was reckless and headstrong. As an older man, he was too cautious when a more aggressive foreign policy might have better served the interests of Athens. However, he had a profound respect for the people of
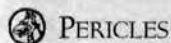
PERICLES

10th-Level Human Politician/5th-Level Aristocrat/3rd-Level Fighter

CR 17; SZ M (humanoid); HD 10d4 + 5d8 + 3d10 + 18; hp 76; Init +0; Spd 30 ft.; AC 10; Atk melee +11 (1d6+1, shortsword); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SA Aura of Power, Compelling Promise, Matching Speech, Personal Touch, Public Appeal, Public Support, Quid Pro Quo, Satisfying Ambiguity, Seniority, Sense of the Room; AL LG; SV Fort +8, Ref +7, Will +14; Str 12, Dex 11, Con 12, Int 14, Wis 15, Cha 18

Skills: Appraise +7 (+9 to evaluate an abstract document), Bluff +14, Climb +4, Diplomacy +21, Gather Information +13, Intimidate +9, Jump +4, Knowledge (architecture and engineering) +12, Knowledge (geography) +11, Knowledge (history) +11, Knowledge (law) +12 (+14 to create and understand legal texts), Knowledge (local) +13, Listen +2, Perform (music) +8, Perform (oratory) +18 (+20 to make legal arguments), Ride +7, Sense Motive +13, Spot +2, Swim +8

Feats: Alertness, Commanding Voice, Expertise, Inspired Leader, Information Network, Leadership, Lightning Reflexes, Quick Draw, Skill Focus (Diplomacy)

Aura of Power (Su): Any character who can see and hear Pericles must make a Will save (DC 29) to voice a disagreement with him or disobey his direct commands while in his presence. Aura of Power is a mind-affecting *charm* ability.

Compelling Promise: Pericles gains a +2 influence bonus to Diplomacy checks when he makes a promise to be fulfilled later. He is not required to fulfill the promise.

Matching Speech: Pericles inspires confidence and trust by talking in the same way as the person he is trying to influence. This gives him a +2 reaction bonus on Bluff, Diplomacy, Disguise, and Perform (oratory) checks.

Personal Touch: When Pericles greets someone, he may make a Knowledge (local) check (DC 15) to remember a flattering fact about him. He may make this check for each character he meets, but he may only make it once every 24 hours for any specific character. If he succeeds at the check, he may mention this fact in his greeting and gain a +2 bonus to one Bluff, Diplomacy, or Sense Motive check involving that character. The bonus must be used within one hour after it is received.

Public Appeal (Sp): Once per day, Pericles may compel an audience of up to 500 people to perform a simple, non-violent task for him. He must speak to an audience for at least 10 minutes. He may then attempt a Perform (oratory) check (DC 25). If he succeeds, he may compel the audience to perform a simple set of instructions no more than 50 words long, and describing no more than three actions. If the politician asks the audience to perform an obviously dangerous action, each member may make a Will save (DC 24). Pericles may make a Will save to avoid being compelled by another politician's Public Appeal, and receives a +2 competence bonus to the Will save. Public Appeal is a mind-affecting *charm* ability.

Public Support: Pericles can rally the people to his cause. He must speak to an audience for at least 30 minutes. He may then make a Perform (oratory) check. The DC is 15 + 1 for each 100 members of the audience. If he succeeds, he gains a +1 competence bonus for each 100 members of the audience. He may use this bonus for any one Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, or Perform (oratory) check on any matter on which the opinion of that audience has a bearing. He must use this bonus with 24 hours of receiving it. If the politician fails a Perform (oratory) roll to gain Public Support, he may not attempt the roll again for a month.

Quid pro Quo (Sp): Pericles gains the ability to make unusually binding deals with another party. The politician and the other party must agree to a deal that imposes obligations on both parties. Both parties then make a Diplomacy check. If the other party wishes to break the deal, that party must succeed at a Will save versus the higher result of the two Diplomacy checks. Pericles is not bound to the deal, and automatically succeeds at the Will save to break it.

Satisfying Ambiguity: Pericles can communicate several different (sometimes even contradictory) messages within the same words. To do so, he makes a Perform (oratory) check (DC 16) while speaking with the audience he wishes to affect. He may choose to send up to five messages, and may choose which members of his audience receive which message. Each message requires at least five minutes of oration to communicate and adds +2 to the difficulty of the Perform (oratory) check. For audiences of 10 or less, Pericles may choose which individual receives which message. For audiences of more than ten, he may divide the group along simple differences. Race, class, and alignment are all useful differences, whether separately or in combination.

Seniority: Pericles gains a +2 reaction bonus to Bluff, Diplomacy, and Intimidate checks when dealing with another politician with fewer than 10 politician prestige class levels.

Sense of the Room: Pericles may make a Sense Motive check (DC 18) to learn the needs and goals of a group of people. Each attempt requires ten minutes of conversation with the members of the group. If the check is successful, he understands what each person in the group hopes to accomplish and why. He is aware of any differences in agenda between the members of the group, and which members of the group (if any) are withholding relevant information.

Athens, and pursued a democratic ideal for the city's government throughout his 30-year career.

The game statistics at left present Pericles at the height of his fame and power a few years before his death in 430 BCE. He is cautious, devoted to protecting the power and freedom of Athens. He is almost unassailable as the senior leader of Athenian politics, but he is also slightly paranoid because his political rivals have targeted his friends and allies instead of himself. He is a powerful enemy to anyone who might threaten his city.

MODERN DEMOCRACY

Direct democracy is limited by the size of its population. More people means more needs and more complicated issues. Sooner or later, it takes so long to decide what to do that nobody has time to do it.

The solution is representative democracy, which is the system today's democracies use. In a representative democracy, a few citizens are chosen to guide the government for everyone else. Each citizen usually represents a particular group of people and takes political positions that are in that group's interest.

Representative democracy reduces government to a manageable size, but it also creates new problems. Representatives often answer to different groups of people with conflicting interests. It's also easy for a representative to use his power to benefit himself and not the people he represents. Unless safeguards are built into the system, a representative democracy quickly becomes corrupt.

Dividing the Power

One of the most basic safeguards is splitting power between several branches of government. The United States government has three branches, for instance — the legislative branch makes laws, the judicial branch interprets them, and executive branch carries them out. Each branch has the power to stop corruption and injustice in the other branches.

Three branches are a common configuration, but not the only one. The European Union has four branches — legislative, executive, judicial, and an elected Parliament that serves an advisory role. The structure exists because the EU is a "government of governments", a system mediating between the sovereign governments of Europe. The legislative "Council of the European Union" represents the interests of the different nations in the Union, while the Parliament is a "supranational" body that represents the interests of the citizens of the different nations. But the Parliament and the Council are already in competition with each other; the EU's four-branch structure may be unstable.

The government of Taiwan also has at least one extra branch. The National Assembly has the right to impeach the president, to vote on amendments to the constitution, and to approve the appointment of high officials by the executive branch. It's a sort of meta-branch, an elected group of citizens that checks the actions of the legislative, judicial, and executive branches.

Taiwan's executive branch also has separate divisions that handle foreign relations, the enforcement of local laws, and civil service examinations; each division has the power to check the other divisions or other branches. There's also the "Control Yuan," which watches public officials for signs of corruption. These divisions and branches are independent enough that the Taiwanese government can reasonably be said to have anywhere between four and seven branches. Politics is a complicated business in Taiwan.

What makes branches of government useful in political games is that they create situations where the left hand of the government doesn't know what the right hand is doing. The player characters can be watchdogs looking for misdeeds in another branch of government, or they may find themselves making hard decisions about breaking the rules to prevent wrongdoing in a branch of government where they have no authority. Branches create complications, which lead to conflicts and instability, which lead to adventures.

Making Friends and Influencing People

Whether you are a president, a senator, or a judge, representing your fellow citizen is more complicated than simply voting for yourself. There are three parts to the job: getting it, doing it, and keeping it.

Most representatives are elected; a few are appointed. Appointed representatives have it easy, because all they have to do is draw the attention of whoever has the authority to give them the job of ambassador or judge. In some societies, a reputation for excellence is all you need — other societies may reward schmoozing or bribery instead.

Elected officials must introduce themselves to the people with the power to elect them and persuade those people that they will make good representatives. Local residents usually elect representatives, but this doesn't have to be the case. A guild of mages might elect a representative to the City Council, or a National Assembly might have seats specifically reserved for elves.

To be elected, you must figure out who your constituency is. Who is eligible to elect you, and who is likely to vote for you? What do they want? How can you provide it to them? How do you tell them you can provide it?

Once you learn these things, you must meet with your constituents and convince them that you're worth their vote. Speeches, prayer meetings, and baby kissing are all time-honored ways to prove your worthiness; so are fliers, town criers, and endorsements from other public officials. If you're unscrupulous, you can buy the election with gifts, or trip up opponents with dirty tricks. However you go about it, it takes time and money to get elected.

Once elected, you do many of the things a citizen in a direct democracy does — suggest, convince, make deals. However, you do so with the eyes of your constituents upon you. You have less freedom to fail or change your mind. If you don't accomplish what you promised, you lose the support of the people who elected you.

It doesn't help that in a representative democracy your powers are limited by the rules and procedures of your branch of government. What you do as a legislator may be undone by an executive or a judge. There is always someone to hold you in check, someone who can remove you from office, and someone who would like very much to take over your job. Keeping that job and accomplishing your goals requires charisma, determination, and even more time and money.

Party Politics

Political parties are another innovation of modern democracy. Like factions, political parties are groups of people who share ideologies and goals. Political parties take on a life of their own, though. Factions are informal alignments of allies, but political parties are permanent organizations that sign up members, issue policy statements, raise funds for elections, and choose leaders who may hold no government position of their own.

The number of political parties in a democracy can drastically affect that government's style. Many "democracies" of the last century have had just one political party, with all other parties banned, suppressed, or made irrelevant. These single-party democracies are more like dictatorships (see below). They have the advantage of a unified government, but they are frequently inflexible and intolerant of new ideas.

Other countries have many political parties, each representing a small fraction of the population. In these countries, no single party can control the government by itself, which forces the parties to band together into factions and coalitions. Many viewpoints are represented, but the factions are constantly realigning. Coalition governments collapse early and often, and it's hard for them to get anything done. In extreme cases, a country can go through several sets of leaders in just a few weeks.

American democracy takes a middle ground. At any given time there are two major political parties and a few minor ones. Each major party gains power for a few years at a time — long enough to advance its agenda — and then hands over power with a minimum of fuss. Unfortunately, each party frequently defines itself as "not the other party" and measures its own success by the other party's failure. When this happens, compromise breaks down and the government is paralyzed.

Parties can be a useful source of money or information, and party rituals like conventions or fundraisers can make great settings for intrigue. Most parties are made up of people with similar opinions and goals, however, and the conflicts between them can be petty and dull. One or two adventures about winning a political party's support or dealing with a corrupt party insider can be fun, but most political parties are best used as scenery.

REPRESENTATIVE DEMOCRACY IN ACTION

Representative democracies provide a natural campaign structure. The characters struggle to win an office, exercise power while in office, and then either keep their position or rise to a more powerful one. Each phase of the campaign provides many choices, plot hooks, and potential rivals.

A campaign can also thrive on the limitations of power inherent in a representative democracy. In most democracies, a senator can't command an army and a president can't make laws. To accomplish goals that fall outside your job description, you have two choices — make a deal with somebody who can do what you want done, or step outside the law. Many great villains choose to do the latter and accomplish their political goals through *coups*, assassinations, and shadow governments.

Large, complicated branches of government aren't always helpful to a game, though. Players may feel confined by the limits on their own power, and it's easy to get caught up in the boring minutiae of an election campaign or legislative session. As always, the goal is to make stirring speeches and fight for the rights of humanoids everywhere, not to simulate the details of writing a new tax law. Fortunately, the PCs can start a subversive conspiracy if their political roles are too confining.

DEMOCRACY IN YOUR GAME

Strengths: Government by the people usually inspires the loyalty of the people. Democracies excel at making peaceful changes in their leaders or policies. Compromise and creative solutions are encouraged.

Weaknesses: Large direct democracies become slow and unwieldy, but representative democracy is easy to

corrupt unless power is balanced among several branches. Political branches breed secret agendas and conflicting interests. When several political factions put ideology over practicality, gridlock can result.

How to Get Power: Win favor from established politicians, then use that favor to gain endorsements or political appointments. Win elections through clever campaigning or dirty tricks. Use your wealth and influence to buy the politicians you need.

Campaign Ideas:

- A politician and his staff campaign and scheme their way from humble beginnings to the highest offices in the land. The politician can be an NPC or a PC.

- A high-ranking politician has been enchanted by a foreign power, and is slowly betraying his country. He must be stopped, but exposing him may do as much damage to the government as the plot itself.

- The laws of the land deny gnomes and halflings full citizenship, and the "little people" aren't going to take it anymore. Will the PCs oppose them, mediate the conflict, or help them revolt?

DICTATORSHIP

Dictatorship is about order. One person is in charge, and can do whatever he deems necessary to fulfill his goals for society.

A dictatorship usually springs up in response to a crisis. War threatens, or the economy collapses, and a leader gains unusual powers to deal with the problem. The first great dictator, Cincinnatus, was called into service twice to protect Rome from its enemies. Hitler and Mussolini won power by promising to put hungry people back to work and make their countries great again. Dictators are rarely elected — they are usually either appointed by a government in trouble or seize power in a *coup*.

A few dictatorships are benign. Cincinnatus is famous for serving his country and retiring as soon as his job was done. This self-control is rare, however. Most dictators hold on to power until they die or are overthrown. They may only want the best for their country, but they are convinced that only they can provide it. They do not share power well.

Dictators are intelligent, charismatic, and ruthless. They are often reasonable and willing to listen to advice, but they always have strong opinions of their own. Successful dictators pay close attention to the source of their power, which is often the military. A dictator must keep his sup-

porters happy and his enemies intimidated, or he will be quickly replaced.

EVERYONE EXPECTS THE SECRET POLICE!

The secret police is an essential tool of a strong dictatorship — and its existence is never a secret. The government may not officially acknowledge it, but everyone knows it's there. Fear of the secret police does as much to keep a population in line as that force's actions do.

Most secret polices are run by one of the dictator's most trusted advisors. This chief of police is usually the only person in the government who is as intelligent and ruthless (though less charismatic) than the dictator is. The chief answers only to the dictator, and is hated by the few people who know his identity.

Secret polices get most of their information by rewarding informants and paying close attention to newspapers and other public forums. Characters who attract suspicion may be followed, eavesdropped upon, or brought in for questioning. Those who seem guilty are often never heard from again, though the occasional show trial or violent midnight raid can have a wonderfully terrifying effect on the general population.

DICTATORSHIPS IN ACTION

Dictatorships are not an ideal setting for a political game. All the power is concentrated in the hands of a single individual, who is really the only person worth talking to. Arguing with a single iron-willed character gets old fast.

Revolutionary campaigns about overthrowing a dictator are more interesting, especially if the dictator has a vicious and stylish secret police to serve as minions. Depending on their social positions, the PCs can lead double lives as adventurers and/or respected members of society while secretly pursuing the tyrant's downfall.

Another possibility is for a government facing a crisis to give the PCs dictatorial powers. The game can focus on how the PCs wield their power, and whether or not they can give up that power once the crisis is resolved.

DICTATORSHIP IN YOUR GAME

Strengths: A dictator can lead troops against an enemy or order immediate changes to the economy. For better or worse, the decisions get made.

Weaknesses: Most dictators are vicious and more interested in personal power than the general welfare of their people. Followers of dictators usually lack initiative. Most dictators come to bad ends.

How to Get Power: Most of the time, you have to kill off your rivals to take power for yourself. The greatest heroes of the land may be given dictatorial powers in national emergencies.

Campaign Ideas:

- A group of characters conspires to overthrow an evil despot. The twist? They're all undead, back from the grave after being imprisoned and executed.

- An elite secret police unit hunts down traitors, but the tide of public anger is rising. What happens when the secret policemen realize that they cannot hold back the revolution forever?

- The economy is collapsing. The barbarians are at the gates. Everything is falling apart, and the senate has just put the PCs in charge. They have one year to turn the entire country around before it's destroyed.

FEUDALISM

King and country — it's the traditional form of fantasy government. Whether good, evil, powerful, or ineffective, kings and queens are what everyone expects to see.

Feudalism combines power, wealth, and intrigue in a near-perfect mix for political stories.

The basic tenet of feudalism is that power comes from the land, and the ruler owns the land. The land is too big for the ruler to protect and control all by himself, so he gives land to his vassals, who care for it and help protect it. Each vassal gains power and wealth from the land he holds for the ruler.

That's where things get complicated. The ruler's power depends on the successful management of the land by his nobles. He gains from their wealth — but a noble who gets too rich and powerful may decide that he wants to be in charge. To remain in power, the ruler must have the most money and power. He must squeeze his nobles with taxes and troop levies — but if he squeezes too hard, he risks rebellion.

The situation gets more complicated when the ruler's vassals begin looking for help managing *their* land. They need vassals of their own to make the most of their holdings, so they subdivide their land and give it to their most loyal servants. These minor nobles often become a headache for both the ruler and the lords above them. The ruler must worry that the minor nobles serving one of his vassals are more loyal to the vassal than to himself. The vassal must worry that his minor nobles will try to advance themselves by going over his head and toadying up to the king. Everybody quickly becomes suspicious of everybody else.

The final complication is the concept of inheritance. It's only natural for a lord to want his son or daughter to

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🏵 AVOIDING ATTENTION

The first job of any conspiracy to overthrow a tyrant is to avoid the attention of the secret police. This isn't easy. Any secret police that challenges a group of PCs is certain to be run by a ruthless and intelligent chief.

Each month that a conspiracy against the government is active, the GM should make a Gather Information check for the chief of the secret police. The basic DC is 15, but this can be adjusted upward if the conspiracy takes any or all of the following precautions:

DC	Precaution
+5	No overt action in the last month
+5	Three or fewer members at any meeting in the last month
+5	The conspiracy has less than 10 members
+2	The conspiracy has between 10 and 25 members
+2	The conspiracy has a simple and subtle code system

If the chief of the secret police succeeds at the Gather Information check, the secret police investigates the conspiracy. Agents shadow the conspirators and interview the people who associate with them.

The chief makes another Gather Information check after 1d4+1 weeks of active investigation. This time the DC is 10, plus the modifiers above. If the chief succeeds, then she has gathered enough information about the conspiracy to take action — usually rounding up the conspiracy leaders or setting a trap for the conspiracy.

inherit his wealth, but the transfer of holdings from generation to generation poses problems for the ruler. Inheriting land from your father weakens the concept of "the king gives out the land," and it means that marriage (which combines inheritances) redraws the political map. In many kingdoms, nobles who wish to get married may only do so with the ruler's permission, and any noble that inherits land must have the ownership of that land reconfirmed by the king.

Feudalism is a complicated network of allegiances and betrayals, and that makes it the perfect political situation for a party of ambitious player characters. They can gain the king's favor by rooting out treachery and corruption among his vassals. They can hitch their star to a powerful noble and gain lands and power as knights and advisors. Or they can build their own power base as minor vassals seeking the favor of the nobles above them.

Most players don't have much respect for authority, so it can be difficult to fit their characters into the feudal hierarchy. Many players are more comfortable if their PCs are independent agents of a capable leader. Working for this kind of non-player character lets their characters participate in the feudal setting without being bound by its web of restrictions and allegiances.

However, some players prefer to dive into the complicated relationships of feudalism. These players glory in conflicting allegiances and tough decisions about which nobles are their allies or enemies. Their characters thrive as minor vassals seeking to improve their wealth and position by manipulating the feudal system.

Once a GM has decided where his player characters fit into the feudal system, there are many ways that they can gain power and influence. Characters can gain favor by winning great battles and defeating horrible monsters, by competing in tournaments and other formal displays of chivalry, by foiling the plots of scheming nobles, or by launching plots of their own that discredit rivals. There are opportunities to please every kind of player character, regardless of the position that the party occupies in the feudal hierarchy.

EXAMPLE: PRINCE VICTORY'S RETURN

Prince Victory has been missing for the last two years. Some say he ran away and joined the pirates, while others claim he was kidnapped by a beautiful celestial and sent on exciting adventures through the planes of existence. The prince himself returned three weeks ago — and he's not talking.

The prince was well-liked and much missed, so most of the court is thrilled by his return. One exception is Lord

Graymalkin (GRAY-mahl-kihn), a powerful wizard who has been King Tenacity's chief advisor for the last five years. Graymalkin and the prince have always disliked each other, and the old wizard made good use of the prince's absence to gain influence with the king.

The king had nearly given up hope for his son's return, and is overjoyed to see him again. He includes the prince in all his councils and openly discusses turning over more authority to him. Graymalkin feels himself being shunted aside, and is taking steps to reassert his position.

The wizard is building alliances with ambitious councilors and lords of the realm. He appeals to the self-interest of some, and stirs others' paranoia about where the prince was and how he may have changed during his disappearance. By building a coalition, Graymalkin hopes to sway to the king against the prince — and if the king will not be swayed, Graymalkin may have enough support to replace him.

Prince Victory is doing little to help himself politically. His personality has darkened; he speaks little and keeps his hand near his sword. He has no patience for the ornate speech and subtle boasting that goes on in court, and recently offended a powerful duke by cutting the noble off in the middle of a favorite hunting story. There are reports that strange lights glow in the prince's tower room at night, though these could simply be rumors spread by Graymalkin's supporters.

The player characters can play a variety of roles in this setting. They can be concerned friends of the prince, nobles and advisors approached by Graymalkin, or servants and landless knights worried by the intrigues of the nobles above them. Some or all of the player characters may also be potential heirs of the king, giving them an even stronger interest in the doings of the heir apparent.

What happened to the prince? Did Graymalkin have anything to do with his disappearance? Which nobles will side with the wizard? Who's genuinely concerned about the future of the kingdom, and who's just looking for more power? How can the player characters change the situation to benefit them, and do they want to?

EXAMPLE: WHO DOES THE KING THINK HE IS?

A successful ruler must keep a tight rein on her most ambitious nobles, no matter how much they hate being controlled. If the ruler shows the slightest weakness — or if she squeezes her nobles too hard — she may cause a revolt. The resulting power struggle will either reconfirm the ruler's power or win more power for her nobles.

The birth of the Magna Charta shows how the tensions of the feudal system can explode. From 1203 to 1215, King John of England seemingly did everything he could to anger his vassals. John got the entire country in trouble by fighting with the Pope, then reconciled with him by offering to place the entire kingdom under papal authority (which threatened the barons' claims to the land). He taxed his barons heavily, lost their lands in Normandy to France, and may have murdered his own nephew.

By 1214, the barons had had enough. John had just lost another war with France, a defeat made especially infuriating because of the heavy taxes that paid for the war. Over the course of the next year, the barons drew up a

charter of rights. The charter was nothing new — its provisions were similar to the privileges John's predecessors had traditionally extended to their vassals. What was different was that the rights in this charter were demanded by the barons, not granted by the king.

John rejected the charter, and civil war broke out in 1215. In May, the barons seized London, providing a decisive bargaining chip. John reluctantly signed the agreement at Runnymede in June, then appealed to the Pope, who annulled the charter in August. Civil war promptly broke out again.

The war continued for most of the next year with sporadic fighting and occasional interference from the

LORD GRAYMALKIN, SUBTLE ADVISOR

9th-Level Human Wizard/3rd-Level Diplomat

CR 12; SZ M (humanoid); HD 12d4+36; hp 66; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 13 (+1 Dex, +2 *ring of protection +2*); Atk melee +6 (1d6+1, 19–20 x2, shortsword); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Rach 5 ft.; SA Spells; SQ Blunt Hostility, Cultural Adaptability (Fast Learner), Determine Objective, Evaluate Deal, Offer Compromise +2, Spells, Summon Familiar; AL N; SV Fort +9, Ref +5, Will +11; Str 12, Dex 12, Con 17, Int 20, Wis 14, Cha 17

Skills: Alchemy +12, Bluff +14, Concentration +13, Diplomacy +12, Intimidate +11, Knowledge (law) +13, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +15, Scry +14, Sense Motive +13, Spellcraft +15

Feats: Combat Casting, Dangerous Insinuations, Expertise, Heighten Spell, Improved Initiative, Maximize Spell

Possessions: *bead of force, ring of mind shielding, ring of protection +2*

Blunt Hostility (Sp): When physically threatened, Graymalkin may make an Intimidate, Diplomacy, or Perform (oratory) check (DC 15) as a full-round action. If he takes damage or fails a saving throw during this attempt, he must make a Concentration check (DC 15) to complete the action. If he is successful, each creature that can see, hear, and understand him must make a Will save equal to or greater than Graymalkin's check result to attack him. The effect persists for three rounds. If a creature's saving throw succeeds, Blunt Hostility has no effect on it for 24 hours. Blunt Hostility is a mind-affecting *charm* ability.

Cultural Adaptability: Graymalkin receives a +2 competence bonus at skill checks to learn or perform any rituals or required behaviors of the society he is in.

Determine Objective: During a negotiation, Graymalkin may make a Sense Motive check, opposed by the party's Bluff check.

If he succeeds, Graymalkin learns the least favorable deal that the party will accept. If he offers these terms, the party must accept them. Graymalkin must hear at least one set of demands from the party before attempting to use this ability.

Evaluate Deal: After learning the terms of a deal, Graymalkin may make an Appraise check (DC 20). If he succeeds, he understands all the present and future consequences of the deal, insofar as it is possible to predict them. Graymalkin also knows how much each party affected by the deal benefits from it relative to the other parties.

Offer Compromise: Graymalkin receives a +2 competence bonus to Diplomacy checks when he offers a compromise to a party involved in a negotiation. He must give up a significant concession to receive the bonus.

Summon Familiar: Graymalkin does not currently have a familiar.

Spells: (4/6/5/4/3/2) Graymalkin knows the following spells; those prepared are marked with asterisks. The DC to resist his spells is 15 + the spell level.

0 Level — all, including *daze*, light*, mage hand*,* and *detect magic**

1st Level — *charm person** (Heightened, 2nd level), *change self*, comprehend languages*, erase, mage armor*, magic missile** (Maximized, 4th level), *message, ray of enfeeblement** (Maximized, 4th level), *spider climb*

2nd Level — *detect thoughts**, hypnotic pattern*, knock*, invisibility**

3rd Level — *clairvoyance/clairaudience*, dispel magic*, lightning bolt*, suggestion**

4th Level — *detect scrying*, emotion, resilient sphere, rainbow pattern** (Heightened, 5th level), *scrying**

5th Level — *dominate person***

French. The conflict was resolved in October 1216 when John caught dysentery and died. His nine-year-old nephew was placed on the throne and was much more amenable to the demands of the well-armed barons surrounding him. The charter was rewritten several more times, and the final version — the "Magna Charta" that is the heart of English law — was agreed upon in 1225.

The Magna Charta is often hailed as the beginning of English democracy, which is an overstatement. However, the document is a snapshot of the concerns of medieval barons. It protected the Church from royal interference, guaranteed the rights of the baron's heirs, required the guardian of an underage lord to take good care of that lord's property while he grew up, protected land from being seized to pay debts, required the king to consult with the barons and clergy before declaring new taxes, and clarified forest and fishing rights. All these issues are potential motivations in a feudal politics campaign.

KINGS OF ALL KINDS

Almost all feudal systems have a monarch, though not all kings and queens rule over feudal systems. Monarchy may have reached its high point with feudalism, but it fits into other governments as well.

Most early monarchs were war leaders — chieftains with enough charisma and leadership skill to draw a winning military force around them. Most of the time these chieftains would conquer a country, parcel out lands, and settle down to become proper feudal lords.

Other monarchs were elected or appointed by their subjects. The first Russian king was a Danish Viking named Rurik, who was chosen by the merchants of Novgorod in 854 AD to defend their trade routes against less-welcome Viking visitors.

Modern monarchs are symbols of the state instead of active leaders of the nation. They gain their power and authority from the constitutions that establish the rest of the country's government, usually an elective democracy led by a prime minister. The monarch's job is to be above political concerns, to give advice based on the good of the country as a whole, to draw attention to national needs through public appearances and charitable works, and to be loved by the people.

Sometimes it's hard to know whether a monarch's role is symbolic or not. There is an ongoing debate over how much control the Japanese emperor Hirohito had over his government before and during the Second World War. For decades, it was convenient for the American and Japanese governments to portray him as a powerless figurehead. However, the Japanese constitution of the time gave great authority to the emperor over military matters, and there is evidence that he gave enthusiastic assent to his military's plans for conquest.

On the other hand, an isolated man with a small palace staff would have little leverage over the willful generals and admirals of the Japanese military, especially in a culture that prefers negotiation and consensus to open disagreement. The Showa Emperor may have had no choice but to give his enthusiastic assent to whatever the military "suggested." The situation was complicated, and a group of player characters exploring a similar situation would find it difficult (and possibly dangerous) to figure out who is really in charge.

FEUDALISM IN ACTION

Feudalism is a great setting for political adventures because it is focused. The power is in the hands of a few people with clearly defined relationships. At the same time, feudalism is inefficient and contradictory. Land ownership binds the nobles to the king but also provides them with the means to rebel against him. Inheritance,

🌑 KING JOHN LACKLAND

4th-Level Human Aristocrat/3rd-Level Fighter/3rd-Level Chieftain

CR 9; SZ M (humanoid); HD 7d8 + 3d10; hp 48; Init +5 (+1 Dex, +4 Improved Initiative); Spd 30 ft.; AC 16 (+1 Dex, +5 chainmail); Atk melee +9/+4 (1d8+1, longsword); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft; SQ Authority +2, Followers; AL NE; SV Fort +5, Ref +3, Will +10; Str 12, Dex 12, Con 10, Int 14, Wis 10, Cha 9

Skills: Appraise +3, Bluff +10, Diplomacy +5, Gather Information +3, Intimidate +11, Knowledge (history) +4, Knowledge (nobility and royalty) +9, Knowledge (religion) +4, Ride +8, Sense Motive +10, Swim +6

Feats: Commanding Voice, Expertise, Improved Critical, Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Leadership, Mounted Combat, Ride-By Attack

Authority: King John receives a +2 influence bonus to Bluff, Diplomacy, Perform (oratory) and Intimidate checks to influence his followers.

Followers: King John receives a +2 modifier to his Leadership score for recruiting cohorts and followers. In addition, all 1st-level commoners that are members of King John's country are considered to be "followers," but do not count against the limits set by the Leadership feat.

too, gives nobles an investment in the future and a motivation to revolt. The ideas that make feudalism work also destabilize it.

Succession by inheritance is a perfect example of why feudalism is inefficient. It's supposed to provide stability and continuity — when the lord dies, his heir takes over, continuing the family traditions and benefiting from a lifetime of training for lordship. In an ideal world, each new lord would learn from the mistakes of the past and improve on his ancestors' achievements.

That doesn't happen. Many heirs are incompetent. Others die unexpectedly, leaving their destinies to well-meaning but unprepared younger siblings. And even when a skilled heir successfully becomes a lord, there's the problem of what to do with the "spare" children. As Charlemagne demonstrated, dividing up your land equally among all your children is a recipe for poverty and war. If one heir inherits all, however, the other children are left without resources or purpose.

In feudalism, the land that gives the power is more important than the individuals who control the land. You can move (and remove) the individuals like chess pieces; the land is the chessboard, and the pieces are only important in that they help you control it.

This opens up many possibilities for political interaction. All the usual methods of affecting a policy are available — you can get what you want from a ruler or noble with negotiation, persuasion, or intimidation. But you can also gain power and influence by redrawing the political map. Kill a lord, and the heir who may have very different goals takes his place. Marry a son to a daughter, and two lands become a single, more powerful holding. Destroy or lay claim to a charismatic lord's lands and watch his power fade away. Younger children plot against older siblings, barons and earls seek better positions through marriage or by winning the favor of their liege lords, kings make war or peace depending on whether other countries or their own vassals are the greatest threat to their power.

In feudalism, the secret to success is to gain land or to plot against others in your society. It's hard to gain land, so is it any wonder that so many choose intrigue instead?

TOURNAMENTS AND OTHER SOCIAL GLUES

Because feudalism is so unstable — and because its political showdowns are so deadly — rituals and customs have developed around it. They're like the control rods of a nuclear reactor: because they exist, the feudal power structure is less likely to overheat and melt down.

The first control is the "divine right of kings." This is the idea that God supplies the ruler with the wisdom and authority he needs to rule. It reduces nobles' motivation to rebel because opposing God is usually a bad idea. Divine right is an important support for the ruler in any feudal society that has a strong, monolithic church. It benefits both the ruler and the church — most clergymen prefer peace and prosperity to civil war — and gives rulers a motivation to work with religion rather than against it.

Divine right gets complicated in a fantasy setting, though. Many nations have several major religions that have different opinions about the virtue and faithfulness of the ruler. Fantasy gods also have a distressing tendency to manifest themselves and make their wishes explicit. The king may be able to schmooze a high priest, but will that really help if the god of war gets angry with him?

In most fantasy societies, the relationship between the church and state isn't as close as it was in historical feudalism. Wise rulers stay on cordial terms with the important faiths in their nation, but they can't afford to show favoritism. It only takes one angry god to bring down a kingdom; best not to annoy any of them.

Divine right may protect the ruler from the nobles, but it does little to protect the nobles from themselves. That's where the code of chivalry comes in. Most chivalric codes require fair play and mercy. Formal challenges are encouraged, dirty tricks are banned, and most fights end in capture and ransom instead of death. It's a civilizing influence that only cads and barbarians ignore. (Incidentally, unchivalric characters make great villains that everybody loves to hate.)

If chivalry limits aggressions, then tournaments sublimate them. Tournaments, feasts, and other contests let nobles show off their martial prowess, their wealth, and their political influence. In addition to the usual jousting, dueling, and mass combats, tournaments are an excuse for feasts, formal balls, hunting, market fairs, and plenty of opportunities for private meetings. Tournament winners gain fame, prizes, and the attention of more powerful nobles; some winners may even get a chance to ask special favors of their rulers or liege lords.

FEUDALISM IN YOUR GAME

Strengths: It's good to be the king. Inheritance and succession provide a sense of continuity from generation to generation.

Weaknesses: The system is unstable — anyone in power must constantly work to remain there. Rivalries between nobles lead to backstabbing and treachery.
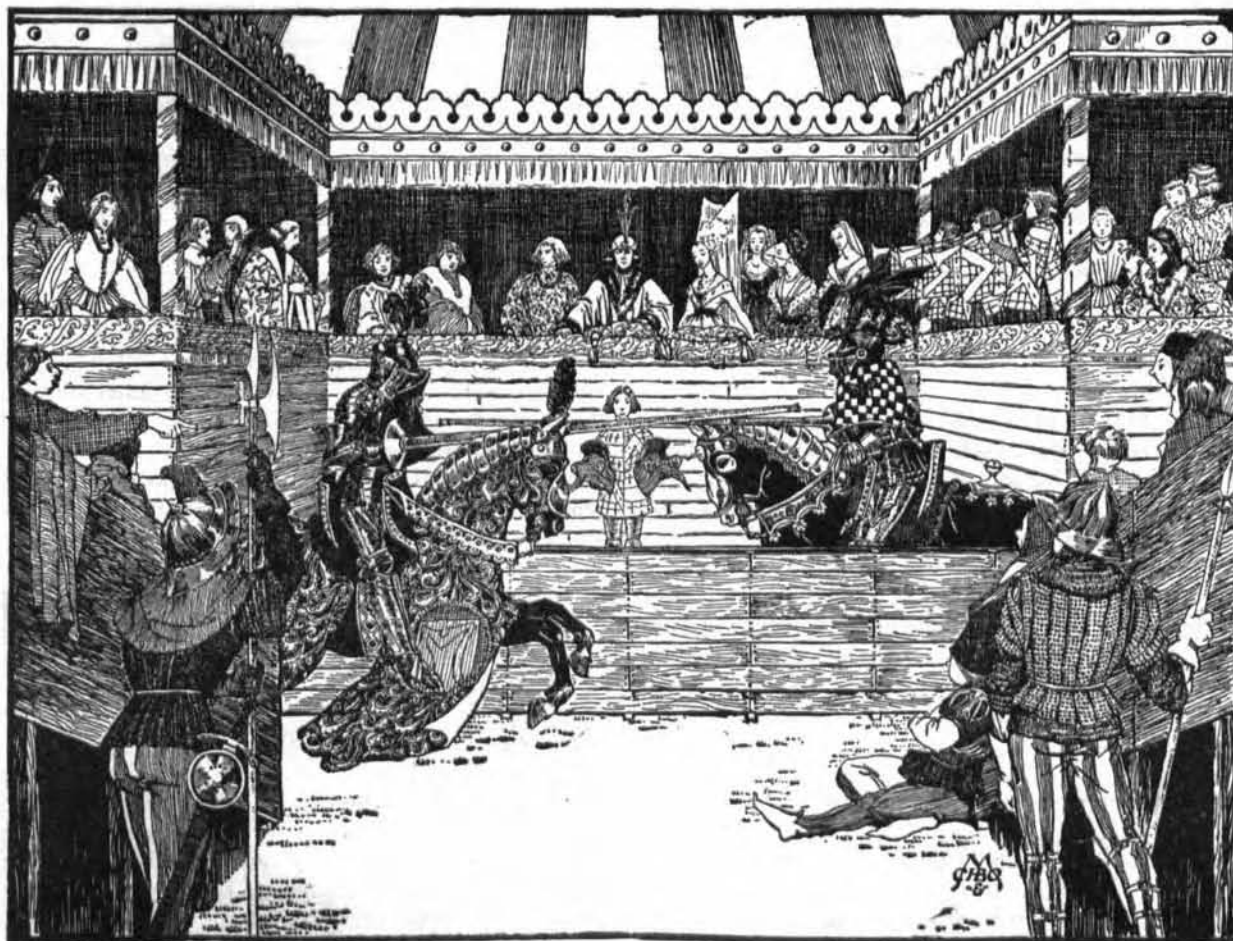
⊛ BREAKING LANCES FOR FUN AND FAME

Most tournament events, such as duels and mass combats, are best run as full-fledged battles. In a chivalric society, nobles are expected to fight their hardest but to avoid serious injury by using blunt or (in the case of crushing weapons like quarterstaffs or maces) unusually light weapons. Any character using blunted or lightened weapons does only subdual damage. Since most combat spells do lethal damage, spellcasters are often restricted in their choice of spells.

Less-civilized societies may use regular weapons, but if so, most characters will yield after losing half of their hit points. Accidents happen, but killing an opponent in a tournament is frowned upon.

Jousting is a specialized contest that has little to do with conventional warfare. The object is to unseat your opponent rather than harm him, so conventional combat rules are not used.

In a joust, two knights armed with lances ride directly toward each other. As they pass each other, each knight tries to strike the other's shield with his lance. The lances are made to shatter when they make contact, so they are unlikely to do actual damage. If the knight strikes the opponent's body or shield, however, the impact may knock the opponent off his horse.

Characters involved in a pass make simultaneous attack rolls. If an attack roll succeeds, then the character who was hit must make a Ride check. (Both characters can be hit at the same time.) Unless the result of the target's Ride check is greater than the result of the attacker's attack roll, the target is unhorsed and suffers 1d6 points of damage from the fall.

Any character who does not have the Mounted Combat feat suffers a –2 penalty to his attack rolls and Ride checks in a joust. A critical hit automatically knocks the target off his horse.

If neither or both of the knights are knocked off their horses, the knights make another pass. If only one knight falls, that knight has lost the pass. Many tournaments involve three passes between each pair. Draws are possible, though some knights will insist on continuing until there is a clear winner.

At the GM's option, the winner of a tournament (or a particularly spectacular joust) may gain a +2 circumstance bonus to Charisma-based skill checks for the next 1d4 days.

How to Get Power: Overthrow the monarch and take his place. Gain the monarch's trust and guide his policies. Ascend up the ranks of the nobility through deeds and alliances.

Campaign Ideas:

- The Princess Larissa is an intelligent but headstrong young woman who needs to learn many things before she inherits the throne. The PCs play tutors and bodyguards who must educate the princess and — after the king suffers an untimely death — help her take power.

- The PCs are justices of the crown assigned to travel around the countryside and take stock of each lord's holdings for the king's taxes. As they compile their reports, they also dispense justice and resolve conflicts between the fractious lords of the land.

- Young knights set out to regain their ancestral lands by slaying monsters, competing in tournaments, and fighting in great battles — all to win the favor of the lord who dispossessed their families. Secret identities and betrayals abound.

MAGEOCRACY

Mageocracies are governments ruled by wizards and sorcerers. They are discussed in more detail in Chapter Three.

THEOCRACY

A theocracy is a government organized on religious principles. It resembles a dictatorship, but there are important differences — especially in a fantasy setting.

In a dictatorship, the leader of the government is the ultimate authority. There is no law above him. A theocracy is bigger than its leaders. The religious mission of the government is more important than the personal power of those in charge.

That doesn't mean that the rulers of a theocracy don't have ambitions, or that they don't enjoy the benefits of power. However, accomplishing the religious goals of the government is their top priority. These leaders answer to a higher power, and their faith influences every decision they make.

Most religious governments pursue order and a particular way of life. Contemplative and individualistic religions rarely take much of an interest in government — a faith that seeks to rule a nation usually has specific ideas about how it wants its followers to live.

Because they are usually devoted to order and a revealed truth, there isn't much room for open political debate within a theocracy. Leaders may discuss doctrine and policy matters, but there is no formal struggle between political parties or factions. Everybody is on the same side whether they like it or not.

Influence-peddling and conspiracies thrive in this monolithic political environment. The Cardinals of the Vatican may speak as one, but the history of papal succession is filled with deal-making and factional intrigue. (Occasionally the intrigue has boiled over, causing schisms and an uncomfortable period where two rivals warred over who was the Pope and who was the pretender.) In the tightly knit structure of a theocracy, political advancement always means stepping on somebody else's ambitions.

THEOCRACY IN AN AGE OF GODS

Theocracies are especially powerful in epic fantasy settings. The religious rulers of our world accomplish a lot with charisma and faith — imagine how much power a ruler can command when she has explicit proof that she is her god's Chosen One.

The clerics and paladins of a militant god have incredible spells and special abilities, from smiting evil to feeding armies to raising the dead. They have all the tools they need to seize control of most governments. Mages might be able to hold the faithful back, but the conflict would be devastating.

Fortunately, there's more than one god in the typical fantasy pantheon. There is usually a host of gods, each with her own concerns, and even the most powerful faiths have equally strong rivals. That puts a damper on launching epic crusades to cleanse the world of infidels.

In a fantasy setting, theocracies are often small communities of like-minded people. They have more in common with the Mormons or the Amish than the armies of Mohammed. Theocracies usually develop when a few hundred faithful settle an unpopulated area and claim it for their own. Over time, the settlement may grow to a great city — but even great religious cities are usually beacons to the faithful instead than launching pads for holy wars.

THEOCRACY IN ACTION

Theocracies present a contrast: those who believe in a particular way of life as compared to those who do not. To make effective use of a theocracy in your game, you must have something to say about both groups.

Sometimes the player characters are the unbelievers. This is the classic conspiracy or rebellion situation — the heroes disagree with the practices of the theocracy and seek to change it. They may succeed in defending their own beliefs and either overthrow the government or reform it into a more benevolent organization. They may also be converted to agree with the theocracy, either because they failed and "the bad guys won," or because they were convinced that the theocracy really did represent a better way of life. (This last outcome is the least

likely result in fiction or gaming, though it may be more common in real life.)

Other unbelievers come from outside of the religious community. The player characters may or may not be part of the community, but the unbelievers definitely are not. In this case, the theocracy is usually on the side of "the good guys" — if it weren't, the PCs would join the theocracy's opponents.

The opponents might or might not be villains, depending on how good the theocracy is. Most opponents are more satisfying if they are as evil as the theocracy is good, and vice versa. If the theocracy is a shining city of paladins, the villains should be ravening hordes of orcs. If the theocracy is well-meaning but not always right, then the most interesting conflict lies in equally well-meaning enemies with contradictory beliefs. (This is much more likely to lead to a political campaign of nego-

🌑 SANCTIFYING A COMMUNITY

A community of the faithful is a powerful thing. The desire to be closer to your god is especially powerful when you are surrounded by fellow believers. With time, effort, and sincere belief, a community can make the world around them fit the ideals of the god they follow.

For a community to become sanctified, at least 90% of its population must be faithful followers of a single god. It takes time to sanctify a community — how long depends on the number of people within it, as seen on the table below.

Population	Time
100 to 1000	100 years
1001 to 2000	50 years
2001 to 4000	25 years
4001 or more	10 years

A sanctified community must also have a focal point, a centrally located monument that epitomizes the ideals and goals of the community's god. This can be a cathedral, or a garden, an arena, or even a gigantic mithril golem that towers over the city. Whatever the nature of the monument, it requires at least 10 years to construct and at least 1,000,000 gp of materials.

Note: Some gods — nature gods, for instance — do not value the building of great monuments or cities of faith. It is impossible to create a sanctified community for such gods, though they may have their own places of power.

Once the monument is constructed, it must be dedicated to complete the sanctification. This requires a dedication ceremony attended by at least 100 faithful followers of the god. A leader of the community must conduct the ceremony and make a Perform (oratory) check (DC 40). Retries are not allowed — the skill check must succeed the first time, or all the years of effort and expense are wasted. The table below lists several special

modifiers to the skill check; the attendee bonuses stack with the sacrifice and *miracle* bonuses, but are exclusive of each other.

Circumstance	Modifier
500 – 999 attendees	+1
1000 – 4999 attendees	+2
5000 – 9999 attendees	+3
10,000 or more attendees	+4
A sentient being is sacrificed (evil gods only)	+4
A *miracle* spell is cast	+4

If the skill check succeeds, the entire community becomes aligned to the home plane of its god. Anyone who does not share at least one alignment trait (good, evil, lawful, chaotic, or neutral) with that god suffers a −2 penalty to all Charisma-based skill checks when within the community. Followers of the god enjoy the benefits of the *bless* spell while within the physical area of the community, and anyone of the opposite alignment to the god suffers the penalties of a *bane* spell.

Clerics and paladins of the community's god enjoy the benefits of an *aid* spell instead of a *bless* spell. While they are within the physical area of the community, the DC for saving throws of any spell they cast is increased by +2. Any spell they cast within 50 feet of the community's monument enjoys the benefits of the Maximize Spell feat.

The character who made the skill check gains a permanent +2 circumstance bonus to all Charisma-based skill checks made within the community.

To remain sanctified, a community must remain faithful to its god. At least 90% of the community must follow the god, and its monument must be maintained well and used on a regular basis. A community that does not fulfill these conditions loses the benefits of sanctification and can never regain them.

tiation and trickery than the paladins and orcs example.) Either way, the theocracy and its antagonists should be equally matched, making the PCs the deciding factor in the conflict between the two.

Even when the game is focused on a conflict within the government of the theocracy, the believer/unbeliever contrast holds true. Religion is based on the idea of a single truth, and most theocratic power struggles turn on issues of faith. If the PCs are enmeshed in a conflict between two or more factions within a theocracy, then at least one of those factions must be wrong about something.

THEOCRACY IN YOUR GAME

Strengths: Theocracies have a god on their side. In a fantasy game with active deities, that's a huge advantage.

Weaknesses: In a theocracy, diversity is not a virtue. Anyone who doesn't follow the preferred god is likely to be ignored, persecuted, or even killed.

How to Get Power: Be chosen by a god — or make everybody else think you have been.

Campaign ideas:

- For three generations, paladin-kings have ruled the land with an iron hand. Now a motley group of heroes must replace the old order with a more reasonable alternative — preferably without angering the paladins' patron god of justice.

- Orcs have declared a *jihad* against a reclusive mountain community devoted to the god of peace. How can the monks and laypeople of this tiny nation keep their ideals, their lives, and their freedom?

- A convocation of religious leaders is selecting its next leader. Can you manipulate and scheme your candidate to the top?

BUREAUCRACY

There are two political subsystems that merit special attention: bureaucracies and empires. Neither is a form of government in and of itself, but both are essential parts of many other systems.

Bureaucracies develop in any complicated government, and they become more common and pervasive the older a government gets. An ancient government may become a spiderweb of departments and agencies, each of which has duties that overlap with several other departments.

Disputes of jurisdiction are common, and each office zealously defends its turf.

A bureaucracy can slow PCs down for a few crucial hours while they get information or equipment. It can add a feeling of decadence if the players have to bribe every other official and wait hours for even the most essential service. Dealing with a bureaucracy is usually an obstacle to be overcome rather than the main plot, though. Unctuous officials also make great comic relief.

A bureaucracy can be a good base of operations for an adventuring party. They could be law enforcement agents working for the equivalent of the FBI. They could be census takers, like the officials who journeyed all over England counting people and property so as to compile the Domesday Book for William the Conqueror. Or they could be magistrates traveling the country and dispensing justice like the ancient Chinese.

If there's a job for the government to do, then there's usually a department that does it — and in a large government, that department doesn't necessarily have to report what it's doing to anyone else.

BUREAUCRACY IN YOUR GAME

Strengths: It's easy to hide things in a bureaucracy. Sometimes whole agencies disappear.

Weaknesses: It's nearly impossible to get things done.

How to Get Power: Stay employed and get promoted.

Campaign Ideas:

- Workers at an obscure agency discover a trail of corruption and treachery that leads to the highest levels of the government.

- The Library of Kroom was once the most celebrated repository of magic in the world. Now it's almost forgotten, and budget-minded leaders want to close it — a move that could have dire consequences given the many powerful magic items and creatures still in the library's keeping. The PCs must prove the library is still relevant with heroic deeds and passionate lobbying.

EMPIRES

An empire is a nation that has grown so big that its leader can no longer run the whole thing himself. If the leader of a country begins to delegate his regular duties to governors or other provincial administrators, that

country is an empire. An empire can be a dictatorship, a democracy, or any other system outlined in this chapter. Empires often have bureaucracies.

An empire develops when a vigorous nation absorbs several surrounding nations. There are usually significant political and cultural differences between the central territory (what used to be the original nation) and the provinces (its former neighbors). The residents of the central territory are considered to be a better class of citizen, and those in the provinces may not be allowed to be citizens at all. The central territory is upheld as the center of culture and power, while the provinces are usually thought of as "exotic," or "backwards," or even "barbaric."

The most important thing about an empire setting in a campaign is giving it a sense of scale. An empire should feel *big*. Each province should have its own culture — trade goods, clothing, customs, and even languages should be different. The central territory should be wealthy and opulent, with big buildings and gigantic civil projects. All the roads of an empire meet at the cap-

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🌀 NEW TRAP: MAZE OF BUREAUCRACY [CR VARIABLE]

Need to delay the PCs for a few crucial hours … or weeks? The "ISO 10000 Bureaucracy Generator" is here to help. Just decide which time unit you wish to use and roll up a suitable maze of red tape!

Mazes of Bureaucracy always have a challenge rating equal to the average level of the player characters.

No attack roll necessary (no damage); Diplomacy (DC 30) avoids any one agency; Wisdom check (DC 15) to realize what the wait time will be at any one agency; Disable Device not applicable.

Step One: Generate Number of Visits

Roll 2d4+3. This is the number of places the PCs have to visit accomplish their goal. Make a list with this many items, and go on to find their names in Step Two.

Step Two: Generate Each Place's Name

You can come up with your own names or use the name generator below. Just roll 1d20 at least once on at least three columns, or pick the choices you like best, then arrange the results so they sound imposing.

d20	Name 1	Name 2	Name 3	Name 4
1	Administration	Ad Hoc	Affairs	Art
2	Agency	Advisory	Archive	Communication
3	Board	Central	Audit	Compliance
4	Bureau	Combined	Branch	Defense
5	Center	Consular	Concerns	Documents
6	Commission	Diplomatic	Guidelines	Education
7	Council	Ethical	Headquarters	Health
8	Counsel	Fiduciary	Inspection	Justice
9	Department	Historical	Itemization	Labor
10	Directorate	Informational	Library	Law
11	Division	Joint	Management	Magic
12	Foundation	Memorial	Practices	Personnel
13	Forum	Military	Prevention	Protocol
14	Institute	National	Program	Records
15	Ministry	Occupational	Project	Research
16	Office	Operational	Review	Safety
17	Program	Political	Strategy	Security
18	Registry	Quasi-Official	Study	Taxes
19	Service	Standard	Survey	Treasury
20	Tribunal	Steering	Training	Trade

Step Three: Generate Wait Time

Roll 2d6 to generate the wait time at each agency. This is how long the PCs have to wait to get what they want. (Use whatever time unit you've decided is most appropriate for the situation.) The "expedited wait time" and "express service time" is how long the PCs have to wait if they succeed at greasing the gears of bureaucracy; see Step Four for the skills and DCs required for these.

2d6	Normal Wait	Expedited Wait	Express Service
2	1 time unit	immediate	immediate
3	2 time units	1 time unit	immediate
4	3 time units	1 time unit	immediate
5	5 time units	2 time units	1 time unit
6	8 time units	3 time units	1 time unit
7	13 time units	5 time units	2 time units
8	21 time units	8 time units	3 time units
9	34 time units	13 time units	5 time units
10	55 time units	21 time units	8 time units
11	89 time units	34 time units	13 time units
12	144 time units	55 time units	24 time units

Step Four: Generate Assistant

For each agency on the list, roll 2d4 or choose the person who will "help" the PCs from the list below. Add a name and a description to fit the bureaucrat's personality. Skills are abbreviated: Bluff (Blu), Diplomacy (Dip), Intimidate (Itd), and Knowledge (Kno). Minimum bribes are listed in gp. Charisma DCs to change an NPC's attitude to Helpful are also listed.

2d4	Nature	Attitude	To Expedite	For Express
2	Helpful	Helpful	Just ask!	Dip (DC 10)
3	Clueless	Friendly	Kno (DC 15)	None available
4	Suspicious	Unfriendly	Dip or Blu (DC 20)	Cha (DC 40)
5	Indifferent	Indifferent	Dip or Itd (DC 20)	Cha (DC 30)
6	Angry	Unfriendly	Dip or Itd (DC 25)	Cha (DC 40)
7	Greedy	Indifferent	1d6 x 10 gp	2d6 x 100 gp
8	Garrulous	Friendly	Intimidate (DC 12)	Cha (DC 20)

ital — it should be a cosmopolitan place, magnificent and exciting, where you could see anything from anywhere right outside your own front door.

Empires can be vigorous or decadent. A vigorous empire expands, conquers, and discovers new things. New buildings and roads spring up everywhere, both in the central territory and in the provinces. There should be a sense of change, of new things happening — the empire should win great victories and accomplish new things every year. Political movements should be active and enthusiastic, seeking to make a great society even better. Even the cynics should be a little idealistic.

A decadent empire shrinks and declines. Construction projects languish half-done, and many never get started at all. Regulations and taxes choke businesses and farms, and most government officials want bribes. There are no great military campaigns — the borders are guarded by mercenaries, and barbarians pick away at the provinces. The government gives out food or sponsors spectacular events, but living conditions never improve.

EMPIRES IN YOUR GAME

Strengths: Empires have the resources to do great things — to build roads and structures that will last for thousands of years, for example. Many empires have long golden ages of peace, prosperity, and artistry.

Weaknesses: Nobody can manage a gigantic, sprawling empire forever. Corruption and cultural exhaustion always take their toll.

How to Get Power: The capital is where it's at. Characters in the center of the empire's political life can

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☀ MAZE OF BUREAUCRACY [CONTINUED]

Step Five: Generate Event

For each agency on the list, roll 1d20 or choose an event that happens at the agency.

d20 Event

1 Unless a PC succeeds at a Knowledge (law) check (DC 15), the party has brought the wrong paperwork and must return to the previous agency.

2 The bureaucrat at this agency stamps the PCs' form and sends them back to the previous agency. They may move on to the next agency after having their form stamped at the previous one.

3 Everybody in the office is out to lunch. The PCs must wait 1d6 hours for them to return.

4 The office is closed. Come back tomorrow.

5 The characters have just gotten to the head of the line when closing time arrives. They must talk the bureaucrat they're dealing with into helping them (use the "Expedite Service" condition) or return the next day.

6 Everyone at the agency is horribly ill. The PCs can return in a week or risk exposure to mindfire; Fort save: DC 12, incubation time: 1 day, does 1d4 temporary damage to Intelligence score.

7 There's a 2d10 x 20 gp fee for the paperwork.

8 There's a 2d10 gp fee for the paperwork.

9 The characters must pass a test to qualify for what they're seeking. At least 1d4 PCs must make a skill check (DC 15) in a rel-

evant skill. If they fail, they must return each day until all the characters have passed the test at least once.

10 A stench pervades the room. Each PC must make a Fortitude save (DC 12) or suffer a –2 penalty to all skills while in the room.

11 A wandering monster attacks while the characters wait.

12 Two guards (2nd-level fighters) ask the PCs to check their weapons at the door. Roll again.

13 A sinister man in a cloak watches everyone going in or out of the agency.

14 The party must fill out a form. Roll several dice to generate the form number.

15 The bureaucrat is hard of hearing. The PCs must shout to be heard.

16 There's a long line at the agency. Fortunately, there's also a bar across the street.

17 The PCs must swear to their identity in the name of their favored god. Characters that do so and that follow a lawful good or lawful neutral god receive a +1 divine bonus on their next skill roll.

18 A bureaucrat recognizes the characters and remembers them favorably. The characters receive a +4 circumstance bonus to on checks to influence this NPC.

19 The agency's workload in unexpectedly light. The wait time is divided in half.

20 The characters receive useful advice and get everything they need. They're done.

win prestige that can be traded for powerful governorships and even higher positions. Another method is to gain control of an army and use it to vault into power.

Campaign Ideas:

- The empire is expanding, and nothing can stand in the way of its destiny. The PCs are diplomats who must persuade a neighboring kingdom to join the empire before the emperor wastes lives conquering it.

- The emperor has died unexpectedly, and three bitter rivals are making their bids for the throne. The PCs are influential political figures — senators, governors, and generals — who must decide which factions they support. Choosing the wrong faction could be fatal.

- Barbarian tribes threaten a declining emperor, but nobody in power seems to care. The PCs must persuade the government to raise an army and then lead it to victory.

⊛ ECONOMIES OF SCALE

The following rules may be applied to empires to reflect their world-spanning trade and culture.

- *News Travels:* While in a large city or metropolis, characters may make Gather Information checks to learn about recent events in other cities of the empire. Characters with the Information Network feat may apply that bonus to these checks.

- *Cost of Living:* Food, drink, lodging, and clothing are 20% more expensive in large cities and metropolises. However, spell components and raw materials for magic items are 10% less expensive.

- *Cultural Crossroads:* Many large cities and metropolises have large communities of immigrants or minorities. Any character growing up in one of these cities may take the

native language of one of these communities as a class skill during character creation.

- *Provincial Rivalries and Exotic Visitors:* Any native of a province that journeys to another province is subject to the following bonuses and penalties when making Diplomacy and Intimidate checks. If the person the character is trying to influence is Hostile or Unfriendly, the character receives a –2 penalty to the check. If the person the character is trying to influence is Friendly or Helpful, the character receives a +2 circumstance bonus to the check.

- *Awed and Restless Natives:* Any official representative of a rising or stable empire receives a +2 circumstance bonus to Diplomacy or Intimidate checks made in neighboring lands that are not empires. Any official representative of a declining empire receives a –2 penalty to Diplomacy or Intimidate checks in neighboring lands.

FANTASY RACES

Real world governments can provide a lot of inspiration for political games, but many fantasy governments rule over different races of humanoids. How do elves and halflings, for instance, interact in a political setting?

FANTASY RACES AND GOVERNMENT

Most societies are dominated by a majority race. A fantasy nation may be mostly human, mostly elves, or mostly gnomes, with a government that reflects the customs and temperament of the majority.

Minorities are often discriminated against; their cultures may be misunderstood or repressed. They may be denied political or social rights that are given to the majority. They may face language barriers because they have not been brought up to speak "correctly" — using the grammar and vocabulary of the majority.

Fantasy races are in a difficult situation, because it is almost impossible for a minority to "pass" as a member of the majority. A dwarf doesn't look like an elf, even if he wears Spock ears and platform shoes. A member of a minority race may not even be able to act like a member of the majority. Innate racial traits are nonsense in real life, but an orc's behavior might be fundamentally different from an elf's.

Even when a minority is welcomed into a society, it may not want to join a melting pot. It's hard to give up ancestral traditions, and many minorities struggle to preserve their own communities. These efforts can include special schools, rules about socializing with outsiders, and even refusing to speak a common tongue.

Some minority cultures also believe in a single truth, one that is incompatible with the majority culture. A private school may teach more than language and traditional ceremony — it may be a training ground for warriors and revolutionaries.

There's no reason several fantasy races can't live together in harmony, of course. Even if they do, however, there are conflicts that can develop. The older members of a society may be uncomfortable when cultures mingle. The younger members may be frustrated when the cultures *don't* intermix, especially if their lives are divided between two cultures.

Mingling cultures can motivate a character and supply reasons for the traditional antipathy between two races. The wish to experience new cultures — or to avoid them — can split families and inspire long journeys or new careers. What's a dwarf father to do when his son couldn't care less about mining and wants to roam the forests as an archer, and how will it affect his opinion of elves?

For a good look at the tensions that can develop between different fantasy races, check out David Chart's Marchion campaign book *Splintered Peace*, also available from Atlas Games.

MINORITY RULE

Sometimes a minority uses an advantage in weapons or tactics to conquer a majority. When this happens, the minority's language and customs become a way of retaining power over the majority. The Normans maintained their lineage and French cultural roots for a couple of centuries after conquering the Anglo-Saxons. Dutch settlers did much the same thing in South Africa, and a comparatively small number of Manchurians overwhelmed Han Dynasty China. In each case, the difference in cultures helped set the rulers apart from the ruled.

This separation is almost always temporary. The Normans eventually intermarried with and mixed languages with the Saxons. The Manchu adopted the luxuries and customs of the Chinese court almost immediately, even though a more traditional lifestyle persisted in Manchurian settlements outside the major cities. The most "successful" conquerors may have been the white colonists of South Africa, who used brutality and their different appearance to oppress the black natives for over three centuries.

Fantasy races may be slower to mingle. Traditional fantasy races have different features, skills, and life spans. Interbreeding is less likely, despite the number of half-elves and half-orcs running around in adventuring parties. An evil fantasy race may be able to duplicate the cruelty of the South Africans for many centuries.

With these general principles in mind, let's take a look at how specific races can interact politically. Remember

that the new feats and prestige classes used below are in Chapter Four.

DWARVES

They're short, they're strong, and they're great with gold and tools. Dwarves are known as the hardest-working race in fantasy — they prize the things they make and the precious metals and jewels they dig out of the earth. They are the ultimate materialists.

Because dwarves love wealth, a dwarvish government usually protects the wealth of individual dwarves and dwarf clans. Its priorities are keeping trespassers out of the mines, allocating mining rights, and resolving arguments about who owns what. Taxes may be given up grudgingly, or paid gladly as a sign of wealth and social status. The entire government might run on donations from wealthy dwarves, or be paid for by its leader.

Dwarvish economies depend on mining and trade. Unproductive mines can quickly become an economic and political disaster. Since dwarves are usually clannish and conservative, it may be difficult for a government to persuade its people to move or find new sources of wealth, or to convince each clan that it is getting fair treatment. A clannish government might not even pretend to be fair — the cronies of the leader may get the best mines and trade deals while out-of-favor clans are stuck with whatever is left.

Dwarves frequently have a low opinion of other races. A dwarf minority may ignore a government run by another race, especially if that government is based on the surface and the dwarves are underground. On the other hand, a non-dwarf with practical skills can win great respect and influence in dwarvish society.

Traditionally, most dwarvish governments are monarchies, in which a king or queen takes responsibility for guiding the entire nation. Democracies also make sense for dwarves, but each clan sticks together and speaks with a single voice. A dwarvish democracy could be organized in several ways: each clan might get a single vote, or each clan's power may be proportional to either its population or its wealth.

EXAMPLE: CLAN MEETING

The dwarves of the Silver Deeps are at a turning point. This city-state of interconnected mines is a meeting point between the surface world and the underworld. The dwarves trade precious metals, luxury goods, and weapons freely with elves, humans, halflings, and drow.

The Clan Moot

The clan moot is an assembly of dwarvish leaders. Each clan selects a representative to deliberate and vote for its interests at the moot. (Any adult dwarf member of a clan can vote for that clan's representative.) Whatever the representative agrees to, the clan is honor-bound to abide by.

The moot meets for one week every six months, with representatives chosen a week before the moot. The representatives gather for two four-hour sessions each day, with a long lunch between the sessions and dinner afterwards. A great deal of politicking happens during each of

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🌎 NEW COMMUNITY: THE SILVER DEEPS

Size: Large City; **Power Center:** Conventional (elected representatives of many clans), Nonstandard (informal network of elder dwarves); Nonstandard (conspiracy of drow-aligned dwarves) **Alignment:** the representatives and elders are Neutral Good, while the conspiracy is Neutral Evil; **GP Limit:** 40,000 gp; **Assets:** over 4 million gp; **Population:** 20,873; 96% are dwarves, 2% are humans, 1% are drow elves, while the remaining 1% includes gnomes, halfings, and other races.

Authority Figures: The leaders of the Interventionist, Neutral, Isolationist and Sympathizer factions, as well as respected elder dwarves like Snorri (snor-ee) Dragonskull (10th-level dwarf expert).

Being a meeting point has disadvantages. War threatens between the surface and the underworld, and both sides are looking for allies. The surface dwellers want the dwarves to battle evil; the underdwellers want the dwarves to remain neutral. The dwarves don't know what they want yet.

This dwarvish society is splitting into factions. The Interventionists want to ally with the surface dwellers and turn the Silver Deeps into a staging ground for an attack on the drow. The Neutrals want to maintain relations and trade with both sides. The Isolationists want to cut off relations with both sides, and the Sympathizers advocate an alliance with the drow against the surface dwellers.

The disagreements run deep within Silver Deeps, dividing clans and kinsmen. Most clans favor either the Interventionists or the Neutrals, but many clan-halls are divided by angry debate. The splinter factions add confusion, and there are rumors that the Sympathizers may take violent action if the Interventionists gain control at the upcoming moot.

Subtle Chairs use recognition to guide the flow of the moot and accomplish a coherent political agenda. Clumsy Chairs get voted out by angry representatives.

To run a Chair election, use the election rules in Chapter Five. There are usually four factions, and winning the election requires getting more than half the votes.

Alfir Hammerkin

Alfir (ahl-feer) Hammerkin is a strident Interventionist who lost a brother to underworld slavers over 20 years ago. He would like nothing better than to exterminate the dark elves.

He also has a more pragmatic motivation for his politics. The Hammerkin are renowned makers of arms and armor, and Alfir would make a handsome profit supplying gear to a surface dweller army. He likes combining vengeance and profit.

these meals, and the dinners are followed by long nights of drinking and storytelling.

The first order of business at any moot is the election of a Chair. Most moots elect a respected senior dwarf by acclamation, but this show of cooperation can break down when times are tense. Sometimes an electoral struggle breaks out, and a few infamous clan moots have wasted the entire week trying to elect a Chair.

The Chair's sole power is to recognize the next representative to speak. Recognizing a new speaker compels the current speaker to sit down and shut up, and the Chair can use this power with the precision of a scalpel.

Alfir is honest but fanatical. He will not use dirty tricks to accomplish his goals, but he does not tolerate disagreement. Even a moderate Interventionist may rouse his ire, and he considers anyone showing sympathy for the underworlders to be a traitor.

Chan Silvershine

Chan (CHAHN) Silvershine is charming, well-dressed, and untrustworthy. This dwarf made his fortune trading mining rights between clans, and always gets the better part of every deal. He has a hoard a dragon would envy, and he wants more.

⊛ CLAN MOOT RESOLUTIONS

Any representative may propose a resolution at a clan moot. When a resolution is proposed, a vote is taken. If at least one third of the representatives vote to argue the resolution, the proposal is discussed. Representatives then take turns speaking about the resolution. When every dwarf who wishes to has said his piece, the vote is taken. The vote must be taken by the end of the session unless two-thirds of the representatives vote to continue discussions into a second session. The vote must be taken at the end of the second session — the dwarves believe that any proposal that takes more than a few hours to resolve isn't worth agreeing to.

A resolution passes if more than two-thirds of the representatives vote in favor of it. If the resolution fails, the representative may

introduce a similar resolution — if and when the Chair recognizes him again.

A character may propose a resolution by making a Perform (oratory) check (DC 18). Continuing a discussion into a second session requires a more difficult Perform (oratory) check (DC 24). Final votes can be resolved using either the simple resolution system or the faction vote system, both located in Chapter Five. If using the faction vote system, there are usually four factions and passing a resolution requires two-thirds of the vote.

The four characters who follow can be used either as leaders of factions within clans or as influential representatives at the clan moot.

That's why he's in the pay of Daren (DAHR-ehn) Goldchaser (see below). Chan supports peace and free trade between the races — after all, free trade means more trade — and being paid to say what he believes is like having gems on a necklace. "You can do without gems on a necklace," he likes to say, "but why would you want to?"

Chan lobbies for peace during his many other business activities, and he's getting good results by mixing business with politics. Those who support Chan and the Neutral cause get sweetheart deals; those who speak against the drow may find themselves losing business. Chan isn't exactly buying power — he's just selling "options on the future."

⊛ ALFIR HAMMERKIN, ANGRY ACTIVIST

4th-Level Dwarf Expert/4th-Level Warrior

CR 7; SZ M (humanoid); HD 4d8 + 4d6 +16; hp 47; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 17 (+1 Dex, +6 *chainmail +1*); Atk melee +10 (1d8+3, x3, *+1 warhammer*); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Dwarven Traits; AL CG; SV Fort +7, Ref +3, Will +6; Str 14, Dex 13, Con 14, Int 11, Wis 9, Cha 13

Skills: Appraise +7, Craft (blacksmithing) +7, Craft (weapon-smithing) +7, Diplomacy +8, Intimidate +5, Knowledge (geography) +4, Perform (oratory) +6, Sense Motive +6

Feats: Iron Will, Leadership, Power Attack

Possessions: Alfir wields a *+1 warhammer* and wears *+1 chain-mail*, both made by the Hammerkin.

Dwarven Traits (Ex): Dwarves have +1 racial bonus to attack rolls against orcs and goblinoids, +2 racial bonus to Will saves against spells and spell-like abilities, +2 racial bonus to Fortitude saves against all poisons, +4 dodge bonus against giants, and Darkvision that lets them see with no light source at all, to a range of 60 feet. A dwarf who merely comes within ten feet of unusual stonework can make a Search check with a +2 racial bonus as though actively searching for stonework traps.

Followers: Alfir's cohort is DeKarth (duh-KAHRTH), a 7th-level half-orc barbarian who serves as Alfir's bodyguard and journeyman. (DeKarth is fascinated by blacksmithing.) The dwarf has also attracted five dwarf apprentices who share his views and are 1st-level experts.

⊛ CHAN SILVERSHINE, OPEN-MINDED TRADER

9th-Level Dwarf Bard

CR 9; SZ M (humanoid); HD 9d6; hp 31; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 13 (+2 Dex, +1 *ring of protection*); Atk melee +7/+2 (1d3 subdual, unarmed); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SA Spells; SQ Bardic Knowledge, Bardic Music, Dwarven Traits, Spells; AL N; SV Fort +3, Ref +8, Will +7; Str 12, Dex 15, Con 11, Int 11, Wis 12, Cha 17

Skills: Appraise +8, Bluff +9, Diplomacy +11, Gather Information +11, Knowledge (geography) +3, Perform (oratory) +12, Sense Motive +9, Spellcraft +3, Use Magic Device +6

Feats: Skill Focus (Appraise), Skill Focus (Diplomacy), Skill Focus (Gather Information), Skill Focus (Sense Motive)

Possessions: *ring of mind shielding, +1 ring of protection*

Dwarven Traits (Ex): Dwarves have +1 racial bonus to attack rolls against orcs and goblinoids, +2 racial bonus to Will saves against spells and spell-like abilities, +2 racial bonus to Fortitude saves against all poisons, +4 dodge bonus against giants, and Darkvision that lets them see with no light source at all, to a range of 60 feet. A dwarf who merely comes within ten feet of unusual stonework can make a Search check with a +2 racial bonus as though actively searching for stonework traps.

Bardic Knowledge: A bard may make a special Bardic Knowledge check with a +9 bonus to see whether he knows some relevant information about local notable people, legendary items, or noteworthy places. The DC is 10 for common knowledge, 20 for uncommon, 25 for obscure, and 30 for extremely obscure knowledge.

Bardic Music: Once per day per level, Chan can use Bardic Music: Inspire Courage, Countersong, Fascinate, Inspire Competence, or Suggestion. A deaf bard suffers a 20% chance to fail with bardic music. If Chan fails, the attempt still counts against the daily limit.

Spells: (3/4/4/3) Chan knows the following spells. The DC to resist his spells is 13 + the spell level.

0 Level — *detect magic, light, mage hand, open/close, prestidigitation, read magic*
1st Level — *alarm, charm person, identify, message*
2nd Level — *detect thoughts, locate object, suggestion, tongues*
3rd Level — *clairaudience/clairvoyange, dispel magic, emotion*

Bokan Steelfist

The surface dwellers say they are fighting for the freedom of all races. Bokan (BOH-kahn) Steelfist doesn't believe them.

Bokan is a priest of the old dwarvish god Brycwyrcan (BRIK-vur-kan) whose name translates to "Glorious Toil." Brycwyrcan is a miner god associated with duty, steadfastness, and loyalty to one's immediate companions. Bokan extends this idea of loyalty to all dwarves, and stops right there.

BOKAN STEELFIST, DETERMINED TRADITIONALIST

8th-Level Dwarf Cleric/4th-Level Religious Leader

CR 12; SZ M (humanoid); HD 12d6+24; hp 66; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 15 (+1 Dex, +4 masterwork chain shirt); Atk melee +10/+5 (1d6+1, x4, +1 lawful heavy pick); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SA Spells, Turn Undead; SQ Dwarven Traits, Enthralling Speech, Followers, Moral Authority, Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God, Spells, Spontaneous Casting; AL LN; SV Fort +12, Ref +6, Will +13; Str 11, Dex 12, Con 15, Int 13, Wis 16, Cha 13

Skills: Concentration +6, Craft (weaponsmithing) +6, Diplomacy +9, Knowledge (religion) +11, Perform (oratory) +11, Profession (miner) +6, Sense Motive +8, Spellcraft +4

Feats: Craft Magic Arms and Armor, Leadership, Lightning Reflexes, Spell Penetration

Possessions: Bokan carries a +1 lawful heavy pick and wears a +2 cloak of charisma over a masterwork chain shirt.

Dwarven Traits (Ex): Dwarves have +1 racial bonus to attack rolls against orcs and goblinoids, +2 racial bonus to Will saves against spells and spell-like abilities, +2 racial bonus to Fortitude saves against all poisons, +4 dodge bonus against giants, and Darkvision that lets them see with no light source at all, to a range of 60 feet. A dwarf who merely comes within ten feet of unusual stonework can make a Search check with a +2 racial bonus as though actively searching for stonework traps.

Enthralling Speech (Sp): If Bokan speaks to an audience for 2 rounds and then makes a successful Perform (oratory) check (DC 20), his audience becomes *fascinated*. It remains quiet and listens attentively for as long as Bokan continues speaking. The targets' Spot and Listen checks suffer a –4 penalty. Bokan gains a +2 circumstance bonus to any skill checks to influence members of the audience for the duration of his speech. He may speak for four hours before becoming exhausted. Any creature can negate the effect with a Will saving throw equal to or greater than Bokan's Perform (oratory) check result. Any potential threat allows the *fascinated* creature a saving throw against a new Perform (oratory) check result, including the +2 circumstance bonus described above. Any obvious threat, such as casting a spell, drawing a weapon, or aiming, automatically breaks the effect. If a creature's saving throw succeeds, Bokan cannot attempt to *fascinate* that creature again for 24 hours. Enthralling Speech is a mind-affecting *charm* ability.

Followers: Bokan's cohort is Ralgor Stronghand, a 7th-level fighter/3rd-level dwarven defender. He also has thirty 1st-level followers, three 2nd-level followers, one 3rd-level follower, and one 4th-level follower. Most of his followers are dwarven miners (1st- and 2nd-level experts); the 3rd- and 4th-level followers are clerics of Brycwyrcan with the Strength and Protection domains. Bokan receives +4 modifier to his Leadership score for recruiting cohorts and followers.

Moral Authority: Bokan gains a +4 competence bonus to Diplomacy and Perform (oratory) checks when he argues in favor of an official position of his religion.

Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God (Sp): As a full-round action once per day, Bokan may make a Perform (oratory) check. Any creature that can see Bokan and hear the speech must make a Will save against the result of that check. If the creature fails, it suffers the effects of the *cause fear* spell as if Bokan had successfully cast the spell upon it. This is a mind-affecting spell-like ability.

Spells: (6/6+1/5+1/5+1/3+1/3+1/2+1) Bokan worships the god Brycwyrcan; his chosen domains are Earth and Strength. Bokan has the following spells prepared. The DC to resist his spells is 13 + the spell level.

0 Level — create water, detect magic, guidance, light, mending, purify food and drink

1st Level — bless (x2), command, comprehend languages, endure elements, remove fear, shield of faith

2nd Level — augury, bull's strength, endurance, lesser restoration, make whole, zone of truth

3rd Level — create food and water, dispel magic, locate object, remove disease, meld into stone, stone shape

4th Level — divination, divine power, freedom of movement, spike stones

5th Level — break enchantment, greater command (x2), righteous might

6th Level — greater dispelling, quest, stoneskin

Spontaneous Casting: Bokan can "lose" a prepared spell (other than domain spells) in order to cast any *cure* spell of the same level or lower.

Turn Undead (Su): Bokan can Turn Undead four times per day.

Bokan believes that dwarves should be self-sufficient and have nothing to do with other societies. In his perfect world, all non-dwarves would be expelled from the Silver Deeps, and trade with other nations would be reduced to a bare minimum. "Only then," says Bokan, "only then can we perfect ourselves."

It has been difficult for Bokan to gain followers in the secular society of the Silver Deeps, but he has won the loyalty of older dwarves uncomfortable with the "outsiders" in their halls. What Bokan lacks in personal charisma, he makes up for in doggedness and the favor of his god.

Daren Goldchaser

The Goldchasers dig deeper than any other clan, and they know many things. They deal with underworlders every day, including the reclusive deep dwarves and derro. There are rumors that they have made pacts with the things they have found in mines.

Daren Goldchaser knows nothing of demonic pacts. However, he has journeyed extensively through the deep realms and likes what he sees. The underworlders' sense of order and social caste appeal to him — he sees their society as a triumph of the strong and capable over the weak.

DAREN GOLDCHASER, DWARF WITH A PLAN

5th-Level Dwarf Expert/4th-Level Conspiracy Leader

CR 8; SZ M (humanoid); HD 9d6+18; hp 48; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 13 (+1 Dex, +2 leather armor); Atk melee +7/+2 (1d4+1 plus 1d6 electrical, 19–20/x2, *+1 dagger of shock*); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SA Cell Structure, Cunning Plan +2, Dwarven Traits, Followers, Judge Loyalty, Useful Advice; AL NE; SV Fort +4, Ref +3, Will +9; Str 11, Dex 12, Con 14, Int 15, Wis 12, Cha 13

Skills: Appraise +10, Bluff +7, Diplomacy +9, Disable Device +7, Disguise +9, Forgery +7, Gather Information +9, Hide +7, Intimidate +7, Knowledge (geography) +8, Perform (oratory) +7, Profession (miner) +7, Profession (merchant) +7, Sense Motive +9, Speak Languages: Elven, Goblin

Feats: Expertise, Improved Disarm, Leadership, Lasting Alliance: Chan Silvershine

Possessions: *+1 dagger of shock*

Cell Structure: The DC of any Gather Information check that an outsider makes about the Sympathizer faction increases by +5.

Cunning Plan: Once per week, Daren may create a detailed plan to achieve a specific goal. Any follower that is part of this plan receives a +2 bonus on all skill checks related to this plan, as long as the followers perform Daren's instructions to the letter. The bonus is lost if the followers diverge from the plan, or if 48 hours elapse after the plan is begun. Daren does not receive this bonus for his plan.

Dwarven Traits (Ex): Dwarves have +1 racial bonus to attack rolls against orcs and goblinoids, +2 racial bonus to Will saves against spells and spell-like abilities, +2 racial bonus to Fortitude saves against all poisons, +4 dodge bonus against giants, and Darkvision that lets them see with no light source at all, to a range of 60 feet. A dwarf who merely comes within ten feet of unusual stonework can make a Search check with a +2 racial bonus as though actively searching for stonework traps.

Followers: Daren's cohort is an 8th-level drow sorcerer named Quellic who poses as a dwarf by wearing a *ring of seeming* (see Chapter Three). The eight followers in his inner circle are miners and traders (1st-level experts). Daren receives +2 modifier to his Leadership score for recruiting cohorts and followers.

Goal: Remake the Silver Deeps into an orderly state that embraces the ideals of the drow realms.

Judge Loyalty: Daren gains a +2 insight bonus to any Sense Motive check he makes to determine a follower's loyalty or state of mind.

Useful Advice: Once per day, Daren may give a follower useful advice about an upcoming skill check, such as setting a trap or bluffing a guard. Daren must have at least 5 ranks in the relevant skill, and the follower must perform the skill check within 24 hours of receiving the advice. The follower receives a competence bonus to the check equal to the lower of either +4 or the number of ranks Daren has in the skill.

NEW DEITY: BRYCWYRCAN, GOD OF GLORIOUS TOIL

Brycwyrcan is an ancient dwarvish god of mining. He rewards stalwart effort and loyalty to one's companions, "from shining hearth to lightless dark." He is fading away from dwarf society, but traditional mining families remember him and always keep a candle burning in their hall for him.

Alignment: Lawful Neutral
Domains: Earth, Strength, and Protection
Typical Worshipers: Dwarven miners
Favored Weapon: Heavy pick
Symbol: A pickaxe splitting stone
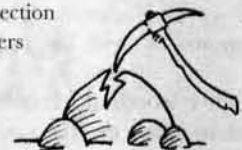
Daren does not want to overthrow the messy democracy of the Silver Deeps. Instead, he wants to change it from within. He sees the dwarves of today as clannish and prone to choosing the good of the family over the good of the Silver Deeps. Daren wants to remake dwarvish society so that its people put the good of the state over the good of the clans.

To do this, he needs his followers to gain prestige at the clan moot, so that they might prompt the Silver Deeps to develop closer relations with the underworld realms and learn better ways from them. The Interventionist and Neutral factions make these goals difficult, and if the Interventionists win then the Goldchasers will lose much of their wealth and power base. Because of this, and because Dwarvish society needs a good scare if it is to embrace a more centralized government, Daren Goldchaser plans to cause an "incident."

Daren intends to use the clannishness of the dwarves against itself. By creating a scandal that implicates the Interventionists and the surface dwellers, he hopes to spark a reaction against "surface dweller interference." The Sympathizers can then offer attractive and ethical representatives for the clan moot.

It is no secret that the Sympathizers receive support from the drow, so the scandal must portray the major factions as being helpless puppets of the surface dwellers. Daren plans to slip alchemical substances into the water cisterns of key Interventionist leaders. These substances will induce paranoia and fanaticism, causing the leaders to increase their stridency and harden their political positions. The substances will also be planted in the embassies and trading posts of prominent surface dwellers and "discovered" a few days before the election by the allies of Neutral leader Chan Silvershine (who is secretly working for Daren). As the scandal unfolds, the "shocked" Chan will embrace the Sympathizer cause, using his influence to bring many of his Neutral allies with him.

Daren knows that this underhanded strategy could destroy the Sympathizer faction if it backfires. Fortunately, he has powerful allies — and he's willing to ruthlessly eliminate any mistakes that he makes.

ELVES

There are three traditional interpretations of elves. In one, elves are woodland creatures that think only of the moment. In another, they are ancient beings of great power and nobility. The third sees them as a lot like humans, but with longer lives and a more reflective nature.

Flighty woodland creatures and ancient beings usually live in small groups and mind their own business. The oldest or wisest elf may lead the others around her, but there is little disagreement or ambition to deal with. Neither group takes a strong interest in politics.

Elves that are like humans have more interesting political structures. Most fantasies depict elves as living under monarchies, but any government is possible. (The only unlikely choice is a theocracy — elves usually worship nature gods or chaotic gods, which take little interest in ruling people.) The differences between human and elvish political systems are more likely to be in style rather than structure.

Elves often follow chaotic alignments, which reduces their interest in controlling others. Even human-like elves often live in small communities led by individuals. They are more likely to rebel against a government (if it is unjust) than to enforce its rules. Elves make great conspiracy leaders, not least because of their extended lifespans.

Elves live for centuries, which gives them perspectives and skills that a human cannot match. An elf can spend fifty years gathering information and making contacts before taking action; elvish plans can stretch over several human lifetimes. Seniority is easy for elves — all they have to do is outlive their rivals. The only thing that keeps elves from ruling the world is lack of interest.

Remove the chaotic tendencies from an elf and you have a devastating political schemer who can take his time accumulating wealth and power. A cabal of such elves can gradually fill the most powerful positions of any society and turn it to their own ends. It may take centuries for such a cabal to take control, but once established it would be almost impossible for the short-lived races to unseat it. An elf-run government might be a benevolent steward of the land and the races that live in it, or it might be a heartless tyranny. Whether kind or cruel, however, it is likely to endure for millennia.

EXAMPLE:
THE EMPIRE OF THE OWLS

Centuries ago, humans raised a great empire that stretched from sea to sea. They did many great works, but they also did great evils. They pillaged the land, emptied the fisheries, burned the forests. They overworked the fields, and finally the crops failed. It was then that the elves intervened to help the starving mass of humanity.

They came from the last remaining pockets of forest in the land, using their magic to help sustain the population while the humans learned how to reclaim the land. They advised the humans, guiding them to a new way of life. They saved the world, and humanity now prospers under their benevolent rule.

That's the legend. The truth is a little more complicated, as the elves did as much to cause the crisis as solve it.

The real story begins with a nation of humans that expanded into the forests of the elves. The humans were more numerous and better organized than their wood-land neighbors, and so the elves were steadily driven into the deepest parts of the forests. In time, the elves abandoned direct conflict, hid themselves in the heart of the forest, and took a new approach.

GENERAL RAFEL PEREGRINE, OLD POLITICAL INFIGHTER

13th-Level Elf Fighter/7th-Level Politician

CR 20; SZ M (humanoid); HD 13d10 + 7d4 + 20; hp 122; Init +1 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 17 (+1 Dex, +4 *ring of protection +4*, +2 *bracers of armor +2*); Atk melee +18/+13/+8/+3 (1d6+2, 17–20 x2, shortsword); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Compelling Promise, Elven Traits, Matching Speech, Personal Touch, Public Appeal, Quid Pro Quo, Satisfying Ambiguity, Seniority, Sense of the Room; AL LG; SV Fort +11, Ref +8, Will +12; Str 14, Dex 12, Con 13, Int 16, Wis 13, Cha 20

Skills: Bluff +15, Climb +14, Diplomacy +15, Gather Information +17, Handle Animal +11, Innuendo +7, Knowledge (law) +11, Jump +14, Perform (oratory) +19 (+21 to make legal arguments), Ride +12, Sense Motive +15, Swim +6

Feats: Brothers in Arms, Combat Reflexes, Commanding Voice, Dangerous Insinuations, Expertise, Fanatic: Keep humans repressed, Improved Critical (short sword), Improved Disarm, Improved Initiative, Iron Will, Power Attack, Quick Draw, Sunder

Possessions: *+2 bracers of armor, ring of mind shielding, +4 ring of protection*

Compelling Promise: Rafel gains a +2 influence bonus to Diplomacy checks when he makes a promise to be fulfilled later.

Elven Traits (Ex): Elves are immune to magic *sleep* spells and effects, have a +2 racial bonus to Will saves against enchantment spells or effects, have Low-light Vision that lets them see twice as far as a human in starlight, moonlight, or torchlight, and an elf who merely passes within five feet of a secret or concealed door is entitled to a Search check as though actively looking for it.

Matching Speech: Rafel inspires confidence and trust by talking in the same way as the person he is trying to influence. This gives him a +2 reaction bonus on Bluff, Diplomacy, Disguise, and Perform (oratory) checks.

Personal Touch: When a Rafel greets someone, he may make a Knowledge (local) check (DC 15) to remember a flattering fact about that person. Rafel may make this check for each character he meets, but may only make it once every 24 hours for any specific character. If Rafel succeeds at the check, he may mention this fact in his greeting and gain a +2 bonus to one Bluff, Diplomacy, or Sense Motive check involving that character. The bonus must be used within one hour after it is received.

Public Appeal (Sp): Once per day, Rafel may compel an audience of up to 350 people to perform a simple, non-violent task for him. He must speak to an audience for at least 10 minutes. He may then attempt a Perform (oratory) check (DC 25). If he succeeds, Rafel may compel the audience to perform a simple set of instructions. The instructions may be no more than 50 words long, and they may describe no more than three actions. If Rafel asks the audience to perform a dangerous action, each member may make a Will save (DC 22). For large audiences, the GM may wish to make a Will save for every 10 or even every 100 audience members. Any politician or PC may always make a Will save to avoid being compelled by another politician's Public Appeal. Politicians receive a +2 competence bonus to the Will save. Public Appeal is a mind-affecting *charm* ability.

Quid pro Quo (Sp): Rafel and the other party must agree to a deal that imposes obligations on both parties. Both parties then make a Diplomacy check. Both parties must now keep the deal to the best of their ability. If either party wishes to break the deal, that party must succeed at a Will save versus the higher result of the two Diplomacy checks. The other party remains bound by the deal whether the party trying to break it succeeds at the Will save or not. (The other party may still try to break the deal on its own, of course.)

Satisfying Ambiguity: Rafel can communicate several different (sometimes even contradictory) messages within the same words. Rafel a Perform (oratory) check (DC 16) while speaking with the audience he wishes to affect. He may choose to send up to three messages, and may choose which members of his audience receive which message. Each message requires at least five minutes of oratory to communicate and adds 2 to the difficulty of the Perform (oratory) check. For audiences of 10 or less, Rafel may choose which individual receives which message. For audiences of more than ten, he may divide the group along simple differences. Race, class, and alignment are all useful differences, whether separately or in combination.

Seniority: Rafel receives a +2 reaction bonus to Bluff, Diplomacy, and Intimidate checks when dealing with a politician with fewer than 7 politician prestige class levels.

Sense of the Room: Rafel may make a Sense Motive check (DC 18) to learn the needs and goals of a group of people. Each attempt requires ten minutes of conversation with the members of the group. If the check is successful, Rafel understands what each person in the group hopes to accomplish and why. He is aware of any differences in agenda between the members of the group, and which members of the group (if any) are withholding relevant information.

They poisoned the land. They ruined crops, infected herds, blighted trees with disease. They disguised themselves as humans and attached themselves to the careers of the most rapacious human lords, encouraging those lords to exploit the land and betray each other. It took nearly three centuries, but they destroyed the lands of man.

And then they returned, bearing gifts. They exposed the degenerate lords, sacrificing a few of their disguised agents in the process. They lifted the curses they had placed on the land. They also provided guidance to humanity, helping them live within their means and renew the land. The price of this advice was that the elves took control.

A thousand years later, the Empire of the Owls is a green land again. Humans and elves live in small communities surrounded by wilderness. The human commoners grow food and practice simple trades. Elvish lords hunt, fish, manage the land, and pursue the arts. It's an idyllic place — for the elves.

If you're a human, there's never quite enough to eat, because the elves never allow quite enough land to be farmed. You are allowed to travel, but only with a magical passport that allows the elves to "ensure the safety of those away from home." Humans don't receive educations. To the elves, humans are children to be minded and disciplined as necessary.

It is not an unkind rule, but some humans still believe they deserve the freedom to make their own mistakes. Little resentments and prejudices have festered over the centuries. Some families pass down memories of the days when they weren't peasants; others secretly thrill to tales of outlaws and exiles roaming the forests.

🦉 SENATOR LUCEL MEADOWLARK, ENLIGHTENED POLITICIAN

10th-Level Elf Monk/10th-Level Politician

CR 20; SZ M (humanoid); HD 10d8 + 10d4; hp 70; Init +0; Spd 60 ft.; AC 10; Atk melee +12/+9/+6/+3 (1d10, unarmed); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SA Deflect Arrows, Flurry of Blows, Improved Trip, Ki Strike +1, Stunning Attack; SQ Aura of Power, Compelling Promise, Elven Traits, Improved Evasion, Leap of the Clouds, Matching Speech, Personal Touch, Public Appeal, Public Support, Purity of Body, Quid Pro Quo, Satisfying Ambiguity, Seniority, Sense of the Room, Slow Fall, Still Mind, Wholeness of Body; AL LG; SV Fort +10, Ref +12, Will +20; Str 10, Dex 11, Con 10, Int 16, Wis 18, Cha 18

Skills: Balance +10, Bluff +14, Climb +5, Concentration +10, Craft (calligraphy) +11, Diplomacy +26, Gather Information +24, Jump +5, Knowledge (arcana) +9, Knowledge (history) +18, Knowledge (law) +13, Knowledge (local) +8, Move Silently +5, Perform (oratory) +18 (+20 to make legal arguments), Perform (dance) +12, Sense Motive +20, Swim +6

Feats: Deflect Arrows, Endurance, Expertise, Improved Disarm, Improved Trip, Improved Unarmed Strike, Iron Will, Lightning Reflexes, Paragon, Sweet Voice of Reason

Possessions: Lucel carries no weapons, armor, or magical possessions.

Abundant Step (Sp): Lucel can slip magically between spaces, as per the spell *dimension door*, once per day. Lucel's effective caster level is 5.

Aura of Power (Su): Any character who can see and hear Lucel must make a Will save (DC 30) to voice a disagreement with him or disobey his direct commands while in his presence. Aura of Power is a mind-affecting *charm* ability.

Compelling Promise: Lucel gains a +2 influence bonus to Diplomacy checks when he makes a promise to be fulfilled later.

Elven Traits (Ex): Elves are immune to magic *sleep* spells and effects, have a +2 racial bonus to Will saves against enchantment spells or effects, have Low-light Vision that lets them see twice as far as a human in starlight, moonlight, or torchlight, and an elf who merely passes within five feet of a secret or concealed door is entitled to a Search check as though actively looking for it.

Evasion (Ex): If Lucel makes a successful Reflex saving throw against an attack that normally deals half damage on a successful save, he instead takes no damage. Evasion can only be used if the monk is wearing light armor or no armor.

Fast Movement: Lucel moves at 60 ft. A monk in armor (even light armor) or carrying a medium or heavy load loses this extra speed. Lucel's running ability is actually a supernatural ability.

Flurry of Blows: Lucel may make one extra attack in a round at her highest base attack, but this attack and each other attack made that round suffer a –2 penalty apiece. A monk's unarmed strikes deal normal damage rather than subdual damage.

Improved Evasion: Lucel only takes half damage on a failed save.

Ki Strike (Su): Lucel's unarmed strike can deal damage to a creature with Damage Reduction as if the blow were made with a weapon with a +1 enhancement bonus.

Leap of the Clouds: Lucel's jumping distance (vertical or horizontal) is not limited according to his height.

Matching Speech: Lucel inspires confidence and trust by talking in the same way as the person he is trying to influence. This gives him a +2 reaction bonus on Bluff, Diplomacy, Disguise, and Perform (oratory) checks.

Leaders of the Empire

There have been four empresses since the founding of the Empire of the Owls; the latest is known as the Songbird. She is an idealistic young elf who has ruled for only fifty years, and she is distressed by the rising unrest among the humans. Just 25 years ago, she tried to widen the perspective of her subjects by loosening travel restrictions and sending teachers to the human villages, but this seems to have backfired.

The Songbird now pays much closer attention to her senior advisors, who were against the plan to uplift humanity. These twelve lords — known as the Owls — are descendants of twelve of the agents who disrupted the human empire. Their leader is General Rafel (ray-fell) Peregrine, a hardline advocate of law and order who remembers all too well what his great-grandfather had to do to put the humans in their place.

In addition to the empress and the Owls, there is a senate charged with making the laws of daily life. The sen-

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SENATOR LUCEL [CONTINUED]

Personal Touch: When Lucel greets someone, he may make a Knowledge (local) check (DC 15) to remember a flattering fact about him. Lucel may make this check for each character he meets, but may only make it once every 24 hours for any specific character. If Lucel succeeds at the check, he may mention this fact in his greeting and gain a +2 bonus to one Bluff, Diplomacy, or Sense Motive check involving that character. The bonus must be used within one hour after it is received.

Public Appeal (Sp): Once per day, Lucel may compel an audience of up to 500 people to perform a simple, non-violent task for him. He must speak to an audience for at least 10 minutes. He may then attempt a Perform (oratory) check (DC 25). If he succeeds, Lucel may compel the audience to perform a simple set of instructions. The instructions may be no more than 50 words long, and they may describe no more than three actions. If Lucel asks the audience to perform a dangerous action, each member may make a Will save (DC 24). For large audiences, the GM may wish to make a Will save for every 10 or even every 100 audience members. Any politician or PC may always make a Will save to avoid being compelled by another politician's Public Appeal. Politicians receive a +2 competence bonus to the Will save. Public Appeal is a mind-affecting *charm* ability.

Public Support: Lucel speak to an audience for at least 30 minutes, then make a Perform (oratory) check. The DC is 15 + 1 for each 100 members of the audience. If he politician succeeds, Lucel gains a +1 competence bonus for each 100 members of the audience. He may use this bonus for any one Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, or Perform (oratory) check on any matter on which the opinion of that audience has a bearing. He must use this bonus with 24 hours of receiving it. If Lucel fails a Perform (oratory) roll to gain Public Support, he may not attempt the roll again for a month.

Purity of Body: Lucel gains immunity to all diseases except for magical diseases.

Quid pro Quo (Sp): Lucel and the other party must agree to a deal that imposes obligations on both parties. Both parties then make a Diplomacy check. The other party must now keep the deal to the best of their ability, while Lucel is no longer bound to the deal. If the other party wishes to break the deal, that party

must succeed at a Will save versus the higher result of the two Diplomacy checks.

Satisfying Ambiguity: Lucel can communicate several different (sometimes even contradictory) messages within the same words. Lucel a Perform (oratory) check (DC 16) while speaking with the audience he wishes to affect. He may choose to send up to five messages, and may choose which members of his audience receive which message. Each message requires at least five minutes of oratory to communicate and adds 2 to the difficulty of the Perform (oratory) check. For audiences of 10 or less, Lucel may choose which individual receives which message. For audiences of more than ten, he may divide the group along simple differences. Race, class, and alignment are all useful differences, whether separately or in combination.

Seniority: Lucel receives a +2 reaction bonus to Bluff, Diplomacy, and Intimidate checks when dealing with a politician with fewer than 10 politician prestige class levels.

Sense of the Room: Lucel may make a Sense Motive check (DC 18) to learn the needs and goals of a group of people. Each attempt requires ten minutes of conversation with the members of the group. If the check is successful, Lucel understands what each person in the group hopes to accomplish and why. He is aware of any differences in agenda between the members of the group, and which members of the group (if any) are withholding relevant information.

Slow Fall: Lucel takes damage as if a fall were 20 feet shorter than it actually is.

Still Mind: Lucel gains a +2 bonus to saving throws against spells and effects from the Enchantment school.

Stunning Attack (Su): Lucel can use this ability once per round, but no more than 10 times per day. A foe struck by Lucel is forced to make a Fortitude saving throw (DC 19). In addition to receiving normal damage, if the saving throw fails, the opponent is stunned for one round.

Wholeness of Body (Su): Lucel can cure himself of up to 20 hit points of damage each day, and he can spread this healing out among several uses.

ate is expected to follow the policies of the empress, but the body serves as a forum for elvish citizens to review and comment on her actions. The senate cannot defy the empress, but the empress cannot ignore the opinions expressed in the senate. There are three senators from each community, and each senator serves for thirty years. Elections are held every ten years, staggered so that one-third of the senate is "new" at any given time. Any elf can vote for a senate candidate; no other race can. A non-elf could theoretically serve as a senator, but this has never happened.

Rafel's greatest opponent is Senator Lucel (loo-sell) Meadowlark. The oldest member of the senate, Lucel has been meditating on the progress of humanity for almost 300 years. He is convinced that with time and education humans can become full citizens of the empire. Peregrine has been trying to force Meadowlark's retirement for years, but the wily senator has always defended his power base.

Threats to the Empire

In addition to the human unrest, the empire faces several related threats. Drow elves are the most dangerous of these. The drow attempted to attack the surface world 200 years ago, and were soundly defeated. After licking their wounds, they've hit on the same approach the woodland elves used against the humans: ruin the empire from the inside.

Drow agents are spreading decadence through elvish society, encouraging the elves to devote themselves to pleasures and dreams. They have the ears of many in the government, and may even have infiltrated the twelve Owls. They are stirring up the humans, encouraging the hardliners, and seeding conflicts with other nations.

The empire's leaders are aware that the dark elves are on the move again, but do not realize how deeply drow agents have penetrated into the empire itself. General Peregrine insists the drow are nothing but a military challenge, that the empire should gather its forces and allies to smash their army before it boils out of the underdark.

The other major threat is the free dwarves of the nearby Silver Deeps. Their existence is a reminder to humans it's possible to live well without elvish guidance, and they're suspected of sympathizing with the drow. The hardliners among the Owls are pushing the dwarves to

help fight the drow; they hope that the war will leave the dwarves crippled and desperate for elvish help.

GNOMES

Like dwarves, gnomes are clannish — but they're not very serious about it. Gnome families stick together and stand up for one another, but its members don't necessarily agree about anything. In fact, some like to disagree just to keep the others on their toes.

Gnome societies are loose democracies or comfortable anarchies. The most likely model for a gnome "government" is Athenian democracy, but the style is more like that of a town meeting. There are no formal rules, any-

🌑 NEW COMMUNITY: KNOCKWOOD

Size: Hamlet; **Power Center:** Conventional (loose Athenian democracy), **Alignment:** Chaotic Good; **GP Limit:** 100 gp; **Assets:** 750 gp; **Population:** 150 gnomes.

Authority Figure: Shamil Folkor (SHAH-mill FOHL-kor), a 3rd-level gnome druid generally acknowledged to be the wisest person in the village.

body can speak, and everybody brings snacks. Votes are taken when necessary, but most decisions are reached when everyone has said their piece and a course of action (or inaction) has been proposed with which everyone agrees. Gnomes make good politicians, but get along better without them.

Gnomes have a sharp eye for the silliness inherent in most other species' politics. Ceremony brings out their prankster natures, and any serious leader in a community of gnomes had better not be too attached to his dignity. Gnomes happily tolerate any political system that keeps the rest of the community happy, but they're subversives at heart. Repressive governments hate gnomes — their rule depends on fear, and it's hard to cause fear when your secret policemen's uniforms have been turned invisible.

EXAMPLE: THE HIDDEN VILLAGE OF KNOCKWOOD

Gnomes have not fared well within the Empire of the Owls. A few make their living as wandering tinkers, but the elvish lords have no place in society for people who refuse to take orders. The gnomes have drifted out of the empire, seemingly departing for other lands.

Many of them haven't gone too far, though. Entire villages are hidden in the forests, right under the elves' noses. The gnomes conceal themselves with camouflage, small magics, and by living quietly.

Knockwood is a typical gnomish village buried among the redwoods of the Eastern Forest. There are ten comfortable burrows dug under and among the roots, a convenient spring for fresh water, and plenty of nuts, berries, and fungi growing in seemingly random groupings around the community. There's one thing that makes Knockwood special, though: *The Testaments of the Last Days.*

The Testaments is the only existing copy of a history written during the last days of the human empire. A few humans traced the blights upon the land to their true cause, realized what was happening, and recorded what they knew for future generations. The book could help spark a revolution — and the gnomes are waiting for the day a human comes looking for it.

HALF-ELVES AND HALF-ORCS

Half-elves and Half-orcs don't have much leverage as political groups. They're always minorities in their societies, and they are more likely to embrace their heritages than to develop political movements of their own.

Half-elves shine as individuals in an egalitarian society. They have contacts and cultural roots among two species, plus an extended lifespan with which to make the most of those advantages. They are often considered attractive by both humans and elves, and can achieve great things in almost any kind of government.

In a society where humans and elves are treated unequally, half-elves are in an uncomfortable position. Among the favored race, they are stigmatized by inferior bloodlines. Among the unfavored race, they are often thought to be putting on airs or acting "above themselves." Direct involvement in politics may not be an option for a half-elf in this society, but dual heritage is still an advantage in business or diplomacy. A half-elf can gain great influence as a wealthy trader or a discreet go-between.

⊕ NEW TRAP: WILL CHIMES ⌈CR 5⌉

Will chimes are non-magical wind chimes that entrance whoever listens to them. Originally conceived as a meditation aid for monks, the chimes unfocus the mind and induce an easily suggestible mental state. Any character that can hear the chimes must make a Will save (DC 20). Characters who fail the save suffer a 1d4+2 temporary reduction in Wisdom score. The effect ends when the character can no longer hear the chimes; this is a mind-affecting effect.

The chimes' effect is subtle. A character must make a Knowledge (nature) check (DC 25) to deduce what the modulated winds do to a humanoid psyche. Monks may also make a Knowledge (religion) check (DC 20) to recognize the power of the chimes. Any character aware of the existence and effects of a will chime receives a +4 bonus to the Will save against its

effect. Will chimes have no effect on non-humanoids or deaf humanoids, and do not work when there is no wind.

Will chimes must be custom-built for a specific location. They cannot be moved without being completely disassembled and rebuilt in the new location. Will chimes require a full day's labor, 200 gp in materials, and a Craft (trapmaking) check (DC 20) to construct. Some rock formations are natural will chimes, but these are extremely rare.

No attack roll necessary (reduces Wisdom by 1d4+2); Will save (DC 20) avoids; Knowledge (nature) (DC 25) to notice the effect the chimes create; Disable Device (DC 25) to alter the chimes to play off key.

Half-orcs get the fuzzy end of the racial lollipop. They are neither as strong as their orc kindred nor as smart as their human kin. These weaknesses push them towards low-status jobs in both cultures. Politics, business, and diplomacy are almost completely out of the question for a half-orc in human society, and a half-orc that wishes to take charge of an orc tribe must be exceptionally cunning and vicious.

EXAMPLE: THRUSH THE LAND-SCULPTOR

Thrush is a foppish half-elf who has devoted his life to land-sculpting, the art of shaping and arranging trees and stones. Despite showing early talent, Thrush has struggled as an artist, and reached middle age with little to show for his decades of work.

🌀 THRUSH, FOOLISH ARTIST

3rd-Level Half-Elf Expert

CR 2; SZ M (humanoid); HD 3d6+3; hp 13; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (Dex); Atk melee +2 (1d3+1 subdual, unarmed); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Half-Elven Traits; AL NG; SV Fort +2, Ref +3, Will +2; Str 13, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 9, Cha 13

Skills: Appraise +6, Balance +5, Climb +4, Craft (land-sculpting) +9, Diplomacy +6, Ride +4, Spot +3, Wilderness Lore +3

Feats: Elegant, Skill Focus: Craft (land-sculpting)

Half-Elven Traits (Ex): Half-elves are immune to magic *sleep* spells and effects, have a +2 racial bonus to Will saves against enchantment spells or effects, and have Low-light Vision that lets them see twice as far as a human in starlight, moonlight, or torchlight. For all special abilities and effects, a half-elf is considered an elf.

🌀 JOLA VEIL, DUPLICITOUS FRIEND

6th-Level Drow Elf Rogue

CR 7; SZ M (humanoid); HD 6d6+6; hp 13; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 30 ft.; AC 12 (Dex); Atk melee +6 (1d4+1 plus poison, 19–20 x2, *dagger of wounding*); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SA Sneak Attack +3d6; SQ Drow Traits, Elf Traits, Evasion, Poisoned Dagger, Traps, Uncanny Dodge; AL NE; SV Fort +2, Ref +5, Will +2; Str 13, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 13, Wis 12, Cha 14

Skills: Appraise +4, Bluff +13, Climb +4, Craft (trapmaking) +10, Diplomacy +11, Disable Device +4, Disguise +13, Listen +7, Move Silently +8, Read Lips +7, Search +4, Sense Motive +10, Spot +7

Feats: Expertise, Skill Focus: Bluff, Skill Focus: Disguise

Possessions: *dagger of wounding*, disguise kit, vial of drow arrow poison, tools and materials for creating will chimes

Drow Traits (Ex): As a drow elf, Jola receives Spell Resistance 17 and a +2 racial bonus to Will saves against spells and spell-like abilities, she can cast *dancing lights, darkness,* and *faerie fire* once per day as a 6th-level sorcerer, she has Darkvision up to 120 feet instead of the Low-light Vision typical of elves, and she suffers from the Light Blindness extraordinary ability that blinds her for 1 round when exposed to bright light, incurring a –1 circumstance penalty to all attack rolls, saves, and checks.

Elven Traits (Ex): Elves are immune to *sleep* spells and effects, have a +2 racial bonus to Will saves against enchantment spells or effects, and an elf who merely passes within five feet of a secret or concealed door is entitled to a Search check as though actively looking for it.

Evasion (Ex): If exposed to any effect that normally allows Jola to attempt a Reflex saving throw for half damage, she takes no damage with a successful saving throw. Evasion can only be used if Jola is wearing light armor or no armor.

Poisoned Dagger (Ex): Jola's dagger is coated with the potent venom often used by drow elves on their arrows. It requires a Fortitude save (DC 17) on a successful attack or the target falls unconscious. After 1 minute, the subject must succeed at another Fortitude save (DC 17) or remain unconscious for 2d4 hours. Jola must reapply the poison after each successful attack, which requires a full-round action. She carries enough poison for six applications, in addition to that dose already coating her dagger while in its sheath.

Sneak Attack: Any time Jola's target would be denied a Dexterity bonus to AC (whether the target actually has a Dexterity bonus or not), or when Jola flanks the target, her attack deals extra damage. The extra damage is +3d6. Ranged attacks can only count as Sneak Attacks if the target is within 30 feet.

Traps: Rogues (and only rogues) can use the Search skill to locate traps when the task has a DC higher than 20. Finding a nonmagical trap has a DC of at least 20, higher if it is well hidden. Finding a magic trap has a DC of 25 + the level of the spell used to create it. Rogues (and only rogues) can use the Disable Device skill to disarm magic traps. A magic trap generally has a DC of 25 + the level of the spell used to create it.

Uncanny Dodge: Jola retains any Dexterity bonus to AC if caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible attacker, and can no longer be flanked except by another rogue of at least 10th level.

All that has changed since he befriended Jola Veil, another half-elf artist specializing in elaborate wind chimes. Jola's designs are the perfect accent for Thrush's gardens, inducing deep reveries and feelings of fulfillment in those who visit.

What Thrush doesn't know is that Jola is a drow agent. Her chimes use subtle harmonies to entrance listeners and sap their willpower. The effect is most useful at garden parties and other social gatherings, when other agents among the guests can mingle with the elf nobility suggesting ideas that further the drow cause.

HALFLINGS

Halflings are experts at assimilation. They rarely have lands of their own, but they fit in perfectly in almost any political system. They accomplish this by minding their own business.

Political activity is rare among halflings. They tend their shops and gardens, collect their favorite things, and occasionally go on adventures, but most halflings leave matters of government to "those big folks that care about it." When halfings get involved in politics, it's usually about practical matters like good schools and whether there are enough watchmen on duty.

Halfings are surprisingly effective, though, when a political matter becomes important to the community as a whole. They have strong family ties, and news spreads quickly through their networks of parents and brothers and sisters and cousins and aunts and uncles. They are excellent grass-roots organizers, and those who underestimate them can be blindsided by a political movement that sprang up literally overnight. Halflings prefer to resolve political disputes peacefully, but they will take to the streets and fight if they have to.

Halflings rarely pursue political careers, but their jovial natures and willingness to listen make them good politicians and diplomats. Most halfling communities are democracies, with regular elections for positions that have easily performed duties and pleasant-sounding titles. In halfling governments, many hands make light work.

EXAMPLE:
GILLY WORDBLOSSOM

Gilly Wordblossom knows there's nothing better than a guilty pleasure. He makes a good living supplying the cravings of the finest folk in the land. Hallucinogenic mushroom liquor from the drow, fine young lovers, fresh game out of season — he can provide it all.

The best part is that guilty pleasures go hand-in-hand with secrets, and secrets are profitable, too. Gilly doesn't blackmail his customers often, but when he does he always gets what he wants. He's also developing a profitable sideline introducing people to each other. The Imperial Senate is bitterly competitive, and there are a number of elves in need of contacts who would be unwelcome in polite society. The right words from Gilly can mean a satisfying deal for several parties.

Business is good and it's only going to get better — as long as Gilly can keep the good times coming without crossing anyone who might want him dead.

ORCS

Orcs are short-lived, fecund, and none too bright. They live in nomadic tribes or rampaging hordes, and do not have sophisticated political structures. The strongest, toughest, and/or meanest orc rules as many other orcs as he can intimidate or inspire — until a stronger or meaner orc takes the job away from him. Most orc leaders are chieftains who know how to fight.

Orcs don't deal well with minorities. They may work with other monstrous humanoids, but the alliances

GILLY WORDBLOSSOM, CHEERFUL PROCURER

6th-Level Halfling Expert

CR 5; SZ S (humanoid); HD 6d6+6; hp 24; Init +2 (Dex); Spd 20 ft.; AC 17 (+2 Dex, +1 size, +4 *mithral shirt*); Atk melee +4 (1d6, 19–20 x2, *+1 shortsword*); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SQ Halfling Traits; AL CN; SV Fort +4, Ref +5, Will +6; Str 8, Dex 14, Con 12, Int 11, Wis 10, Cha 12

Skills: Appraise +8, Bluff +5, Diplomacy +8, Forgery +4, Gather Information +8, Innuendo +4, Listen +10, Move Silently +6, Sense Motive +4, Spot +8

Feats: Alertness, Dodge, Reputation Broker

Possessions: *mithral shirt, +1 shortsword*

Halfling Traits (Ex): Halflings receive a +2 morale bonus to saving throws against fear.

rarely last and the allies are never considered to be part of the horde. Orcs make slaves of other races, though these slaves are better described as "food that can work."

Even when they are allowed into civilized societies, most orcs are incapable of fitting into an organized political system. A minority population of orcs is more likely to be a criminal underclass than a law-abiding community. Power struggles within the community are resolved the same way as in orcish tribes: the strongest and most vicious dominate the rest.

The injection of orcs into a civilized society is the ignition event in David Chart's adventure campaign, *Splintered Peace* (also from Atlas Games). In it, you'll find a detailed examination of the troubles that can arise when different political and value systems are forced together. You'll also see how to effectively put your PCs in the middle of it all.

EXAMPLE: OTUSK OF THE DRIPPING FANG

Otusk is an orc who is losing his teeth. For twenty years, he has harried the outlying settlements of the empire as leader of the Dripping Fang orcs. This nomadic tribe has fallen upon hard times, though, and Otusk is sick of the endless conflict with humans and elves. He's considering negotiating for ranging rights and peaceful coexistence.

Peace is an alien thought for most orcs, and Otusk knows that any agreement he makes may not outlive him. (Just bringing up the idea of negotiations may drastically shorten his lifespan.) Otusk has the loyalty of his son and the tribe's best warriors to count on, though, and the old orc dares to dream of a better life. All he has to do is convince the rest of his world.

OTUSK, CHANGING CHIEFTAIN

8th-Level Orc Barbarian/6th-Level Chieftain

CR 14; SZ M (humanoid); HD 8d12 + 6d8 + 42; hp 121; Init +4 (Improved Initiative); Spd 40 ft.; AC 18 (+4 *lion's shield,* +4 *studded leather armor +1*); Atk melee +13/+8/+3 (1d8+5, 18–20/x3, *+1 keen battleaxe*); Face 5 ft. x 5 ft.; Reach 5 ft.; SA Rage; SQ Authority, Darkvision 60 ft., Fast Movement, Fearsome Reputation, Followers, Illiteracy, Light Sensitivity, Raise Horde, Uncanny Dodge; AL N; SV Fort +8, Ref +4, Will +7; Str 18, Dex 10, Con 16, Int 12, Wis 14, Cha 16

Skills: Bluff +7, Climb +8, Diplomacy +9, Handle Animal +7, Intimidate +19, Intuit Direction +6, Jump +9, Listen +6, Ride +8, Sense Motive +12, Swim +8, Wilderness Lore +12

Feats: Combat Reflexes, Commanding Voice, Improved Critical: Battleaxe, Improved Initiative, Inspired Leader, Leadership, Power Attack

Possessions: *+1 keen battleaxe, lion's shield, +1 studded leather armor*

Authority: Otusk receives a +4 influence bonus to Bluff, Diplomacy, Perform (oratory) and Intimidate checks to influence his followers.

Barbarian Rage: Otusk temporarily gains +4 to Strength, +4 to Constitution, and a +2 morale bonus on Will saves, but suffers a –2 penalty to AC. The increase in Constitution increases the barbarian's hit points by 2 points per level, but these hit points go away at the end of the rage. While raging, Otusk cannot use skills or abilities that require patience and concentration. Otusk's fits of rage last for 8 rounds. At the end of a rage, Otusk is fatigued (–2 to Strength, –2 to Dexterity, can't charge or run) for the duration of that encounter. Otusk can only fly into a rage once per encounter, and only three times per day.

Darkvision (Ex): Orcs can see with no light source at all, to a range of 60 feet. Darkvision is black and white only.

Fast Movement: Otusk has a speed faster than the norm for his race by +10 feet when wearing no armor, light armor, or medium armor (and not carrying a heavy load).

Fearsome Reputation: Otusk receives a +2 influence bonus to Bluff, Diplomacy, Perform (oratory) and Intimidate checks when his identity is known.

Followers: Otusk's cohort is his son Gragtor, an 8th-level orc barbarian. Otusk's followers include forty 1st-level orc barbarians, ten 1st-level fighters, five 2nd-level barbarians, three 3rd-level fighters, two 4th-level barbarians, and one 5th-level barbarian. Otusk receives a +2 modifier to his Leadership score for recruiting cohorts and followers.

Illiteracy: Barbarians are the only characters who do not automatically know how to read and write. A barbarian must spend 2 skill points to gain the ability to read and write any language the barbarian is able to speak.

Light Sensitivity (Ex): Orcs suffer a –1 penalty to attack rolls in bright sunlight or within the radius of a *daylight* spell.

Raise Horde: Otusk may raise a horde of up to 100 1st level warriors to accomplish a military objective. He may raise the horde no more than twice per game year, and the horde will serve for no more than one month of game time. The horde's size is also limited by the size of the chieftain's tribe. There can be no more than 1/2 as many warriors as the chieftain's total number of followers.

Uncanny Dodge: Otusk retains his Dexterity bonus to AC (if any) if caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible attacker, and he can can no longer be flanked except by a rogue of at least 12th level.

THE MAGIC OF POLITICS

Magic is a valuable tool; it can do almost anything, often from a distance, and only a few people can understand and use it. A nation with superior magic can dominate its neighbors, and the people who control that magic can dominate their own nation.

MAGEOCRACY

It's harder than it looks for mages to dominate a government. They may have mighty spells, but mages are physically frail and their non-magical rivals also have formidable abilities. Mages need allies to protect them and bolster their weaknesses. Religious spell-casters have it a little easier. Most of them are better at fighting and can count on the support of a god when the fate of nations is in play.

Individual mages can lead a government, but that leadership depends more upon force of personality and political savvy than spellcasting power. Magic is limited by the requirements of preparation time and innate ability; it can't replace loyal minions or the consent of the governed.

On the other hand, an organization of mages can wield tremendous power. If the mages of a nation ally with each other, they can offer or withhold their services to suit their self-interest. They can protect each other, pool resources, and threaten an entire nation with their combined power. A well-organized mage guild has an excel-

lent chance of dominating a government and forming the heart of an oligarchy.

EXAMPLE:
THE ARCANE COUNCIL

An earthquake put the Arcane Council in power, and now it's determined to stay there — at least until it can remake the land of Lorayon (LOR-ay-ahn).

Lorayon was once a prosperous republic, and the Arcane Council was an innocuous organization of magical academics. That was before a cabal of necromancers set out to conquer the land by raising a mighty army of undead. The Council was the first to discover the necromancers' plans, but its warning were ignored until it was almost too late.

When the true extent of the threat became clear, a hastily assembled force of Lorayon's mightiest heroes met the army in a valley near the capital city of Layess (LAY-ess). As the battle raged, the Arcane Council took up a position on a hill overlooking the battlefield and cast spells in support of the heroes.

Even with the Council's help, the battle did not go well. The heroes were steadily driven back, and the Council was forced to unleash its greatest spell. The mages broke

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🜨 NEW ORGANIZATION: THE ARCANE COUNCIL

Number of Members: 120

Alignment: Lawful Good

Regions of Influence: The republic of Lorayon, now under mystical law.

Primary Activities: Protect Lorayon from danger and improve its standard of living.

Organization: There are six circles in the Council. The First Circle is the six wizards in charge and is led by the Archmage. The five other wizards in the First Circle each have a circle of underlings who help them attend to their spheres of influence. Each circle has between ten and thirty members.

From largest to smallest, the five subordinate circles are the Circle of Research, the Circle of Solace, the Circle of Security,

the Circle of Teaching, and the Circle of Augury. The Circle of Security is growing quickly, though, as members are transferred to it from Research and Solace.

Members: The members of the Arcane Council are all wizards. New members join by applying to study with a mentor in the Circle of Teaching. If the student does well, the mentor invites her to join one of the five circles — which one depends on the prospective member's interests and the organization's current needs.

Benefit of Membership: Any character who becomes a full member of the Arcane Council receives one extra skill point per level. This skill point must be applied to Knowledge (arcana) or Spellcraft.

Leaders: The Archmage is Kelsa Summer, an 18th-level wizard. The other five members of the First Circle are 16th- and 17th-level wizards.

the valley open with an earthquake, returning the dead to their graves … and killing almost all of the land's heroes as well.

Suddenly, the wizards of the Arcane Council were the most powerful people left in the land. They were needed everywhere at once — to mop up the remnants of the undead army, to repair the damage of the quake, and to ward off the country's opportunistic neighbors. Somebody had to be in charge, and the wizards were the only ones left.

Five years later, the wizards are still there. The damage to Lorayon has been repaired, and now they're ready to make improvements. A network of weather control enchantments is being developed, and the wizards have drawn up plans for teleportation gates that could revolu-tionize the country's travel and trade. All they need is time, research, and lots of money.

The money is the sticking point. More and more of the government's budget is going to magical research and development. Taxes are going up, and many citizens are grumbling that it's time for the mystical law declared five years ago to end. The Arcane Council sees a bright future just over the horizon, though, and refuses to give up this opportunity to realize it.

The Council doesn't want to be repressive, but the rising tide of rebellion has to be dealt with, and the best way to go about this is to round up the dissidents and get them out of the way. The Arcane Council plans to release them and hand over the reins of the government as soon as their work is done. It should only take a few decades to finish …

SPELLCASTING IN THE POLITICAL ARENA

Even if spellcasters aren't running the government, they can be very influential. Magic lets you multiply resources, influence friends, and gain information about faraway places. Mages are the spin doctors and political consultants of the fantasy genre, and they're paid very well to give political figures an edge over their rivals.

TRICKS OF THE TRADE

Many of the traditional D20 System spells have obvious applications to politics. The following are some ways to use them effectively in the political arena.

Message is an essential tool for wise advisors who want to prompt charismatic but foolish lords, and almost any communication spell can help allies share and spread information.

Fly and teleportation spells can speed a leader to a crisis — or a political rally — anytime just sending a message isn't enough.

Clairaudience/clairvoyance and scrying spells glean information from a safe distance.

Many politicians rely on *augury* and other divination spells to tell them how the public will react to their decisions.

Then there are the dirty tricks. *Bestow curse* can ruin a politician's career if it's applied to Charisma, and *zone of truth* can have even worse effects if the public witnesses the results.

Well-placed *antipathy* spells can keep voters of the "wrong" alignment away from the polls on election day.

Enchantments like *charm person* and *dominate person* can make friends and convert rivals into allies.

Dispel magic and other counterspells are an important political resource, since it's no surprise that politicians must be careful when there are spellcasters in the room.

VARIATIONS ON A THEME

The following rules can be applied to unique uses of certain spells, at the game moderator's discretion.

Alter self and *change self* can be used to trim flab, tone up muscles, and rearrange the face into a more pleasing configuration. This use provides the caster with a +2 competence bonus to Charisma-based skill checks for the duration of the spell.

Ghost sound may be used to supply sympathetic crowd noises — laughter, applause, angry shouts — during a speech, encouraging the real listeners to react in appropriate ways. The caster must make a Bluff check (DC 20). If the check is successful, the attitude of the crowd improves by one step (from Hostile to Unfriendly, for instance, or from Friendly to Helpful; see the standard D20 System rules). If the check fails, the crowd realizes it is being manipulated, and its attitude takes one step for the worse.

Speak with dead can provide evidence from beyond the grave, which is both compelling and frightening. Any character who uses this spell to support an argument must make a Charisma check (DC 15) to reassure the audience. If the character is successful, the audience finds the testimony convincing and its attitude improves by one step, as mentioned above. If the character fails, the crowd is frightened and repulsed, and its attitude takes one step for the worse.

Sympathy gathers crowds quickly and draws their attention to an enchanted object. A character who holds the object and describes how the crowd's assistance will benefit the object or help them get the object may make a Charisma check to alter their attitude to Helpful. The character gains a +2 bonus on the check.

MAGICAL ESPIONAGE

Spying is often an essential part of political intrigue, and magic is a very flexible tool for espionage. Here are some of the things that magecraft can accomplish:

Informs About Outsiders

You can't make decisions about another country without knowing what's happening there. Espionage provides information about current agricultural conditions, local economics, political news, military movements, and more. If troops are massing on your border, you want to know about it. If famine threatens, you may be able to offer timely aid, and if the price of silk hits an all-time high your merchants can be the first to take advantage of it.

Information doesn't have to be secret to be useful. Nobody hides crop prices or the queen's love of formal

dances. If there's a sudden increase in demand for iron and blacksmiths, it may be an early warning that a country is mobilizing its troops and preparing to attack.

Local agents can use communication spells to send back reports in a fraction of the time it would take a messenger to deliver them. Divinations predict events before they happen. An invisible rogue can slip into a camp and learn the exact plans of an army. Scrying spells can be used for the discreet surveillance of important leaders. Compulsion spells can convince a reluctant informant to talk.

Provides Internal Information

Spying on your own people is a more difficult mission. Nobody appreciates being watched, and aggressive monitoring usually stirs up fear and anger. Some leaders keep their followers in line by intimidating them with a very public "secret" police, but if your goal is to root out treachery or corruption it's best to maintain a low profile while doing it.

Magic is the perfect tool for internal surveillance, because it's flexible and impossible for most people to detect. A government or organization that uses magic may devote more magical resources to spying on itself than spying on others.

Interferes With Rivals

Sometimes gathering information isn't enough. An espionage organization may have to take direct action against a rival country or organization. This includes assassination, the destruction of equipment or information, kidnappings, or even terror tactics. It can also include disinformation and propaganda to confuse or redirect the actions of rivals.

As with information-gathering, the ability to speed up communication or slip into a stronghold unnoticed can be very helpful. Offensive magic supplies a variety of destructive or diversionary tactics. Death clouds and fireballs wreak large-scale destruction, while magical plagues and necromancy can shatter the morale of an entire city.

Magic is less useful for propaganda and disinformation, since few spells are useful in convincing or confusing many people at once. There are a few communications spells that can get an organization's message out, however. Spells designed to charm people can subvert prominent members of an enemy population, or enhance the sincerity of agents spreading propaganda.

Enhances Security

If you're spying on them, they're probably spying on you. Espionage organizations must protect themselves, and there are many protection and warning spells that can help achieve this goal.

Magecraft is even more important for preventing magical spying than effecting it. An organization must detect cloaked intruders, disrupt scrying and other surveillance, and prevent magical subversion. The only thing that can trump magical espionage is better magic.

When two mages come into conflict, the more experienced spellcaster usually wins. Powerful mages are valuable, especially since it's difficult to compel one to work for you. Any espionage organization is going to want to

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🜨 NEW ORGANIZATION: THE GRAY HAND

Number of Members: 70

Alignment: Lawful neutral

Regions of Influence: The domestic security and international politics of the realm.

Primary Activities: Develop contacts among sympathetic citizens of other nations. Acquire and evaluate information about the plans and workings of neighboring governments. Remove threats to the realm by any means necessary.

Organization: The Gray Hand is organized into small administrative cells with four to six agents in each cell. Each cell reports to a senior member of the group. The cells are not isolated — almost every agent knows at least a few agents in other cells — and this may prove to be a security problem in the future.

Members: You don't seek membership in the Gray Hand — it seeks you. The organization recruits characters who can cast spells and have Charisma and Intelligence scores of 13 or better.

The senior members do make occasional exceptions, but these tend to be more along the lines of permitting the friends of a particularly talented agent to serve as auxiliary agents. Given the choice, the Gray Hand would prefer that an agent's companions never know about their friend's work.

Most of the members are bards, sorcerers, and wizards, and almost all of them have a few levels in the rogue class.

Benefit of Membership: Any character who is recruited for the Gray Hand undergoes an intensive three-month course of training. At the end of this training, the character may increase her Strength, Dexterity, or Constitution score by 1 point.

Leaders: Lord Sumara (SOO-mah-rah) is a 7th-level wizard/3rd-level rogue/2nd-level monk.

have the best mages. It will make handsome offers to those it can recruit, attempt to win over those who work for rivals, and try to eliminate any powerful mages who cannot be won over.

An organization worried about espionage must also protect members who are not mages — usually, the majority of those in the organization. Since many low-level spells can help detect or warn against the use of magic, it makes sense to train as many members as possible in the basics of magic. It also helps to recruit members with the wit to notice the telltale signs of magic and the willpower to resist magical compulsions.

EXAMPLE: THE BEST AND THE BRIGHTEST

Most students never notice them, but every spring numerous grey men wander the campus of Iolea (ee-oh-LAY-uh) University. They attend the sporting events, drink in the nearby pubs, visit with the deans, and watch the students. They're looking for two or three of the best and brightest in each class, the students with the wit and courage to do the unspeakable.

They are recruiters for the Gray Hand, an organization of spies and assassins sworn to do the king's will no matter what it may be. Much of their work is mundane — agents often live quietly in neighboring countries, observing trends and writing the occasional letter. Many of their activities are more dangerous, though. The Grey Hand specializes in infiltration, and its members use disguise, physical abilities, and magic to penetrate almost any secure location.

Every member of the Gray Hand is a spellcaster, though many have only basic abilities. The recruiters look for talented students of magic with a reputation for curiosity and mischief. If a student appears to be promising, they investigate her background, then arrange for an interview; a trusted professor usually introduces the student to the recruiter.

If the interview goes well, the student is offered a job and given intense physical and mental training. As soon as she has mastered the basic skills of espionage, she and any other students recruited at the same time are given a routine assignment.

The assignment is a final test. The senior members of the Gray Hand pose as a rival spies launching an all-out assault upon the organization. The headquarters is left in a shambles, and the new agents' mentors fake their own deaths. The senior members pursue the new agents, challenging them to the very limit of their abilities. If the agents survive with their minds and courage intact, they become full-fledged members of the Gray Hand.

The Gray Hand is the creation of Lord Sumara (SOO-mah-ruh), an illegitimate brother of the queen. The organization is only 15 years old, and even its most experienced members are still learning the fine points of espionage. The organization is far from invincible, and has had some embarrassing failures in recent years. Not all of these failures can be explained by bad luck, and some of the senior members suspect that an enemy agent may be hidden within the organization.

That's not the only trouble the Gray Hand is facing. The once-energetic Lord Sumara has become withdrawn since the death of his lover two years ago. His conversations are increasingly elliptical and filled with mystic references, and the other senior members are concerned about his mental health.

NEW SPELLS

The following spells are designed to aid in information-gathering, intrigue, and more. These spells will help any magic-user make the political arena her own.

ABSORB INFORMATION

Transmutation
Level: Bard 3, Sor/Wiz 3
Components: V, M
Casting Time: 1 minute
Range: Touch
Target: Object touched
Duration: Instantaneous
Saving Throw: See text
Spell Resistance: No

Information is power, and sometimes you need that power fast. When you're dealing with long rows of figures, complicated instructions, or a secret battle plan, *absorb information* can help you. This spell instantly transfers written information from a book, scroll, or similar document to your mind, allowing you to recall it perfectly at will.

Nonmagical writings are transferred automatically. To absorb the writing of a magical item, you must make a caster level check (1d20 + caster level) versus a DC of 11 + the item's caster level. If you absorb a document with more than one spell written in it, you must make a caster level check for each spell absorbed. *Absorb information* may absorb any spell that can be affected by an *erase* spell. If you fail the caster level check to absorb *explosive runes*, *glyph of warding*, or a *sepia snake sigil*, you accidentally activate the runes, glyph, or sigil instead.

Absorbing a spell does not mean that you learn or can cast that spell. You can write the spell in a spellbook or (if you have the Scribe Scroll feat) on a scroll, but if the spell was written by someone else you must first decipher it as per the standard D20 System rules for deciphering magical writing. You may not create magical items using an absorbed spell unless you are capable of casting that spell. You can write down the text of a magical book like the *tome of clear thought*, but it has no magical power unless you enchant it. (You gain no magical benefit from mentally studying the absorbed text of a magical book — the power is in the physical book itself.)

You may absorb up to 10 pages of information for each caster level you have. There is no limit to the amount of absorbed information that you can keep in your head. Just try not to share it all at once.

Material Component: A sprig of dried rosemary, which you must crumble in your hand as you cast the spell.

CONCEALED INSTRUCTION

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Sor/Wiz 6
Casting Time: 3 days

As *programmed instruction*, but the spell is almost impossible to detect, even when the programming is active. The subject is completely unaware of her programming, and is conditioned not to believe any attempts to convince her that her behavior is abnormal. Any spellcaster attempting to detect, analyze, or dispel the enchantment must succeed at a caster level check (DC 15 + your caster level).

Concealed instruction is a grueling spell to cast, requiring three days of nearly continuous effort to shatter and rebuild the subject's personality. Your concentration must not be interrupted during the casting, and you must make a Fortitude save (DC 15) each day or the spell fails.

CONFESSION'S HAND

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Clr 3, Sor/Wiz 4
Components: V, S, F/DF
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Target: Creature touched
Duration: 1 minute/level (D)
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

Secret policemen love this spell, which forces the truth — in writing! — from all but the most strong-willed of traitors. The subject must hold a pen (described as a focus below) when the spell is cast, and must have a surface to write on while the spell is in effect.

If the subject fails the Will save to resist the spell, he is compelled to hold the pen until the spell ends. If you ask the subject a question, he must write a truthful answer to the question. The spell does not prevent unintentional inaccuracies, and the subject may commit lies of omission.

A medieval pen must be dipped in ink every few words, which slows down the writing process. A short answer to a question usually takes about 30 seconds to write. A long answer may take two minutes or more.

Focus or Divine Focus: A pen with a silver nib worth at least 50 gp.

CONVIVIALITY

Illusion (Glamer)
Level: Bard 0, Sor/Wiz 0
Components: V
Casting Time: 1 action

Range: 10 ft.
Area: All creatures within 10 ft.
Duration: 1 minute/level (D)
Saving Throw: Will negates (harmless)
Spell Resistance: Yes (harmless)

This spell makes any party or other social gathering sparkle. Colors become brighter, music sweeter, flavors more intense. All creatures within the area of effect receive a +2 circumstance bonus on Diplomacy or Perform checks. The spell can only be cast during a social occasion, as it merely enhances people's relaxation and pleasure.

⊛ CRYPTIC MARK

Illusion (Phantasm)
Level: Bard 2, Sor/Wiz 1
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Touch
Effect: 1 message of 10 words or less
Duration: Permanent
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: No

Sometimes you need to leave a discreet message for the right people. This spell allows you to inscribe a message of 10 words of less on any surface without doing harm to that surface. The writing is invisible, but becomes visible to you and any other persons whom you designate. Those persons need not be present when the mark is made.

A *detect magic* spell will indicate the mark's presence but not render it visible. *Read magic, see invisibility, true seeing,* a *gem of seeing,* or a *robe of eyes* may reveal the mark, but only if the caster level of the spell or item is higher than the caster level of the *cryptic mark* spell. The mark cannot be dispelled, but can be removed by the caster or an *erase* spell. If the spell is cast on a living being, normal wear causes the mark to fade in about a month.

⊛ DISTORT

Illusion (Glamer)
Level: Bard 4, Sor/Wiz 4
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft/2 levels)
Target: One humanoid
Duration: 6 hours/level (D)
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

One of the classic dirty tricks in politics is to "demonize your opponent." Most mages are sensible enough not to take this literally, but *distort* is a more practical version of this tactic. This curse twists the features of the target humanoid in subtle and frightening ways. The lines of the face sharpen, and a feral glint appears in the eyes. The lips curl, and the posture stoops. Everything the target says

sounds false. The target suffers a –10 penalty to all Charisma-based skill checks for the duration of the spell.

⊛ FORGET

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Language-Dependent, Mind-Affecting]
Level: Bard 4, Sor/Wiz 5
Components: V, S
Casting Time: 1 full round
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft/2 levels)
Target: One creature
Duration: Permanent (D)
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

When you cast this curse upon a target creature, you block its mind from accessing a specific memory. The subject of the memory can be broad, but it must be a single memory that can be described within 10 words. "Forget what you saw me do to the king" or "Forget that you are a paladin" are both workable compulsions; "Forget everything" or "Forget our meeting yesterday, and the one last week, too" are not, though the latter goal could be accomplished with two castings of *forget*.

The memory remains in the target creature's mind and can be accessed with telepathy or other mind-affecting actions. The target simply cannot consciously remember it. The spell also erases a few seconds of the target's short-term memory, ensuring that the target forgets being told to forget something.

Forget can inhibit the use of a skill, but the spell's effectiveness is limited. You must specifically order that a skill be forgotten. If you tell a character to forget that she is a paladin, she forgets her paladin abilities exist, but can use them normally if convinced to try them. However, if you tell the paladin to "Forget how to fight", she will be convinced that she does not know how to fight, and will probably avoid doing so.

Most skills involve trained reactions rather than conscious thought. Since *forget* only affects conscious thought, the target's actual skill remains. The target may attempt to use any skill or ability that requires a skill check, including attack rolls. The character suffers a –2 penalty due to lack of confidence and uncertainty, however. Each time the character makes a successful skill check or attack roll despite the penalty, the character receives another Will save to dispel the enchantment.

Knowledge skills are completely negated by this spell. If a character makes a skill roll in a "forgotten" area of Knowledge, he makes his check as if he had no ranks in the skill. Special abilities and spells that do not require some kind of skill check are also completely unusable.

GARBLE

Illusion (Glamer)
Level: Bard 3, Sor/Wiz 3
Components: V, M
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft/2 levels)
Target: One creature
Duration: 1 hour/level (D)
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

This curse disguises the target's speech, which is useful for ending arguments and squelching well-spoken agitators. Whatever she says sounds completely normal to her, but is incomprehensible gibberish to everyone else. Most skills involving a common language are useless, though the target may be able to communicate with non-verbal methods such as touch, writing, sign language, or facial expressions. The target's ability to cast spells with verbal components is unaffected.

Material Component: A slice of lemon, which the caster must bite and suck the juices from.

GREATER IMAGE

Illusion (Figment)
Level: Bard 7, Sor/Wiz 7
Components: V, S, F
Casting Time: 1 minute
Range: Long (400 ft + 40 ft/level)
Effect: Visual figment of any size that is perceived by every creature within 1 mile + 1 mile/level of its center point
Duration: Concentration
Saving Throw: Will disbelief (if interacted with)
Spell Resistance: Yes

As *silent image*, except the figment includes visual, auditory, olfactory, and thermal components. This spell can be used to communicate with — or terrify — the population of an entire city.

Focus: A large bonfire.

INSTANT FACT

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-Affecting, Language-Dependent]
Level: Bard 2, Sor/Wiz 3
Components: V, M
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft/2 levels)
Target: One creature
Duration: 1 day/level (D)
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

This enchantment causes the target creature to believe one idea, no matter how ridiculous. The "fact" may not be about the target, it may not suggest a future action or event, and it must be expressed in a single sentence of 20 words or less. "Capitalism is a tool of the oppressor," "These papers authorize us to be here," or "Lord Harrod performs unspeakable acts with gnomes" will work; "The king must die" will not.

Material Component: A ribbon of silk.

MASS EMOTION

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Brd 5, Sor/Wiz 6
Components: V, S, F
Casting Time: 1 full round
Range: Medium (100 ft. + 10 ft/level)
Target: All living creatures with in a 60-ft. radius
Duration: Concentration
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

As *emotion*, except that it affects more creatures. The same *emotion* applies to all these creatures. This spell is especially useful for inspiring crowds and stirring up angry mobs.

Focus: Bards must use a musical instrument as a focus. Wizards and sorcerers must use a small mirror.

PROGRAMMED INSTRUCTION

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Sor/Wiz 5
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 day
Range: Touch
Target: 1 creature
Duration: Permanent until discharged
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

This spell induces a deep hypnotic state in the subject, allowing you to reshape his behavior to your liking. This does not give you direct control over the subject's actions, but it allows you to program him to act in certain ways and respond to certain stimuli in a set pattern.

The subject will do anything you tell him to do, but you must specify the exact actions you want him to perform. (The best way to do this is to give the instructions in writing to the GM.) The instructions can be as simple or complex as you want them to be, from "Go to the north gate and attack the guard" to a 100-page document full of contingencies and follow-up instructions. You may also command the subject to completely forget the instructions or any actions he takes because of them, without affecting the execution of the instructions themselves.

Once the spell is cast, the subject feels and acts normal. The spell is inactive unless the instructions you have programmed force the subject to take action. It is suppressed by *antimagic* fields and can be detected by *detect magic* and similar mystical divination spells. *Analyze dweomer* can be used to determine the exact programming of the subject.

Knowledge or possession of this spell is considered to be a capital crime in many societies, with good reason. A few well-programmed leaders can literally surrender a nation to its enemies.

Material Component: A 500-gp dose of a milky white plant juice known as mindbane.

SCRYJACK

Transmutation
Level: Sor/Wiz 6
Components: V
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Personal
Area: You
Duration: 1 minute/level

The only thing better than keeping your plans unobserved is presenting disinformation to prying eyes. If you are aware of being the subject of any scrying spell, you may take control of that spell and show its caster what you wish him to see. You must succeed at a caster level check (1d10 + caster level) against a DC of 11 + the caster level of the spellcaster who cast the scrying spell. If you succeed by 5 or more, the spellcaster is unaware that you have cast *scryjack* and are now in control of the scrying spell.

While the *scryjack* is in effect, you may cast mind-affecting spells on the caster of the original scrying spell. If you do so, or if you show the spellcaster images that are obviously unreal, he becomes aware (if he was not already) that you have cast *scryjack*.

SPELLSENSE

Divination
Level: Sor/Wiz 5
Components: V, S, M
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Personal
Area: You
Duration: 12 hours

As *detect scrying*, except you also become extremely sensitive to the flow of magic around you. You immediately notice any spell cast in your presence or upon your person, and can make a Spellcraft check (DC 15 + spell level) to identify it. This Spellcraft check is a free action.

This spell is ideal for guards, and for schemers who wish to make sure that the negotiations and planning sessions they attend proceed without magical interruption.

Material Component: A small brass bell.

TABOO

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Language-Dependent, Mind-Affecting]
Level: Clr 5, Sor/Wiz 5
Components: V
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft/2 levels)
Target: One living creature
Duration: 1 day/level or until discharged
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

A *taboo* enforces a simple prohibition on a creature, forcing it not to take a specific action. The instruction must be one sentence of 10 words or less, and it may only forbid an action. It must be physically possible for the target to obey this command — "Don't live" won't work, but "Don't stand on this cliff" might force a creature into a life-threatening situation as it tries to climb down.

If the creature attempts to disobey a *taboo*, it suffers extreme pain. It must make a Fortitude save (DC 20 + caster level) or be stunned for 1d6 rounds. A stunned creature can't take actions, drops anything it is holding, and loses any positive Dexterity modifier to AC. Attackers gain a +2 bonus to their attack rolls against a stunned creature.

If the creature's Fortitude bonus is high enough that a roll of 20 will succeed at the save to avoid being stunned, the creature may "take 20" to slowly accomplish the forbidden action.

Remove curse ends the *taboo* only if its caster level is at least two higher than your caster level. *Break enchantment* and *dispel magic* do not end the *taboo*, although *limited wish*, *miracle*, and *wish* do.

WEAKEN RESISTANCE

Enchantment [Mind-Affecting]
Level: Clr 4, Sor/Wiz 4
Components: V
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: 1 creature
Duration: See text (D)
Saving Throw: None
Spell Resistance: Yes

Some people are too stubborn to give in easily. This curse can help with interrogations, personality reprogramming, and other coercions. This word of power batters the target's mind. The creature suffers a −4 penalty to all skill checks, attack rolls, and saving throws.

The spell lasts until the creature succeeds at a Will save (the −4 penalty from the spell applies). Each attempt requires a move-equivalent action.

WHISPER GEAS

Enchantment (Compulsion) [Language-Dependent, Mind-Affecting]
Level: Brd 3, Sor/Wiz 4
Components: V
Casting Time: 1 action
Range: Close (25 ft. + 5 ft./2 levels)
Target: Creature touched, and any creature the spell spreads to.
Duration: 1 day/level (D)
Saving Throw: Will negates
Spell Resistance: Yes

Whisper geas is a contagious spell. It compels a creature to spread information, and any creature hearing the information feels a similar compulsion to pass it on. The targets are not aware they are under a spell, though the enchantment can be detected normally. This spell spreads rumors through cities like wildfire.

The verbal component is a sentence of up to 20 words. If the subject fails its Will save, it must speak this sentence to every creature it meets for the duration of the spell. It need only speak the sentence the first time it encounters each creature during the spell.

Any creature that hears the sentence must also make a Will save. If it fails, it must also pass on the sentence for the duration of the spell. If it succeeds, it is unaffected by the spell. The contagion continues to spread until the spell ends or is dismissed.

NEW MAGIC ITEMS

Besides being sneaky, magic can save a spellcaster effort. Need to keep an eye on a rival? Is there a message that must get through? Are you running out of subjects to taste your food for poison? These items can help.

CLEVER TABLE

This enchanted table detects any poisoned food or drink (as per the *detect poison* spell) that is placed upon it, illuminating the contaminants with a blue light. By examining small variations in the light, the enchanter of the table may determine the exact poison that the table has detected. This requires a Wisdom check (DC 20) or Alchemy check (DC 20).

Some lords use this as a side table and test food during preparation. Other lords — those that are more careful than diplomatic — dine at a *clever table* and risk the potential awkwardness of glowing food. The market price below is for a table that can seat up to 6 persons. Larger tables used for banquets cost twice as much.

Caster Level: 1st level; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *detect poison*, 5 ranks of Craft (woodworking); *Market Price:* 2500 gp; *Weight:* 50 to 200 pounds, depending on the size of the table.

CLOCKWORK BIRD

These tiny mechanical birds patrol wealthy estates in search of intruders. They can be trained to recognize the perimeter of an estate and up to 100 creatures authorized to be within the perimeter. They are then turned loose to wander the estate and look for intruders. A *clockwork bird* can fly for up to 18 hours, then must stop and recharge for 6 hours.

A *clockwork bird* can inspect an area of 400 square feet every minute. Any creature wishing to avoid detection must make a Hide check (DC 25). If the check is failed, the bird notes the presence of the creature and attempts to recognize it. If the creature the bird inspects appears to be authorized — a Disguise check (DC 25) will fool the bird — the bird continues its wandering. If the creature does not match the bird's list of authorized creatures, it shrieks loudly and circles the intruder until other guardians arrive.

Clockwork birds are difficult to see if painted in natural colors; characters must make a Spot check (DC 20) to notice them. However, many estate owners prefer to show off their birds, and they are often decorated with gold and small jewels. Another way to detect the presence of *clockwork birds* is to listen for the sound of their gears; this requires a Listen check (DC 15).

Clockwork birds are small and fast, making them hard to hit. Each bird has AC 20 (+8 size, +2 Dex), 10 hit points, and Hardness 5. If caught and held, the bird can be crushed with a Strength check (DC 15).

Caster Level: 5th level; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *alarm*, *fly*; *Market Price:* 15,000 gp; *Weight:* —

COURIER'S POUCH

Mages have a variety of spells that allow secret communications across great distances. However, sometimes the need arises to physically move a document or object while keeping it secure. The *courier's pouch* helps accomplish this. It appears to be a simple battered leather pouch, but any character who inspects it will notice a faint tracing of runes over the leather. The pouch has a volume of one cubic foot, and can hold up to twenty pounds.

If the pouch is opened without proper authorization, the runes inscribed on it create a fiery explosion that does 10d6 damage to anyone within ten feet. A Reflex save (DC 18) halves this damage. The explosion does not damage the contents of the pouch. The explosion does not expend the enchantment, and any further attempts

to break into the pouch will trigger it again. Anything within the pouch is also completely protected from divination and scrying spells.

There are several ways to enchant a *courier's pouch*. It can be enchanted to open only to a command word, or only for a specific person. It can also be enchanted to destroy itself and its contents if it leaves the presence of a specific person. All these options must be chosen when the pouch is created, and cannot be changed afterwards. It is possible to determine the specifics of a pouch's enchantment by examining the subtle variations in the runes inscribed on it. Any character who wishes to do so may make a Spellcraft check (DC 30) or cast *analyze dweomer* on the pouch.

Caster Level: 13th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *explosive runes, sequester; Market Price:* 50,000 gp; *Weight:* 1 lb. (empty)

🕮 DUST OF DISTRACTION

When a clever thief needs to make a quick getaway, this glittering dust can help. When it touches a creature's skin, the creature must make a Will save. If the save is failed, all of its Concentration, Search, Spot, and Initiative checks are at –5 until the creature affected can clean the dust off its skin. (A simple wash with water will suffice.)

Handling the dust is a bit tricky — the user is just as susceptible as the intended target. One safe way of delivering it is to place the powder in a small bag and toss the bag at a target. The bag is treated as a grenade-like weapon, and the dust "splashes" on every creature within five feet.

Caster Level: 7th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *confusion; Market Price:* 700 gp; *Weight:* —

🕮 ECHO GEM

Words are a weapon, and an *echo gem* lets you turn an opponent's words against him. An *echo gem* is a small, precious stone — sapphires work well, but any stone worth at least 500 gp will do — that has been enchanted to store sound. To use it, a character must hold the gem and concentrate on a voice or sound. That sound is then recorded perfectly. It can be played back by holding the gem and speaking a command word — usually "repeat."

An *echo gem* can record up to five minutes of sound, but it can record only one sound at a time. If you wish to record a conversation, you must constantly shift your concentration from one speaker to another. You must make a Concentration check (DC 15) to correctly record a conversation. If you fail the check, parts of the recording will be inaudible. Exactly what information is lost is up to the GM.

An *echo gem* may only be recorded into once. It can be played back any number of times.

Caster Level: 3rd; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *magic mouth; Market Price:* 1000 gp; *Weight:* —

🕮 FLY ON THE WALL

This tiny metal fly looks real but is a sophisticated surveillance device. It can travel to a location, observe and record for up to 12 hours, then return to its owner. When the owner holds the fly and concentrates for one minute, she remembers the events the fly observed as if she had been there in the fly's place.

The fly records all sights and sounds in all directions that are not blocked by walls or other obstructions. It cannot record what it does not see or hear. Its senses are equivalent to a normal human's eyes and ears, and it has no special ability to penetrate darkness or magical silences.

A *fly on the wall* has a range of up to 1000 feet per day. It flies, records, and returns according to the verbal instructions of its owner. Those instructions must be both simple and clear — if you want to be certain that you have given the instructions you intended to give, you must make an Intelligence check (DC 12). Only the fly's owner can give instructions to the fly. The owner is usually defined when the fly is created, but it can be changed with a Spellcraft check (DC 25, and the fly's creator gets a +10 circumstance bonus on the roll). If this check is failed, the fly is ruined.

It's difficult to notice that this is not a normal fly, especially since there's no shortage of flies in the medieval lifestyle. However, any character may make a Spot check (DC 25) to realize that the fly's movements are slightly unnatural and that the body is metallic. Like most insects, the fly is hard to hit (AC 18), but any contact will crush it. A character can capture the fly undamaged by making a successful unarmed attack roll at a –4 penalty.

Caster Level: 5th; *Prerequisites:* Create Wondrous Item, 5 ranks Craft (jewelry), *absorb information, fly; Market Price:* 12,000 gp; *Weight:* —

🕮 INVISIBLE BLADE

This weapon enchantment makes a blade invisible. Only edged weapons like swords and daggers can be enchanted this way, and most spellcasters only enchant the blade of the weapon. It is possible to enchant the hilt and guard as well, but doing so often causes nasty accidents. Even with the hilt visible, it takes some practice to put an *invisible blade* back in its scabbard — traveling companions might want to stand back a couple of paces and enjoy the show.

An *invisible blade* is especially difficult to parry or dodge. While wielding one, you receive a +2 circum-

stance bonus to your attack rolls. Unlike normal invisibility, however, the defender does not lose her Dexterity bonus to AC, since she can react to your movements and the position of your blade's hilt.

Caster Level: 7th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *improved invisibility*; *Market Price:* +1 bonus

LOYAL PEN

A *loyal pen* protects its owner's identity. It writes only for its owner, who must always sign the document with his true name. Any character touching the owner's signature feels like she is standing a few feet away from the pen's owner, and that the owner has just confirmed writing the words.

If the owner chooses, he may project an emotion while writing with the pen. Whoever touches the writing senses how the owner felt — cheerful, angry, eager, lovesick, or any other emotion — while writing. The owner may fake the emotion he chooses to project, but this requires a Bluff check (DC 15). If the check is successful, the fake emotion is completely convincing.

A *loyal pen* isn't really much more secure than a carefully guarded signet ring. However, the expense and difficulty of creating one — each pen requires an intact feather from an adult griffon for its creation — gives the devices snob appeal. Kings and mages use them to show off their power, and wealthy merchants give *loyal pens* to their children as a reward for completing university studies or getting an important job.

A *loyal pen's* owner is set when the pen is created, and cannot be changed afterwards.

Caster Level: 1st; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, a griffon feather, *message*; *Market Price:* 5,000 gp; *Weight:* —

POTION AND ROD OF ATTRACTION

These two items make any person easy to track. If you drink a *potion of attraction*, you become attuned to a matching *rod of attraction* for 48 hours. Any character using that rod can determine your location and distance for as long as you and it are on the same plane of existence.

Due to the inevitable small variations in the enchantment process, no two *rods of attraction* are exactly the same. Each *potion of attraction* can only match one rod (the final step of the brewing is to briefly dip the rod into the potion), but any number of *potions of attraction* can match a single *rod of attraction*. If two characters are simultaneously attuned to *rod of attraction*, the rod supplies the location and distance of both characters on demand. However, it does nothing to identify which character is which.

A *potion of attraction* has the consistency of thin milk and a slightly bitter taste. It can be concealed in beverages or foods, but the heat of cooking ruins the potion. To successfully disguise a *potion of attraction*, you must succeed at an Alchemy or Profession (cook) or similar check, which is opposed by an Intelligence check made by the character consuming the potion.

Caster Level: 7th; *Prerequisites:* Brew Potion, Craft Rod, *locate creature*; *Market Price:* 7,500 gp for a rod, 750 gp for each potion

QUEEN'S SHILLING

A *queen's shilling* is a small gold coin with an unusual variant of the reigning monarch's image stamped upon it. The coin is enchanted to always remain with its bearer; it ceases to exist when the bearer or the monarch dies, but it can only be relinquished if the bearer personally hands it to the monarch.

Queen's shillings are invisible to anyone who does not bear one. Most monarchs only give them to trusted servants, and a bearer is expected to give aid and assistance to any other person who presents a shilling. A bearer seeking help often leaves a *queen's shilling* in his palm while paying for a purchase; more ostentatious (or desperate) bearers may sew the coin into a visible place on their clothing.

Caster Level: 12th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *permanent image*; *Market Price:* 1800 gp (note that this item cannot be sold); *Weight:* —

RING OF ALERTNESS

This ring allows its wearer to remain alert for days on end. Any character wearing this ring does not need sleep, and remains fully aware and alert at all times. When the character removes the ring, however, she immediately falls asleep and cannot be woken until she has slept for a period of time equal to the time spent wearing the ring.

Caster Level: 1st; *Prerequisites:* Craft Ring, *sleep*; *Market Price:* 2,000 gp

RING OF SEEMING

A *ring of seeming* is an essential tool for disguise. It mimics the effects of the *change self* spell. While wearing the ring, you can make yourself look different, alter your weight or height, or change the appearance of your clothing and gear. The most that you can increase or decrease your height is one foot, and you cannot change your basic body shape.

The ring does not change the function of your equipment, or any sounds made by you or your gear. However, the illusion does extend to sense of touch (this is an enhancement of the *change self* spell). If you use this ring to create a disguise, you receive a +10 bonus on the Disguise check.

Any creature that notices an inconsistency in the illusion projected by the ring receives a Will save (DC 18) to recognize that she is looking at an illusion. Successful saves do not dispel the illusion or allow the creature that makes the save to see your true self, but any creature that succeeds at the Will save will notice the ring and realize that it is the cause of the illusion. Inconsistencies that trigger a Will save may include seeing a disguised object perform an unusual function, a disguised character speaking the language of another race with native fluency, a "short" character ducking through a tall door, or any other behavior that's "just not quite right."

Caster Level: 3rd; *Prerequisites:* Craft Ring, *change self*; *Market Price:* 10,000 gp

SEEKING ARROW

This arrow does no harm, though the messages it carries might. A *seeking arrow* is carved so that a slip of paper can be wrapped around it. The paper can be up to two inches long and half an inch wide; large enough to write a short message. To use the arrow, you must fire it into the air from a bow while naming its recipient. The arrow will then speed through the air and land at the recipient's feet. It has a range of 6000 miles, and can travel that distance in an hour.

A *seeking arrow* retains its enchantment permanently. However, each time it is used, there is a 50% chance that it will be ruined when it lands.

Caster Level: 5th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Magic Arms and Armor, *message*, *fly*; *Market Price:* 1000 gp; *Cost to Create:* 500 gp + 50 XP

SHRINKING VELLUM

Shrinking vellum appears to be an ordinary sheet of vellum. However, when you hold it and speak a command word (usually "Shrink!"), it shrinks to 1/10th its normal length and width. Another command word ("Grow!" is popular) returns it to normal size. The vellum is expensive, but can be scraped clean and reused.

Any character holding the paper may palm or conceal it with a Pick Pocket check opposed by the observer's Spot check; the shrunken vellum is considered to be a coin-sized object.

Caster Level: 5th; *Prerequisites:* Craft Wondrous Item, *shrink item*; *Market Price:* 4,000 gp; *Weight:* —

CHARACTER & POLITICS

Good political characters are more complicated than run-of-the-mill adventurers. They believe in causes, and have goals they want to achieve. Most political conflicts come from two or more characters with different goals, and it's hard to get involved in a plot if your character doesn't have an opinion about it.

That doesn't mean that your character has to be Machiavelli. Your character doesn't have to think about politics very much at all. But if you want to make the most of a political campaign, you should have some ideas about what your character believes in.

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

If you're playing in a political campaign, ask yourself a few questions about your character's beliefs. Try to imagine how your character feels about life, the land she comes from, or the people she's with.

Here are some questions to ask:

- What kind of society did my character grow up in, and how did that affect his childhood? Was it happy? Scary? Exciting? Does he look back fondly on that part of his life?

- How much does my character care about politics? A lot, a little, not at all? At a local or national level? Is she more interested in issues or people?

- Is there a cause my character believes in? Is there a goal he'd like to accomplish, or an injustice he wants to put right? How important is that cause, and how much time and energy does my character spend on it?

- Does my character have any enemies in high places? If so, what made them enemies, and what does my character intend to do about it?

- How does my character feel about laws and rules? Should they be obeyed or disobeyed? If a law is wrong, should it be changed or simply broken?

- Where does my character think power comes from? Social status? Land? Money? Personal charisma? Skill at manipulating others?

- Is power a tool? A weapon? A privilege? Or a responsibility? Should it be respected? Feared? Ignored? Rebelled against?

- Does my character want power? If she were offered power, would she take it? What would she do to earn it? If she lost it, how would she react? Could she give it up of her own free will?

You don't have to do this alone. Talk with your game moderator about your character's political interests, since learning about your character helps your GM devise new adventures. Brainstorming with other players about your characters' personalities can also be fun.

THE COMPANY YOU KEEP

Unless you're playing in a very small group, your character most likely adventures with a motley collection of wizards, thieves, and half-orc assassins. Your character's politics affect the party she's in, and a bad political balance is as dangerous to a game as having too many wizards and no fighters or clerics.

A good party *must* be compatible. Minor disagreements add spice to a game, but it's hard to have fun if every session includes an hour-long argument over whether you should overthrow the king. Talk about your characters' goals as a group. If they don't fit together, make adjustments until they do.

It's also a good idea to discuss methods. Even if your characters have the same goals, you're going to waste a lot of time arguing if one character hits every problem with an axe and another always wants to use diplomacy. If you're playing revolutionaries, decide whether you like to riot in the streets or make speeches in front of the senate. You can always handle a particular situation in an unusual way, but why not agree on what your party usually does?

This doesn't mean your characters should have identical beliefs. Different perspectives can be useful, and it's always fun to watch the dwarf and the elf bicker. But if your party agrees on the most important things, then you'll have more time and energy to explore your characters' quirks.

RULES OF PERSONALITY

The D20 System classes focus on what a character can do, but they don't say much about who a character is. That's fine in a game that emphasizes physical action and combat, but political games focus on interaction and personality. The rules below are an aid for detailing personalities and defining how they affect the game.

You'll see many of the standard personalities of fantasy stories here — from leaders and prophets to lone wolves and comic relief. They provide opportunities for the members of your party to work together, to gain extra experience, and to get a little extra help in tight situations.

The extra experience can be particularly helpful for controlling the flow of the game. Most dungeon-crawling adventures feature several challenges in quick succession. Political adventures take a more leisurely approach, focusing on a few long challenges instead of a lot of short ones. As a result, character advancement can be slower than many players like. The personality rules below speed up character advancement and keep the pace of the campaign closer to that of the typical dungeon-crawling campaign.

🐉 NEW FEATS: PERSONALITY RULES

A personality feat is selected like a normal feat. A character may only have one personality feat at a time, but may change an existing personality feat using the Transitional feat below.

Here is the format of a personality feat description:

Feat Name [Personality]

Description: What characters with this feat want, why they want it, and what they might do to get it.

Restrictions: Any special restrictions that may prevent a character from claiming or using this feat.

Condition: Once per session, a character may earn one action point by fulfilling the condition described here.

When the party makes a decision or chooses a course of action, that decision may fulfill the personality feat conditions of several characters at the same time. The players can cooperate in fulfilling personality feat conditions even when the characters are working "against" each other. For example, if an Opportunist sabotages a plan thought up by a Schemer and endorsed by a Leader, all three characters get action points.

Action Points

Action points earned with personality feats can be used in two ways:

- Alter a single d20 roll used to make an attack, a skill check, an ability check, a level check, or a saving throw.

- Gain extra experience at the end of the session.

When a character spends an action point to improve a d20 roll, add 1d6 to the d20 roll to help meet or exceed the DC. A character can declare the use of an action point to alter a d20 roll after the roll is made — but only before the GM reveals the result of that roll (whether the attack or check or saving throw

succeeded or failed). A character can't use an action point on a skill check or ability check when he is taking 10 or taking 20. A character can only spend one action point per round.

At higher character levels, the PCs roll more than 1d6 when spending an action point; see the table below. If the character rolls 2d6 or 3d6, apply the highest of the die results and disregard the other rolls.

Character Level	Action Point Dice
1st – 7th	1d6
8th – 14th	2d6
15th – 20th	3d6

At the end of each session, any character may spend one action point to gain experience. This rewards the entire party as if it had faced an encounter with an encounter level equal to the average level of the party.

The GM may withhold action points if she decides that the characters have not truly earned them. Characters may save action points from session to session.

Restricted Personality Feats

Some personality feats restrict the number of characters in the party who can claim them. These roles become confusing or distracting when too many characters try to play them at once — a group with two leaders is often pulled in two different directions, and a party full of lone wolves might never get together at all.

Limiting personality feats avoids bad character combinations. However, sometimes several players want the same feat. Settle who takes which feat by mutual agreement. (Keep in mind that personalities can change, so players can arrange to hand over a role later in the campaign.) Any player who cannot agree on who takes which feat may be restricted from taking any personality feats at all at the GM's discretion.

PERSONALITY FEATS

A personality feat is new kind of feat that makes a statement about your character's behavior. Each feat provides the opportunity to gain an action point by fulfilling a condition. This action point can be used to improve a die roll or saved to earn experience at the end of the session. See "Personality Rules," on page 75, to learn more.

AMBITIOUS [PERSONALITY]

Description: Your star is rising. You look for ways to gain power and respect, and you may be willing to sacrifice ethics for personal gain.

Restrictions: None

Condition: Persuade one or more of your fellow player characters to take an action that wins power for you or improves your social standing.

ARCHITECT [PERSONALITY]

Description: You have a long-term goal, and you're making steady progress towards it.

Restrictions: You must choose a goal when you take this feat. If you abandon or complete your goal, you must choose a new goal (or a new personality feat) by replacing this feat with the Transitional feat.

Condition: Persuade the party to take an action that brings you closer to completing your goal.

BUREAUCRAT [PERSONALITY]

Description: You believe the system exists for a reason, and that playing by the rules is important. You dot your "I"s, cross your "T"s, and always fill in all the forms.

Restrictions: None

Condition: Persuade the party to overcome a problem by following the correct procedures and obeying the rules.

COMIC RELIEF [PERSONALITY]

Description: Screw this deep philosophical stuff, you're here to have fun. You may not always intend for it to happen, but your pranks and misadventures lighten the mood for everyone.

Restrictions: There may be no more than two characters with the Comic Relief personality feat in one party.

Condition: Take an action that makes the other players (and/or their characters) laugh out loud.

COMPETITOR [PERSONALITY]

Description: You love a challenge, especially from somebody who's just as good as you are. You often test yourself and others in contests of strength or wits.

Restrictions: None

Condition: Defeat or outdo another character with the Competitor personality feat. The other character must acknowledge the defeat. Note that this feat is much more useful if two or more PCs in the party take it, though the GM can give a non-player character the feat.

FORTUNE'S FOOL [PERSONALITY]

Description: You have strange luck. Sometimes you fail at sure things, and sometimes you succeed at the impossible. You just do the best you can with it.

Restrictions: None

Condition: Instead of rolling a die, declare that a skill check or saving throw that you are about to make automatically fails. If the roll was a save, it must have been intended to avoid damage or a harmful state such as being charmed, energy drained, paralyzed, or held. If the roll was a skill check, you may not retry that skill

check during this play session. The GM may choose not to award the action point if the results of the failed roll are inconsequential.

HEDONIST [PERSONALITY]

Description: You pursue your own pleasure above all other things.

Restrictions: None

Condition: When you have a choice between doing something practical and doing something self-indulgent and pleasurable, choose the self-indulgent action.

IDEALIST [PERSONALITY]

Description: You believe in something bigger than yourself. It may be voting rights, world peace, or protecting the habitat of the spotted owl, but you put yourself on the line for a principle. Idealists are often intelligent and strong-willed.

Restrictions: None

Condition: Persuade the party to choose a more difficult course of action because it is the right thing to do.

INVESTIGATOR [PERSONALITY]

Description: The truth is out there, and you're going to find it. An investigator turns over rocks, examines motives, and questions assumptions.

Restrictions: None

Condition: Discover the answer to a mystery or find a solution to a serious problem.

LEADER [PERSONALITY]

Description: Someone's got to make a decision around here, and it might as well be you. You listen to all the options, choose the best one, and steer the group toward agreeing with it. You often speak for the group.

Restrictions: There can only be one PC with the Leader personality feat in a party.

Condition: Persuade the party to follow a plan that your character has decided is the best.

LONE WOLF [PERSONALITY]

Description: You are a dark angel that walks the night alone. You answer to nobody and obey no law. You keep your own counsel and disappear for days at a time. You're so introverted that you don't even talk to yourself.

Lone wolf characters sometimes don't make sense in a group activity like roleplaying, but they're so cool that most groups have a player who wants one. Fortunately, lone wolves have their uses in political campaigns. When sending the whole party into a situation is just going to cause trouble, a lone wolf can often get in, do what needs to be done, and get out with his skin intact.

Restrictions: There can be only one PC with the Lone Wolf personality feat in a party.

Condition: Go into a situation alone and single-handedly accomplish a goal that benefits the party.

LOYAL MEMBER [PERSONALITY]

Description: You belong to an organization and are proud of it. This organization could be a family, a religious order, an elite military force, or any other group that sets itself apart from others. Whatever the organization is, you consider its welfare to be more important than your own.

Restrictions: The character must be loyal to an organization other than the adventuring party.

Condition: Do something that either increases the prestige and resources of your organization, or something that protects its interests.

MANIPULATOR [PERSONALITY]

Description: You twist others around your little finger. Confidence games are second nature to you and you love getting others to do your bidding. Your sneaky ways are useful to the political-minded party, but your friends should be wary of you too.

Restrictions: None

Condition: Persuade one or more PCs or NPCs to take an action that is not in their best interests.

MEDIATOR [PERSONALITY]

Description: You can see both sides of an argument, and believe in finding the common ground between opposing positions.

Restrictions: None

Condition: Resolve a disagreement between two other characters in a way that leaves both of them satisfied.

OPPORTUNIST [PERSONALITY]

Description: You look out for number one. You like and respect the people you spend time with, but you advance your own interests whenever you have the chance.

Restrictions: None

Condition: Alter a situation or plan so that it benefits you personally when it did not before.

PACIFIST [PERSONALITY]

Description: It's not that you hate violence, though you might. You believe that violence wastes time and lives, and that most problems are best resolved through negotiation.

Restrictions: None

Condition: Persuade the party to choose a peaceful solution to a problem when a violent alternative is available.

PROPHET [PERSONALITY]

Description: You have a vision for the future. You want to make things happen, or guide others to make them happen for you. You understand that the future is what you make it.

Restrictions: There may only be one character with the Prophet personality feat in a party. Prophets must make predictions in advance and keep track of them (see below).

Condition: Each play session, you may make one prediction. You succeed at the condition if you or another character in the party takes an action that ensures that an event you predicted in a previous session comes to pass.

PROTECTOR [PERSONALITY]

Description: You stand between danger and your friends. You may serve a cause or protect a particular group of beings, such as elves, animals, or the followers of a faith. You always pay attention to the physical safety of those you care for.

Restrictions: None

Condition: Shield another character or creature from harm in a way that exposes you to danger.

REBEL [PERSONALITY]

Description: The rules stink, and you're determined to break them. You may not last long in the subtle environment of a political game, but you'll shake up the system while you do. Rebels do not get along well with bureaucrats.

Restrictions: None

Condition: Get away with defying an authority figure or breaking the rules.

SAMARITAN [PERSONALITY]

Description: You live to help others. Whether tending the sick, feeding the poor, or protecting a village threatened by bandits, you supply aid and comfort to those in need.

Restrictions: A samaritan must provide assistance to any character in need who asks for it.

Condition: Refuse a reward that has been offered to you for helping a non-player character. Nobody in the party takes or benefits from the reward you refuse.

SCHEMER [PERSONALITY]

Description: You have a cunning plan. Schemers study all the angles, looking for opportunities to do the seemingly impossible. Schemers love complicated plans that require split-second timing, but they also acknowledge that sometimes the simplest plan has the best chance of working. Schemers are generally very intelligent and have many skills.

Restrictions: None

Condition: Persuade the party to use a plan that you created. If there is more than one schemer in the group,

then the plan must include at least one idea from each player whose character is a schemer.

SOLDIER [PERSONALITY]

Description: It's not that you love violence, though you might. You believe that negotiation wastes time and resources, and that most problems are best resolved through the use of force.

Restrictions: None

Condition: Persuade the party to choose a violent solution to a problem when a peaceful alternative is available.

TEAM PLAYER [PERSONALITY]

Description: You may not leap into the spotlight, but you are an integral part of the party. Your support of others is crucial to the entire group's success.

Restrictions: None

Condition: Perform an "aid another" action to assist another party member with a skill check or attack roll.

TRANSITIONAL [PERSONALITY]

Description: Your motivations are changing; you no longer know what you believe in. You are in conflict with yourself.

Restrictions: This personality feat must replace an existing personality feat, and you may not keep this feat indefinitely. You may replace this feat with a different personality feat after one play session, and must do so after two play sessions.

Condition: Take two actions that interfere with each other and support contradictory goals, or let an opportunity to pursue your previous goals slip by.

NEW USES FOR OLD SKILLS

The standard D20 System skill list has everything you need for a political campaign. This section does not present any new skills, but it does suggest several new uses for, and specializations of, old skills.

APPRAISE [INT]

Most characters use Appraise to judge the value of physical objects. However, Appraise can also evaluate abstract valuables like trade offers, treaties, and political deals.

Check: To evaluate an abstract valuable, make an Appraise check (DC 20). If you succeed, the GM must point out all significant benefits of the deal or offer, and the costs or consequences that would result from your character agreeing to it. If there is a hidden clause or consequence that your character might regret later, the GM must inform you of it. The GM must tell you whether this is a "good deal" for your character. (This judgment is subjective, but the GM must present your character's informed opinion. What you do with that opinion is up to you.)

You may also use Appraise to determine the value of an abstract valuable to another character. This requires a successful check against a DC of 30. The GM secretly rolls this check for you. If you succeed, you receive the information above as it would apply to the other character. If you fail, the GM may give you inaccurate information. If your character has the Evaluate Deal class ability (see the diplomat prestige class later in this chapter), you may roll the check yourself against a DC of 20.

Special: Evaluating a deal takes more skill than judging the worth of a necklace. You must have at least 6 ranks

BEHIND THE CURTAIN: NEW BONUS TYPES

Several of the feats and classes that follow refer to new kinds of bonuses. We've used them because the existing D20 System bonuses generally focus on tactics and combat rather than interpersonal relations. The new named bonuses work like most of the standard D20 System bonus names; differently named bonuses stack, but those with the same name don't. The new types are called influence and reaction bonuses.

Influence Bonus

An influence bonus is gained by appealing to a character's conscious knowledge or beliefs. If you benefit from an influence bonus, you have a better chance of convincing another character of something.

Example: if you have a powerful patron, you gain an influence bonus because other characters try to please your patron by helping you.

Reaction Bonus

A reaction bonus is gained by appealing to a character's unconscious likes and dislikes. If you benefit from a reaction bonus, other characters feel they should help you without necessarily knowing why.

Example: if you have a commanding voice, you gain a reaction bonus because other characters can't help but pay attention when you talk.

in Appraise or the diplomat's Evaluate Deal class ability to assess the worth of an abstract valuable.

Sometimes one or more parties involved in a deal may wish to misrepresent it. Any party who wishes to obscure the deal may make a Bluff check. To correctly evaluate the deal, your Appraise check must exceed all the Bluff checks as well as the normal DC.

If you have 5 or more ranks in Knowledge (law) or Knowledge (local), you get a +2 synergy bonus on Appraise checks to evaluate an abstract valuable.

⚙ GATHER INFORMATION ⟦CHA⟧

Not all information is gained in a smoky bar. Sometimes you have to dig through ancient tomes or government files to learn what you need to know.

Check: If you are doing research that involves documents or physical evidence instead of interaction with others, you may still make a Gather Information check. You apply your Intelligence modifier instead of your Charisma modifier, however. The time spent, cost, and DC is up to the GM, but is usually identical to a Charisma-based check. Only the method changes.

Special: The Information Network and Security Clearance competence bonuses apply just as well to an Intelligence-based Gather Information check as they do to a Charisma-based check; see the new feats section in this chapter for more on these. Other Gather Information bonuses and penalties may also apply. In general, the bonus applies if it depends on training and skill rather than a winning personality.

⚙ KNOWLEDGE
⟦INT; TRAINED ONLY⟧

Knowledge (law) is a new field of study. You may create and understand legal texts, or evaluate the legality of an action. A lawyer or politician uses Knowledge (law) to find or write the correct law to describe a situation.

Check: Here are some of the tasks Knowledge (law) can accomplish:

DC Task

10 Determine if a common or daily activity is legal or not.

15 Write a simple law, determining if an unusual or rare activity is legal or not

20 Write a complicated law that takes into account special cases or establishes legal standards of measurement. Write a competent legal argument that proves a civil or criminal case.

25 Recognize the loopholes in an existing law and know how to exploit them.

30 Write a legal theory that proves an existing law should be reinterpreted or overturned.

35 Develop a complete legal system from two or three basic principles.

Special: If you have 5 or more ranks in Appraise, you get a +2 synergy bonus on Knowledge (law) checks to create and understand legal texts.

⚙ PERFORM ⟦CHA⟧

Perform (oratory) is a new type of performance. Lawyers and politicians often use it to make speeches, convince others with verbal arguments, or impress audiences with their talent and skill. It doesn't change attitudes, as that takes a Charisma check, but it does convince an audience to agree with your position.

Check: Most Perform (oratory) checks are opposed, with the higher result winning the agreement of the audience. However, here are some benchmarks of what Perform (oratory) can accomplish.

DC Task

10 Convince an audience with a Helpful attitude to agree with your position.

15 Convince an audience with a Friendly attitude to agree with your position. Speak as skillfully as a village head man does.

20 Convince an audience with an Indifferent attitude to agree with your position. Speak as skillfully as a city council member does.

25 Speak as well as a city mayor or a general does.

30 Convince an audience with an Unfriendly attitude to agree with your position. Speak as skillfully as most national politicians do.

35 Speak with the skill and authority of most presidents or emperors.

40 Convince an audience with a Hostile attitude to agree with your position (assuming they let you speak at all).

Special: If you have 5 or more ranks in Knowledge (law), you get a +2 synergy bonus on Perform (oratory) checks to make legal arguments.

NEW FEATS

Winning favor and agreement isn't just about skill and charisma. Some people have a talent for being convincing or inspiring. Others gain political leverage with alliances and secret information. Just like combat, political maneuvers require fancy footwork and an edge over the opponent. The new feats detailed below can supply that edge.

ANGEL OF MERCY [GENERAL]

You display kindness and caring, and can inspire it in others.

Prerequisite: Wis 15+ or Cha 13+

Benefit: You receive a +2 influence bonus to Bluff, Diplomacy, and Perform checks when trying to convince another character to help a person in need. You cannot use this feat to convince someone to act on your behalf, though you may benefit indirectly from an action they take to help someone else.

BROTHERS IN ARMS [GENERAL]

You inspire loyalty and trust among your fellow soldiers. Your fellowship helps you keep each other alive and sane.

Prerequisites: Cha 13+, Wis 13+. You must be part of an army or other organized and hierarchical unit.

Benefit: Whenever a character in your unit must make a Will save, you may choose to make the save for that character. You and the character making the save must be able to see or hear each other. You may make one Will save for multiple characters, as well; you make a single Will save, and the result applies to everyone.

If you succeed at a shared saving throw, every character that shared the save is considered to have succeeded. If you fail, every character that shared the save is considered to have failed. This can cause spells and other effects that would normally affect one person to affect an entire group, but that's brotherhood for you.

Special: Brothers in Arms may be taken as a fighter's bonus feat.

This feat is usually applied to military units, but it may be applied to other units at the GM's discretion. The unit should be as trained and regimented as a squad of professional soldiers. The members of the unit must work together, live together, and play together under the control of a higher authority. Many religious orders qualify as units by this definition. Most adventuring parties do not.

COMMANDING VOICE [GENERAL]

You have a strong voice that sounds authoritative when you address a crowd.

Prerequisite: Cha 15+

Benefit: You receive a +2 reaction bonus to Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, and Perform checks when speaking to five or more people. If you have the Leadership feat, you gain a +2 modifier to your Leadership score for recruiting cohorts and followers.

Special: Commanding Voice may be taken as a fighter's bonus feat.

DANGEROUS INSINUATIONS [GENERAL]

You know how to appeal to an audience's worst nature. Your words provoke fear and anger, turn friend against friend, and even inspire witch hunts.

Prerequisite: Cha 13+

Benefit: You receive a +2 influence bonus to Bluff, Diplomacy, and Perform checks when inciting distrust and paranoia.

ELEGANT [GENERAL]

You have a gimlet eye for fashion. Even rags look stylish on you, and jaws drop when you make your entrance on formal occasions.

Benefit: You receive a +2 reaction bonus to any Diplomacy or Perform check while attending a formal event. To receive this bonus, you must spend at least an hour preparing for the event in advance and must have adequate materials with which to dress and adorn yourself. (You don't need much to be elegant — a curtain can make a fine sarong — but you do need something to work with.)

ESCAPE PLAN [GENERAL]

You always keep an eye on the exits and one last trick up your sleeve. Your enemies may not know that you can't be kept behind bars, but they're about to find out.

Prerequisites: A total of 30 skill ranks in Bluff, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump, and Move Silently.

Benefit: Once per play session, you receive a +10 competence bonus to one Bluff, Climb, Escape Artist, Hide, Jump or Move Silently check. This check must be made while attempting to avoid or escape capture.

EXPERT [GENERAL]

You know what you're talking about. You have expert knowledge of a subject and the communications skills to explain that subject to others. You are in demand as a lecturer and expert witness.

Choose any skill as the area of your expert knowledge.

Prerequisites: 10 ranks in the chosen skill

Benefit: You receive a +2 influence bonus to Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, and Perform checks when speaking about the area of your expert knowledge.

FANATIC [GENERAL]

You are obsessed by a cause, and you are only at your best when you are pursuing it.

Benefit: Choose a cause. You receive a +2 circumstance bonus to any roll you make that directly advances this cause. You receive a –1 penalty to every other roll. This includes attack rolls, saves, skill checks, and even damage.

Your cause must be specific, it must involve clear and definite action, and it cannot center on your own ambition or self-interest. "Kill every orc in the world" is an acceptable cause, but "Destroy all monsters" is not specific enough. "Further the glory of my god" is too vague, but "Convert everyone in the land to the worship of my god" is acceptable. "Become king of England" is too self-interested, but "End the rule of the evil Plantagenets" is acceptable. The GM is sole judge of whether a cause qualifies for this feat and whether an action you are taking advances your cause.

Your own survival never directly advances your cause. After all, if you fall, other believers will surely rise to take your place.

INFORMATION NETWORK [GENERAL]

You have a network of contacts and informants that keeps you up to date. When you need information, they can provide it to you. An information network can be expensive, but not knowing the latest can be far more costly.

The "Information Network" feat is based on the "Gossip Network" feat in Holistic Design's *Fading Suns D20* rulebook.

Prerequisites: Int 13+, Cha 13+

Benefit: Choose a city to be the center of your network. You receive a +2 competence bonus to Gather Information checks within your network's reach. You may use your Gather Information skill without spending your own time and effort. (A lackey does the legwork for you.)

This feat may be taken multiple times to expand your network's reach and speed up its response time. Successive levels do not increase the Gather Information bonus.

The response time of a network may vary by up to 25% (either shorter or longer) as determined by the GM. Gathering information is an art, not an exact science.

This table shows how far the network reaches, based on the number of times the feat has been taken. How quickly information can be gathered is measured in hours (h), days (d), or weeks (w):

Feat	City	Province	Nation	Continent	World
1st	12 h	—	—	—	—
2nd	6 h	1 w	—	—	—
3rd	3 h	3 d	1 w	—	—
4th	1 h	1 d	3 d	2 w	—
5th	*	12 h	1 d	1 w	2 w

* Immediately; you've known this since last week, and just remember it right now.

Special: An information network costs money to maintain. The more powerful you are, the larger and more expensive a network must be to be useful to you. For every level of this feat that you have, your information network costs you 50 gp per month. If you fail to pay this expense, you lose the use of this feat until you catch up on the missed payments.

If you are part of an organization, that organization will usually pay this cost for you. Whether it does or not — and whether it sends you into a dungeon to get the money it needs to pay your information network — is up to the GM.

INSPIRE FRENZY [GENERAL]

Men and women don't just fight for you, they go berserk. Your words and deeds inspire them to throw themselves headlong into battle.

Prerequisites: Cha 15+, Inspired Leader, either Rabble Rouser or Brothers in Arms

Benefit: You may take a full-round action and make a Will save (DC 20) to inspire your allies in battle. If you succeed, any ally fighting within an area with a radius of ten times your character level in feet centered on you gains a +2 morale bonus to attack rolls, damage rolls, and Will saves. However, the ally also receives a –2 penalty to AC and may not choose to fight defensively.

The effect continues for a number of rounds equal to your character level. When a character's frenzy ends, that character is fatigued; he receives a –2 penalty to his Strength score, a –2 to Dexterity, and can't charge or run. The character must rest quietly for at least an hour to return to normal.

Special: Any character who does not wish to receive the benefit of this feat, or who wishes to cease benefiting from it and fight more carefully, must make a Will save (DC 20). The character may not apply the +2 morale bonus from this feat to this Will save.

Inspire Frenzy may be taken as a fighter's bonus feat.

INSPIRED LEADER [GENERAL]

Followers flock to you. You excel in recruiting and inspiring them.

Prerequisites: Cha 13+, Leadership

Benefit: You gain a +2 modifier to your Leadership score for recruiting cohorts and followers. You may have two cohorts.

LASTING ALLIANCE [GENERAL]

You have forged a powerful alliance with another political figure. Unless you reject or openly betray your ally, he always looks favorably upon your interests.

Prerequisites: Your prospective ally must be willing and able to make an alliance with you.

Benefit: You gain a +4 circumstance bonus to any Diplomacy check you make to influence or reach an agreement with your ally. You may double this bonus to +8 for one Diplomacy check, but then you may not benefit from this feat again until you gain a level. You lose the use of this feat if you end the alliance or openly betray it — you may regain it by reestablishing the alliance, but winning back your former ally may prove difficult.

You receive a +2 circumstance bonus on any Bluff, Diplomacy, or Intimidate check that furthers your ally's interests as well as your own. You must make the ally's interest in the situation clear to any other characters involved in this skill check.

Special: If you are the ruler of a tribe, nation, or other political organization, you may take this feat to represent an alliance with an equivalent political organization. You may then apply the bonus to any Diplomacy check you make with the leaders or representatives of that organization.

You may gain this feat multiple times. Its effects do not stack. Each time you take the feat, it applies to a new character or organization.

PARAGON [GENERAL]

You are a shining example of your beliefs, and you have great influence with anyone who shares them.

Benefit: You receive a +2 influence bonus to Diplomacy and Perform (oratory) checks when dealing with or speaking to characters who share your alignment.

This feat is lost if you change your alignment.

PATRONAGE [GENERAL]

You have friends in high places. You are a member of a powerful organization or have an influential patron who looks out for your interests.

Benefit: You may invoke this feat to gain a +10 influence bonus to one Diplomacy, Intimidation, or Gather Information check. Once you have used this feat, you may not invoke it again until you have gained a character level.

You must designate a powerful person or organization to serve as your patron. If you betray or neglect the interests of your patron, you lose the use of this feat until you make amends.

RABBLE ROUSER [GENERAL]

You can excite a crowd with a fiery speech. Mobs love you because you "tell it like it is" and inspire them to action.

Prerequisites: Cha 13+

Benefit: You receive a +2 influence bonus to Bluff and Perform (oratory) checks when you incite a crowd of 10 or more people to immediate action.

REPUTATION BROKER [GENERAL]

You can enhance another character's reputation — or ruin it, if that's what you prefer.

This feat is based on the "Smear Campaign" feat in Holistic Design's *Fading Suns D20* game rules.

Prerequisite: Cha 13+

Benefit: You can change others' attitudes toward someone else by praising or bad-mouthing him. This usually takes at least 6 hours of friendly interaction with the audience. However, you may attempt to use this feat by speaking to the audience for ten minutes and making a Perform (oratory) (DC 20) check. If you succeed at the check, you may use this feat.

To use this feat, roll a Charisma check and consult the appropriate initial attitude line on the tables below to see what the result of the roll is. Use either the Positive Influence table or the Negative Influence table depending on whether you want to enhance or destroy the reputation of the other character.

When members of your audience next encounter the person you praised or warned them about, their attitude

will be whatever you influenced them toward. The audience does not need to personally know the person; reputation and name is enough.

Influencing NPC Attitude – Positive

Initial Attitude	New Attitude				
	Hostile	Unfrnd	Indif	Frnd	Help
Hostile	<20	20	25	35	50
Unfriendly	<5	5	15	25	40
Indifferent	—	<1	1	15	30
Friendly	—	—	<1	1	20

Abbreviations: Friendly (Frnd), Unfriendly (Unfrnd), Indifferent (Indif), Helpful (Help).

Influencing NPC Attitude – Negative

Initial Attitude	New Attitude				
	Hostile	Unfrnd	Indif	Frnd	Help
Unfriendly	15	—	—	—	—
Indifferent	20	15	—	—	—
Friendly	25	20	15	—	—
Helpful	30	25	20	15	—

Abbreviations: Friendly (Frnd), Unfriendly (Unfrnd), Indifferent (Indif), Helpful (Help).

Modifiers: Add +5 to the DCs in the tables above if the audience already knows the person you are praising or denigrating.

Special: You may use Angel of Mercy, Dangerous Insinuations, Rabble Rouser, or Sweet Voice of Reason to improve your Charisma check.

Normal: You may make Charisma checks to alter somebody's attitude about yourself.

SECRET [GENERAL]

You (or your minions) have information that would embarrass or endanger someone you wish to influence. This gives you leverage with that person, as long as you don't overuse it — and as long as nobody else finds out.

Prerequisite: Information Network

Benefit: Choose a character you wish to influence. You have learned an important secret — work out exactly what with your GM — about that character. Once per session, you may invoke that secret to gain a +4 influence bonus on one Diplomacy or Intimidate check opposed by that target character.

Special: You may also "burn the evidence" to automatically succeed at a single Diplomacy or Intimidate check

opposed by the target character. If you do this, you lose the Secret feat. You also lose the Secret feat if the secret you control becomes public, worthless, or irrelevant, either through your actions or the actions of other characters.

You may gain this feat multiple times, either to hold multiple secrets over one character, or to obtain influence over several different characters. Multiple feat bonuses applied to one character do not stack for a single roll, but rather allow you to use the benefit of the Secret feat multiple times each session.

SECURITY CLEARANCE
[GENERAL]

You have routine access to sensitive information. Exactly what that information is depends on the organization supplying it — it could be military secrets, trade secrets, or police files, for example. Many organizations have wide interests, however, and an organization may have information that goes far beyond its official mission.

Prerequisites: Information Network or the Seniority class ability (see the prestige classes later in this chapter). You must have a relationship with an organization that can supply information to you.

Benefit: Once per session, you may automatically succeed at a Gather Information check that involves information available to the organization that has given you the security clearance. The information arrives in half the usual time required for the check. The GM decides if the information is available.

SKILLED RESEARCHER
[GENERAL]

Nothing makes you happier than a pile of books and a topic to research. You are adept at chasing down obscure references and interpreting cryptic passages. Being an expert researcher doesn't help you decode arcane writings and forgotten alphabets (that's Decipher Script), but it lets you make the most of mundane sources of information.

Prerequisites: Gather Information 4 ranks, literacy.

Benefit: Upon taking this feat, choose any Knowledge skill and add 2 ranks to it. You also receive a +2 competence bonus for any Gather Information check that involves the study of books or other documents. You must perform this study yourself.

Special: You may thoroughly study a document in half the normal time instead of taking the +2 competence bonus. You must perform this study yourself. You may

use this benefit even when no Gather Information check is involved.

SWEET VOICE OF REASON [GENERAL]

You make sense. You express your viewpoint so clearly that most people want to agree with you, even if what you have to say has no connection to reality.

Prerequisites: Int 13+

Benefit: You receive a +2 influence bonus to Bluff, Diplomacy, and Perform checks when you explain your position using reason and logic, no matter how spurious that logic is.

NEW PRESTIGE CLASSES

Some characters are experts in the acquisition and use of power. Their talent at making deals or manipulating crowds seems magical to the untrained eye — and sometimes those abilities really are magical. These political specialists are handled with prestige classes.

All the prestige class special abilities given here are extraordinary abilities unless otherwise noted. The new feats mentioned below can be found earlier in this chapter.

BODYGUARD

The powerful have powerful enemies, and they rarely have the skills and strength to deal with a determined physical attack. They rely on bodyguards for their safety, and the best command a high price for their services.

Bodyguard work requires special training, and most fighters are surprisingly poor at the job. Fighters focus on doing a lot of damage and not getting hurt, but a bodyguard focuses only on protecting the principal. Rogues, monks, and rangers make excellent bodyguards, since the job emphasizes speed and flexibility.

The bodyguard's first priority is to keep his principal out of danger. They are dangerous fighters, but a smart bodyguard will flee an assassin rather than fight him. Once the principal is safe, the bodyguard can turn his attention to eliminating the threat.

The best bodyguards prevent danger with careful research and preparation. They go over every place their principal is going to visit in advance, eliminating ambush opportunities and preparing avenues of escape. They remain constantly alert to detect and head off trouble *before* it gets close. And when all these preparations fail and a determined assassin gets within the principal's critical space, the bodyguard uses all his fast reflexes and skills to get in the way of the killing blow. It's a dangerous job — but you can't beat the adrenaline rush.

Hit Die: d10

Requirements

To qualify for the bodyguard prestige class, the character must fulfill the following criteria.

Base Attack Bonus: +4

Skills: Jump 4 ranks, Listen 4 ranks, Spot 4 ranks, Tumble 4 ranks

Feats: Dodge, Expertise

Class Skills

The bodyguard's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Craft (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Heal (Wis), Jump (Dex), Listen (Wis), Sense Motive (Wis), Spot (Wis), and Tumble (Dex).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier

Class Features

All the following are class features for the bodyguard prestige class. The DCs for required skill checks are included where appropriate.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: A bodyguard is proficient with light and medium armor and with all simple and martial weapons.

The Principal: Most of a bodyguard's abilities focus on protecting a single person from harm. That person is known as the "principal." The bodyguard may only protect one principal at a time, and the character designated as the principal can only be changed once per play session. The principal may not be another bodyguard.

Scan the Crowd: Bodyguards practice looking for threats in crowd situations. When a bodyguard looks for a possible threat in a group of five or more people, he receives a +2 competence bonus to all Spot and Sense Motive checks.

Uncanny Dodge: And 2nd level, the bodyguard acquires the Uncanny Dodge ability if he does not already have it. He retains his Dexterity bonus to AC (if any) regardless of being caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible

attacker. (He still loses his Dexterity bonus to AC if immobilized.)

At 5th level, the bodyguard can no longer be flanked; he can react to opponents on opposite sides of him as easily as he can react to a single attacker. This defense denies a rogue the ability to use a flank attack to Sneak Attack the bodyguard. The exception to this defense is that a rogue at least four levels higher than the bodyguard can flank him, and thus Sneak Attack him.

At 5th level, the bodyguard also gains the ability to guide his principal. If the bodyguard is within five feet of the principal, the principal retains her Dexterity bonus to AC (if any) regardless of being caught flat-footed or struck by an invisible attacker. (She still loses her Dexterity bonus to AC if immobilized.)

At 8th level, the bodyguard's principal can no longer be flanked. This defense denies a rogue the ability to use a flank attack to Sneak Attack the principal. The bodyguard must be within five feet of the principal, and a rogue at least four levels higher than the bodyguard can still flank her, and thus Sneak Attack the principal.

Interpose: At 3rd level, the bodyguard learns how to interpose himself between danger and his principal. If the principal is required to make a Reflex save, the bodyguard may make a Reflex save (at the same DC as the principal's save) to push or guide the principal out of danger.

If the bodyguard is successful, the principal automatically succeeds at her Reflex save. However, success leaves the bodyguard vulnerable to the same threat the principal faced, and the bodyguard is considered to have automatically failed his own Reflex save against this threat. If

the bodyguard fails the Reflex save to push aside the principal, both he and the principal must make Reflex saves to avoid the threat.

The bodyguard may also make a Reflex save (DC 20) to take a blow for his principal; the save is made after the attack has been declared but before the attacker makes his attack roll. If he succeeds, he moves the principal five feet in the direction of his choice and steps into the space the principal vacated. The attacker must then make his attack roll against the bodyguard, who defends with his normal AC. This maneuver is a free action, but it exposes both the bodyguard and the principal to attacks of opportunity from anyone other than the original attacker. It's most effective when used against a single attacker.

The bodyguard must be within five feet of his principal to use Interpose.

At 6th level, the bodyguard may make a normal Reflex save to avoid the threat after succeeding at the Reflex save to protect his principal. Failure still leaves both the bodyguard and the principal vulnerable. The bodyguard must be within ten feet of his principal to use this ability, and must still be within five feet to take a blow for his principal.

At 9th level, the bodyguard automatically succeeds at protecting his principal. The bodyguard must still make a Reflex save to avoid the threat himself, or to take a blow for his principal. The bodyguard must be within ten feet to use this ability or to take a blow for his principal.

Note: Expertise, Evasion, and Improved Evasion combine with Interpose. For example, a 3rd-level bodyguard with Interpose and Improved Evasion may succeed at pushing his principal out of the way of a *lightning bolt* and then take half damage from the automatically failed save. A bodyguard may also use the dodge bonus from Expertise while interposing himself between an attacker and his principal.

Critical Space: At 4th level, the bodyguard's trained senses become hyper-acute within the "critical space," the few feet immediately around his principal. The bodyguard receives a +2 insight bonus to all Listen, Sense Motive, and Spot checks when he is within ten feet of his principal. He also receives a +2 insight bonus to Initiative when he is within ten feet of his principal.

At 7th level, this bonus increases to +4 for both the skill checks and the Initiative roll.

Complete Protection: At 10th level, the bodyguard becomes completely aware of all threats within twenty feet of his principal. If the bodyguard is within five feet of the principal, the principal may not be targeted by any physical attack and automatically succeeds at all Reflex saves as the bodyguard guides her away from danger. This effect can only be stopped by killing the bodyguard, incapacitating him, or moving him away from the principal.

THE BODYGUARD

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+1	+2	+2	+0	Scan the Crowd
2	+2	+3	+3	+0	Uncanny Dodge (Dex bonus to AC)
3	+3	+3	+3	+1	Interpose (Reflex save to protect principal)
4	+4	+4	+4	+1	Critical Space +2
5	+5	+4	+4	+1	Uncanny Dodge (can't be flanked, principal retains Dex bonus to AC)
6	+6	+5	+5	+2	Interpose (Reflex saves protect principal and avoid damage)
7	+7	+5	+5	+2	Critical Space +4
8	+8	+6	+6	+2	Uncanny Dodge (principal can't be flanked)
9	+9	+6	+6	+3	Interpose (principal is automatically safe)
10	+10	+7	+7	+3	Complete Protection

CHIEFTAIN

Somebody has to be in charge. In a small tribe or village, power usually rests in the hands of one person. She may be advised by a shaman or the village elders, but it's her responsibility to make the big decisions. Chieftains also rule larger societies that prize martial prowess and an intimidating demeanor. Many kings have a few levels of the chieftain prestige class, though they usually develop other talents as well.

There are many ways of picking a chieftain. Some inherit power — the son or daughter of a chieftain may be trained from birth to take over the tribe. Others win power by being the best hunter, or the best war-leader. Trial by combat is not unusual, but many villages devise other contests. Prospective chieftains might have to lead a hunt for a large animal, or win a victory over a rival tribe, or even spin the best tale in the longhouse. Other chieftains are elected by vote or acclamation. The giving of gifts is frequently important — a chief who can give rich gifts shows that she has the fighting ability to win treasure and the generosity to share.

Despite the importance of previous achievements to gaining the position, most chieftains do less of what they're best at once they become chief. Their job is about inspiring and teaching their followers. They resolve disputes and make decisions for the tribe. Many chieftains dislike doing most of their work from a feasting chair, and leap at any opportunity to lead their followers on a big game hunt or a daring raid.

Many chieftains start off as barbarians, bards, or rogues.

Hit Die: d8

Requirements

To qualify for the chieftain prestige class, the character must fulfill the following criteria.

Alignment: Any non-chaotic

Base Attack Bonus: +6

Skills: Diplomacy 9 ranks or Intimidate 9 ranks, and Sense Motive 6 ranks

Feats: Leadership

Special: The character must take control of a tribe or village before gaining her first level as a chieftain. This may involve trial by combat, inheritance, divine intervention, or whatever other method the customs of that society dictate.

Class Skills

The chieftain's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Climb (Str), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Jump (Str), Ride (Dex), Sense Motive (Wis), Swim (Str), and Wilderness Lore (Wis).

THE CHIEFTAIN

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+0	+0	+2	Authority +2, Followers
2	+1	+0	+0	+3	Commanding Voice
3	+2	+1	+1	+3	Bonus Feat
4	+3	+1	+1	+4	Raise Horde (100 warriors)
5	+3	+1	+1	+4	Authority +4
6	+4	+2	+2	+5	Fearsome Reputation +2
7	+5	+2	+2	+5	Bonus Feat
8	+6	+2	+2	+6	Raise Horde (1000 warriors)
9	+6	+3	+3	+6	Authority +6
10	+7	+3	+3	+7	Fearsome Reputation +4, Raise Horde (unlimited)

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier

Class Features

All the following are class features for the chieftain prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The chieftain is proficient in all simple weapons and martial weapons, all armor, and shields.

Followers: A chieftain receives a +2 modifier to her Leadership score for recruiting cohorts and followers. Any PC may also declare himself to be a follower of the chieftain. In addition, all 1st-level commoners who are members of the chieftain's tribe or village are considered to be "followers," but do not count against the limits set by the Leadership feat.

Authority: The chieftain benefits from the authority invested in her as leader of her tribe. She receives a +2 influence bonus to Bluff, Diplomacy, Perform (oratory), and Intimidate checks to influence her followers. The bonus increases to +4 at 5th level, and +6 at 9th level.

Commanding Voice: At 2nd level, the chieftain gains the Commanding Voice feat, even if she does not meet the prerequisites.

Bonus Feat: At 3rd and 7th level, the chieftain gains a bonus feat from the following list: Alertness, Dangerous Insinuations, Inspire Frenzy, Inspired Leader, Iron Will, Mounted Combat, Rabble Rouser, Sweet Voice of Reason, or Toughness.

Raise Horde: At 4th level, the chieftain may raise a horde of up to 100 1st-level warriors to accomplish a military objective. The chieftain may raise the horde no more than twice per game year, and the horde will serve for no more than one month of game time. The horde's size is also limited by the size of the chieftain's tribe. There can be no more than half as many warriors as the chieftain's total number of followers.

At 8th level, the maximum size of the horde increases to 1000 1st-level warriors. At 10th level, there is no limit on the maximum size of the horde. However, the horde is still limited to half as many warriors as the chieftain's total number of followers. Mighty hordes must be supported by mighty empires.

Fearsome Reputation: At 5th level, the chieftain's reputation spreads far and wide. The chieftain receives a +2 influence bonus to Bluff, Diplomacy, Perform (oratory), and Intimidate checks when her identity is known.

At 10th level, the chieftain's bonus increases to +4. Any follower of the chieftain receives a +2 influence bonus to Bluff, Diplomacy, and Intimidate checks when he is known to be on the chieftain's business.

CONSPIRACY LEADER

They strike from the shadows. The conspiracy leader may begin her career calling for reform on the streets, but she does not stay there. Sooner or later, she decides that covert action is the best chance of accomplishing her goals.

Some future conspiracy leaders are recruited by secret organizations. At first, they may not be aware that they're part of a conspiracy; they may think they're simply performing a favor for a friend or acting on behalf of a wealthy patron. Even after they learn the truth, it may be some time before they rise to a position of authority and develop leadership skills.

Other conspiracy leaders start at the top and found their own networks. At first, the conspiracy may be no more than a few like-minded friends. As the organization grows, however, the conspiracy leader gains experience, resources, and power. Most high-level conspiracy leaders control a vast network of operatives.

Conspiracy leaders do not share power well. It's rare to find more than one of them in any organization. When there are multiple leaders, it is usually because an ambitious young upstart is rising through the ranks, and to challenge the established leader.

Hit Die: d6

Requirements

To qualify for the conspiracy leader prestige class, the character must fulfill the following criteria.

Alignment: Any non-lawful

Skills: Diplomacy 5 ranks, Intimidate 5 ranks, Sense Motive 5 ranks

Feats: Leadership

Special: The character must pledge herself to a goal when gaining her first level as a conspiracy leader. If the character abandons that goal — or achieves it! — she may no longer advance in levels as a conspiracy leader. Good goals for conspiracy leaders include overthrowing a government, assassinating a highly placed public official, or bringing about the magical destruction of an entire city.

Class Skills

The conspiracy leader's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Hide (Dex), Innuendo (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Sense Motive (Wis), and Spot (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 8 + Int modifier

Class Features

All the following are class features for the conspiracy leader prestige class. The DCs for required skill checks are included where appropriate.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: Conspiracy leaders are proficient in simple weapons and light armor.

Followers: A conspiracy leader receives a +2 modifier to her Leadership score for recruiting cohorts and followers. Any PC may also declare himself to be a follower of the conspiracy leader. All PCs and NPCs who follow the conspiracy leader are considered to be "followers" below.

Useful Advice: Once per day, a conspiracy leader may give a follower useful advice about an upcoming skill check, such as setting a trap or bluffing a guard. The conspiracy leader must have at least 5 ranks in the rele-

vant skill, and the follower must perform the skill check within 24 hours of receiving the advice. The follower receives a competence bonus to the check equal to the lower of either the conspiracy leader's class level or the number of ranks the conspiracy leader has in the skill.

Cunning Plan: At 2nd level, the conspiracy leader gains the ability to dictate a cunning plan to her followers. Once per week, the conspiracy leader may create a detailed plan to achieve a specific goal. Any follower who is part of this plan receives a +2 bonus on all skill checks related to the plan, as long as the followers perform the leader's instructions to the letter. The bonus is lost if the followers diverge from the plan, or if 48 hours elapse after the plan is begun.

The conspiracy leader must devise the plan. Any substantial contribution from any other character (or player) invalidates the bonus. The conspiracy leader does not receive the bonus from her own plans.

At 5th level, the bonus increases to +4. At 9th level the bonus increases to +6.

Judge Loyalty: At 3rd level, the conspiracy leaders gains a +2 insight bonus to any Sense Motive check she makes to determine a follower's loyalty or state of mind.

Cell Structure: Good organization is crucial to an expanding conspiracy. At 4th level, the conspiracy leader may organize her followers into a network of small, interconnected cells. It becomes much harder for outsiders to

🜋 THE CONSPIRACY LEADER

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+0	+0	+2	Followers, Useful Advice
2	+1	+0	+0	+3	Cunning Plan +2
3	+2	+1	+1	+3	Judge Loyalty
4	+3	+1	+1	+4	Cell Structure
5	+3	+1	+1	+4	Cunning Plan +4
6	+4	+2	+2	+5	Codes
7	+5	+2	+2	+5	Informant Network
8	+6	+2	+2	+6	Secret Master
9	+6	+3	+3	+6	Cunning Plan +6
10	+7	+3	+3	+7	Illuminated

gain information about the conspiracy; the DC of any Gather Information check that an outsider makes about the conspiracy leader's organization increases by +5.

Codes: At 6th level, the conspiracy leader may devise a system of codes to communicate with her followers. These codes may use any means of communication the character prefers — verbal, visual, and written codes are all possible. Any outsider wishing to decrypt a coded communication must make a Decipher Script check (for written or visual codes) or an Innuendo check (for codes that are spoken or otherwise performed) to understand the message. The DC of the check is 20 + the conspiracy leader's class level + the conspiracy leader's Intelligence modifier.

Information Network: At 7th level, the conspiracy leader gains the Information Network feat, even if she does not meet the prerequisites for it. This feat stacks with any previous Information Network feats.

Secret Master: At 8th level, the conspiracy leader exercises great control over her own public image and identity. The DC of any Gather Information check that an outsider makes concerning the conspiracy leader increases by +10.

Illuminated: It is said that you can extrapolate the universe from the twitch of a butterfly's wing. At 10th level, the conspiracy leader gains a near-perfect understanding of the world around her. Once per day, the conspiracy leader may cast *divination* as a 15th-level wizard. This is an extraordinary ability, not a spell-like ability. Rather than invoking magic, the conspiracy leader must meditate for one hour.

🐺 DEMAGOGUE

Some people get power from blades. Others get it from mobs. The demagogue inspires and incites. He makes his listeners want what he wants, then tells them how to get it. He makes them forget law and morality.

Personal charisma is everything to a demagogue. With it, he can rise to power with few achievements and skills. A great general or renowned priest is even more effective as a demagogue, however. It's easier to get the mob to chant your name if you're famous, and a good reputation will win the thoughtful as well as the foolish to your side. The hearts and minds of the thoughtful are almost irrelevant, though. The demagogue's power always rests in the goose-stepping cadres and the blind masses chanting his name.

Bards make distinguished demagogues; they already do on a small scale many of the things that demagogues do on a larger stage. Demagogues make commanding villains.

Hit Die: d4

Requirements

To qualify for the demagogue prestige class, the character must fulfill the following criteria.

Skills: Bluff 6 ranks, Perform (oratory) 6 ranks

Feats: Commanding Voice

Class Skills

The demagogue's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Perform (oratory) (Cha), and Sense Motive (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 2 + Int modifier

Class Features

All the following are class features for the demagogue prestige class. The DCs for required skill checks are included where appropriate.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The demagogue is proficient in simple weapons.

Audience: The demagogue's abilities require an audience, even if that audience is only one creature. A creature must be able to see and hear the demagogue to be affected by his abilities. Any creature that can see and hear the demagogue is part of the "audience" referred to below, though the demagogue can intentionally exclude one or more creatures from his audience with the content and tone of his speech.

Languages in Common: The demagogue's abilities depend on his ability to speak. They are useless if he is unable to speak, or if he does not share a common language with his audience.

Matching Speech: At 1st level, the demagogue learns how to vary speech rhythms and vocabulary to mirror those to whom he's talking. He inspires confidence and trust by talking in the same way as the person he is trying to influence. This gives the demagogue a +2 reaction bonus on Bluff, Diplomacy, Disguise, and Perform (oratory) checks.

Enthralling Speech (Sp): At 2nd level, the demagogue learns how to hold an audience spellbound. He must speak to the audience for 2 rounds, then make a Perform (oratory) check (DC 20). If he succeeds, the audience becomes *fascinated*. It remains quiet and listens attentively for as long as the demagogue continues speaking.

The targets' Spot and Listen checks suffer a –4 penalty. The demagogue gains a +2 circumstance bonus to any skill checks to influence members of the audience for the duration of his speech. The demagogue may speak for one hour per class level before becoming exhausted; the Endurance feat doubles this.

Any creature can negate the effect with a Will saving throw equal to or greater than the demagogue's Perform (oratory) check result. Any potential threat (such as an ally of the demagogue moving behind a *fascinated* creature) allows the *fascinated* creature a saving throw against a new Perform (oratory) check result. The new Perform (oratory) check receives the +2 circumstance bonus described above. Any obvious threat, such as casting a spell, drawing a weapon, or aiming, automatically breaks the effect. If a creature's saving throw succeeds, the demagogue cannot attempt to *fascinate* that creature again for 24 hours.

Enthralling Speech is a mind-affecting *charm* ability.

Blunt Hostility (Sp): At 3rd level, the demagogue learns how to forestall aggression long enough to talk his way out of a situation. When physically threatened, the demagogue may make an Intimidate, Diplomacy, or Perform (oratory) check (DC 15) as a full-round action. If the demagogue takes damage or fails a saving throw during this attempt, he must make a Concentration check (DC 15) to complete the action.

If the demagogue is successful, each member of the audience must make a Will save equal to or greater than the demagogue's check result to attack him. The effect persists for one round for each class level the demagogue has in this prestige class. If a creature's saving throw succeeds, Blunt Hostility has no effect on it for 24 hours.

Blunt Hostility is a mind-affecting *charm* ability.

Band of Brothers: At 3rd level, a demagogue also learns to play on his audience's need for belonging to bind it into a cohesive unit. The demagogue may speak for two rounds to draw his audience together in a feeling of brotherhood and instruct it on effective cooperation. He then makes a Perform (oratory) check (DC 20).

If the check is successful, the members of the audience automatically succeed at skill checks to help each other in cooperative efforts and at attack rolls for "aid another" combat actions. Any character who benefits from the "aid another" combat action receives a +4 circumstance bonus instead of the usual +2 circumstance bonus. The effect persists for one hour per class level of the demagogue.

Leadership: At 4th level, the demagogue gains the Leadership feat if he does not already have it. The demagogue receives a +2 modifier to his Leadership score for recruiting cohorts and followers.

Personal Charm (Sp): At 5th level, the demagogue can turn his worst enemies into friends. Once per day, he may attempt to *charm* a character with his force of personality.

THE DEMAGOGUE

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+0	+0	+2	Matching Speech
2	+1	+0	+0	+3	Enthralling Speech
3	+1	+1	+1	+3	Blunt Hostility, Band of Brothers
4	+2	+1	+1	+4	Leadership
5	+2	+1	+1	+4	Personal Charm
6	+3	+2	+2	+5	Shifting Position
7	+3	+2	+2	+5	Fanatical Followers (cadre)
8	+4	+2	+2	+6	Fanatical Followers (mob)
9	+4	+3	+3	+6	Fanatical Followers (mass initiations)
10	+5	+3	+3	+7	Aura of Truth

The attempt takes at least half an hour, and works best if the demagogue is alone with his target. The demagogue gains a +1 circumstance bonus for each hour he spends with the target, up to a +6 bonus. The demagogue suffers a –2 penalty for each person other than himself and the target that is present during the attempt.

At the end of the attempt, the demagogue makes a Perform (oratory) check, adding his class level to the result. The target must make a Will save against this result. If the target succeeds, she is not and can never again be affected by this demagogue's Personal Charm ability.

If the target fails the save, she becomes *charmed*, and treats the demagogue as a trusted ally. This effect is permanent and cannot be dispelled. It can be broken by the usual violations of trust that break a *charm person* spell, as well as by a *greater restoration*, *limited wish*, *miracle*, or *wish* spell.

Personal Charm is a mind-affecting *charm* ability.

Shifting Position: At 6th level, the demagogue also learns to lead his audience to subtle shifts in their opinions. Given enough time and skill, he can convince them that day is night.

Each attempt takes at least one hour of oration. For every two hours the demagogue spends speaking to his audience, he gains a +1 circumstance bonus, up to a +12 bonus. (It takes extraordinary measures to make an audience listen to you for 24 hours, of course.)

The demagogue must start from a position that his audience agrees with. This is easy to do if he is speaking to an audience made up of followers who already agree with the demagogue's public positions. If he is unsure what the audience agrees with, he may suggest a number of ideological positions in his oratory and measure the audience's response. A Sense Motive check (DC10) will determine the most effective position from which to start.

The demagogue then uses his favorite rhetorical tricks to convince the audience of his new position. He speaks until he is ready to make the attempt to shift their position, then makes a Perform (oratory) check. The DC is determined by the magnitude of the shift that the demagogue is trying to accomplish; see the table below.

If the demagogue succeeds, any creature may avoid being convinced with a Will saving throw equal to or greater than the demagogue's Perform (oratory) check result. Success gives no immunity to future influence attempts by the demagogue. Most members of an audience will not make Will saves — in most situations, they probably wouldn't be listening in the first place if they weren't interested in the demagogue's opinions.

Shifting Position Difficulties

Degree of Shift	DC	From: "The king is just!" To:
Slight	15	"The king is just, but he needs to be warned about the elven peril."
Minor	20	"The king is a little soft on the elves."
Significant	25	"The king has been favoring those insidious elves."
Major	30	"The king has been suborned by the elves."
Ridiculous	40	"The king is an elf in disguise, secretly working against our human way of life!"

Fanatical Followers (Sp): At 7th level, the demagogue may use ceremony and ritual to turn ordinary followers into fanatics. He may perform an initiation ceremony once per month of game time. The ceremony does not have to be formal — a chat over coffee can be as effective as a baptism or midnight hazing. The followers must be willing participants, though they need not be consciously aware of the ceremony's effect.

At the end of the initiation ceremony, the demagogue chooses which followers to affect and makes a Perform (oratory) check (DC 25). If he is successful, the chosen followers gain the benefits of a *prayer* spell. This effect lasts for one month and cannot be dispelled, though the effect on a follower will be broken if that follower becomes disaffected from the demagogue.

At 7th level, the demagogue may affect a number of characters equal to his class level in each initiation. Those characters must be followers or cohorts as described in the Leadership feat. At 8th level, the demagogue may affect all of his followers and cohorts at once. At 9th level, the demagogue may affect a number of characters equal to twenty times his character level at once. (At this point, the initiation ceremonies usually involve large rallies and long speeches rather than intimate kaffeeklatches.)

Aura of Truth (Su): At 10th level, the demagogue automatically rolls a "natural 20" anytime he makes a Bluff or Perform (oratory) check, including attack rolls during political debates (see Chapter Five).

🐚 DIPLOMAT

Not every dispute can be resolved with force. Sometimes you have to talk to your enemies, figure out what they want, and present a compromise that everybody can live with. Diplomats excel at doing this.

Diplomats and politicians are both experts in the art of the deal. What's different is who they deal with and why. Politicians swap favors on a day-to-day basis within an established system. Diplomats negotiate situations where the system has broken down, or where two political systems are in conflict. They understand how to deal with outsiders and how to resolve disputes once and for all.

Good diplomacy requires wisdom and charisma. Clerics, wizards, and sorcerers make excellent diplomats — they have the training and the patience to conduct long, difficult negotiations. Paladins and bards also do well, though the paladin may have to overcome certain preconceptions about the necessity of smiting evil. Bards can put their wide knowledge of the world to work, while paladins can make good use of their personal charisma.

Hit Die: d4

Requirements

To qualify for the diplomat prestige class, the character must fulfill the following criteria.

Skills: Bluff 4 ranks, Diplomacy 4 ranks, and Sense Motive 4 ranks

Special: To qualify for the diplomat prestige class, the character must have a Will save of +7 or better.

Class Skills

The diplomat's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Bluff (Cha), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Intimidate (Cha), Knowledge (geography, history, law, nobility and royalty) (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), and Speak Language.

Skill Points at Each Level: 6 + Int modifier

Class Features

All the following are class features for the diplomat prestige class. The DCs for required skill checks are included where appropriate.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The diplomat is proficient in simple weapons.

Party: In the rules below, a party is any individual or group that participates or has an interest in the results of the diplomat's actions. If the party is a group, then one representative of that party makes any skill checks or Will saves that are called for by the diplomat's abilities. The representative may be designated by any means the

🐚 THE DIPLOMAT

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+2	+0	+2	Cultural Adaptability (fast learner), Offer Compromise +2
2	+1	+3	+0	+3	Blunt Hostility, Evaluate Deal
3	+1	+3	+1	+3	Determine Objective
4	+2	+4	+1	+4	Arbitrate Dispute
5	+2	+4	+1	+4	Offer Compromise +4
6	+3	+5	+2	+5	Cultural Adaptability (instant native)
7	+3	+5	+2	+5	Force Concession (1/day)
8	+4	+6	+2	+6	Seniority
9	+4	+6	+3	+6	Force Concession (1/hour)
10	+5	+7	+3	+7	Resolve Dispute

members of that party choose, and may change from roll to roll.

Cultural Adaptability: Diplomats learn the customs of new cultures quickly, and often with great enthusiasm. A diplomat receives a +2 competence bonus at skill checks to learn or perform any rituals or required behaviors of the society she is in, whether that society is a barbarian tribe or a thieves' guild.

At 6th level, the diplomat instinctively observes and mimics the behaviors of a culture. She automatically succeeds at any skill check that tests etiquette or the ability to pass as a native of a society. This does not grant secret knowledge or the ability to speak an unknown language, nor does it allow the character to automatically disguise herself. It simply represents the character's ability to always pick up the right spoon, address the king properly, or stand with an appropriate posture. In a situation where polite behavior is important but is not directly tested, the diplomat receives a +2 reaction bonus to Bluff, Diplomacy, and Perform checks.

Offer Compromise: Diplomats know that to get a lot you usually need to give a little. A diplomat receives a +2 competence bonus to Diplomacy checks when she offers a compromise to a party involved in a negotiation. The diplomat must give up a significant concession to receive the bonus; whether a concession is significant is up to the discretion of the GM. A good rule of thumb is that if both parties are a little unhappy with the deal, it's probably a good compromise.

At 5th level, this bonus increases to +4.

Blunt Hostility (Sp): At 2nd level, the diplomat learns how to forestall aggression long enough to talk her way out of a situation. When physically threatened, she may make an Intimidate, Diplomacy, or Perform (oratory) check (DC 15) as a full-round action. If the diplomat takes damage or fails a saving throw during this attempt, she must make a Concentration check (DC 15) to complete the action.

If the diplomat is successful, each creature that can see, hear, and understand the diplomat must make a Will save equal to or greater than the diplomat's check result to attack her. The effect persists for one round for each level the diplomat has in this prestige class. If a creature's saving throw succeeds, Blunt Hostility has no effect on it for 24 hours.

Blunt Hostility is a mind-affecting *charm* ability.

Evaluate Deal: At 2nd level, the diplomat gains the ability to determine the true worth a deal for every party involved. After learning the terms of the deal, the diplomat may make an Appraise check (DC 20).

If the diplomat succeeds, she understands all the present and future consequences of the deal, insofar as it is possible to predict them. (If it is impossible to predict some consequences of the deal, the diplomat knows why her understanding is limited.) The diplomat also knows how much each party affected by the deal benefits from it relative to the other parties. For example, a diplomat can evaluate a treaty between humans and elves and determine how it will affect the dwarves she represents, even if the dwarves are not involved in making the treaty.

Some parties involved in a deal may wish to obscure the diplomat's understanding of the deal with misdirection or complicated language. Any party who tries to obscure the deal may make a Bluff check. The result of the diplomat's Appraise check must then be higher than these Bluff checks as well as the DC of 20.

Determine Objective: Most people will settle for less than they want. At 3rd level, the diplomat learns how to determine what that minimum is. During a negotiation, she may observe a party she is negotiating with and determine the least favorable deal that he will accept. The diplomat must hear at least one set of demands from the party before attempting to use this ability.

The diplomat makes a Sense Motive check, opposed by the party's Bluff check. If the diplomat succeeds, she learns the least favorable deal that the party will accept. If the diplomat offers these terms, that party must accept them.

Arbitrate Dispute (Sp): At 4th level, the diplomat gains great authority when acting as a disinterested intermediary between two or more parties. After listening to all sides plead their cases, the diplomat may present a resolution to their dispute. The diplomat may set any terms she likes, so long as she does not directly benefit from any term of the resolution. (The diplomat may be compensated for her services, but this should be negotiated separately — and probably in advance — with the parties involved.)

The diplomat then makes a Diplomacy check. Any party that wishes to reject the diplomat's resolution must succeed at a Will save; the DC is the result of the diplomat's Diplomacy check. If any party succeeds at the Will save, none of the parties are bound by the diplomat's resolution, though the diplomat may propose another solution if the parties are still interested in listening to her. Otherwise, all of the parties must honor the terms of the resolution to the best of their abilities.

Arbitrate Dispute is a mind-affecting ability.

Force Concession (Sp): At 7th level, the diplomat's force of personality helps her to extract concessions during a negotiation. Once per day, she may make a Diplomacy check to specify a change in any one statement of a party's demands. The party opposes this

change with a Will save. If the diplomat succeeds, the party must continue its negotiations as if it had been making the altered demand all along.

At 9th level, the diplomat may use this ability once per hour. Force Concession is a mind-affecting ability.

Seniority: At 8th level, the diplomat gains the benefit of seniority over her fellow diplomats. She receives a +2 reaction bonus to Bluff, Diplomacy, and Intimidate checks when dealing with a diplomat with fewer levels in the diplomat prestige class than she has.

Resolve Dispute (Su): At 10th level, the diplomat's negotiation skill becomes almost unbeatable. The diplomat may propose a resolution to any negotiation, setting any terms she likes. She then makes a Diplomacy check, gaining a +1 circumstance bonus for every hour she spends convincing the parties involved to agree to her terms.

Any party who wishes to reject the diplomat's resolution must succeed at a Will save; the DC is the result of the diplomat's Diplomacy check + 10. If any party succeeds at the Will save, none of the parties are bound by the diplomat's resolution, though the diplomat may propose another solution if the parties are still interested in listening to her. Otherwise, all of the parties must honor the terms of the resolution to the best of their abilities.

Any other diplomat representing a party may substitute a Diplomacy check for her party's Will save. Resolve Dispute is a mind-affecting ability.

DISCREET COMPANION

The powerful have powerful appetites. Discreet companions fulfill these appetites, but they charge a high price for their services — a price that is paid in access or information.

Most discreet companions are mistresses, but both men and women can master the arts of seduction, and the gender of a powerful leader's lover depends entirely on that leader's preferences. That said, being a good discreet companion requires the ability to draw your lover out, to listen, and to be a little passive. Many cultures teach one gender to be more subdued than the other, and most of the discreet companions in a culture tend to be of that gender.

Discreet companions rarely work for their own agenda. A few may aspire to be the power behind the throne, but most leave the politics to others. A companion may be in the pay of another political faction, or he may sell information and favors to the highest bidder. Whether he is a freelancer or not, a discreet companion must be quick-witted — he walks a fine line between dangerous forces.

Most discreet companions begin their careers as rogues or bards, using their talents to entertain or deceive others.

Note: This class is a new version of the discreet companion prestige class published in Fantasy Flight Games' sourcebook *Traps and Treachery*.

Hit Die: d6

THE DISCREET COMPANION

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+0	+0	+2	Art of Seduction +2, Resist Charm
2	+1	+0	+0	+3	Secret
3	+1	+1	+1	+3	Art of Seduction +4
4	+2	+1	+1	+4	Charmtouch
5	+2	+1	+1	+4	Secret
6	+3	+2	+2	+5	Talkingtouch
7	+3	+2	+2	+5	Truthtouch
8	+4	+2	+2	+6	Secret
9	+4	+3	+3	+6	Paintouch
10	+5	+3	+3	+7	Caress of the Lost Hour

Requirements

To qualify for the discreet companion prestige class, the character must fulfill the following criteria.

Alignment: Any non-lawful

Skills: Bluff 6 ranks, Diplomacy 8 ranks, Gather Information 8 ranks, Innuendo 4 ranks

Feats: Alertness

Class Skills

The discreet companion's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Bluff (Cha), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Disguise (Cha), Forgery (Int), Gather Information (Cha), Innuendo (Wis), Intimidate (Cha), Listen (Wis), Perform (Cha), Profession (Wis), Read Lips (Int), Search (Int), Sense Motive (Wis), and Spot (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 6 + Int modifier

Class Features

All of the following are class features of the discreet companion prestige class.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The discreet companion is proficient in simple weapons.

Power Behind the Throne: A discreet companion may only advance in class levels if he has at least one lover in a position of power. The GM has final say over whether any the companion's lovers are in a position of power.

Resist Charm: The discreet companion may apply his Charisma modifier to any Will save versus an enchantment or *charm* effect. The Charisma modifier replaces the normal Wisdom modifier.

Art of Seduction: At 1st level, the discreet companion gains a +2 competence bonus to all skill checks made to befriend or seduce another character. This bonus increases to +4 at 3rd level.

Secret: At 2nd level, and every three levels thereafter, the discreet companion gains the new Secret feat. The feat must apply to a lover of the companion.

Charmtouch: At 4th level, the discreet companion may *charm* someone as per the *charm person* spell by touch alone. This ability may be used a number of times per day equal to the companion's Charisma bonus. It takes 10 minutes of physical contact, usually accompanied by enthralling conversation. The DC to resist the *charm* is

10 + the discreet companion's Charisma bonus + half the discreet companion's prestige class level.

Talkingtouch: At 6th level, the discreet companion may converse with a lover or intimate friend through Talkingtouch, a special form of communicating through physical contact. This is not telepathy or psionics; it is the art of carefully orchestrated muscle motions and subtle body language. The discreet companion may teach the method to a character — this requires several hours of rather pleasant instruction — but that character may only use Talkingtouch with the discreet companion who taught it to her. A character may learn Talkingtouch from more than one discreet companion, however.

Anyone able to observe a Talkingtouch conversation must make an Innuendo check (DC 27) to notice it. A character with the Talkingtouch ability receives a +2 synergy bonus to this check.

Truthtouch: At 7th level, the discreet companion may use his intimate knowledge of muscle movements and physical response to determine if someone he is touching is lying or telling the truth. Flesh-to-flesh contact is required, and using this ability requires a Sense Motive check. The DC is 10 + the target's Wisdom modifier, with the following additional modifiers:

Activity	Example	Modifier
Casual contact	Holding hands	+2
Close contact	Dancing, massage	+0
Intimate or prolonged contact	Love-making	–2 to –4
Familiar species	Standard PC races	+0
Unfamiliar species, same creature type	Other humanoids (ogres and kobolds)	+2
Other creaturetype, but not an outsider	Giants, dragons	+4
Undead	Zombies	+6
Outsider	Celestials	+8

These modifiers stack. For example, a human discreet companion reading an undead outsider while dancing with it would face a modifier of +14.

Paintouch: At 9th level, the discreet companion may use his knowledge of muscles and nerves to do extra subdual damage with a successful unarmed strike. The discreet

companion does 1d6 subdual damage for every 5 levels of the discreet companion prestige class he possesses.

Caress of the Lost Hour: At 10th level, the discreet companion may use his personal magnetism and mastery of anatomy to make a target character forget recent events. Using this ability requires one minute of continuous physical contact, and the victim may make a Will save (DC 20 + the companion's Charisma bonus) to resist.

Up to one hour of time spent with the companion can be erased. The time erased must be continuous, and the target is not simply "blanked." She will have vague sense of a pleasant experience, but will be unable to remember any details.

INFORMATION MAGE

Knowledge is power; information mages knows this fact well, as they are masters of divination. They excel at knowledge-oriented spells, and have a talent for spying with magic items. Not all their work can be done from their laboratories, however. Information mages practice the art of unobtrusive inquiry during those occasions when they must gain their knowledge first-hand.

Information mages are more interested in gaining knowledge than using it, so they rarely rise to the very top of a power structure. On the other hand, their jobs are secure and they always have all the resources they need.

An information mage must be an arcane spellcaster. Sorcerers, bards and wizards are equally capable — bards have a slight edge in worldly knowledge, but wizards and sorcerers have more powerful spellcasting abilities.

Hit Die: d4

Requirements

To qualify for the information mage prestige class, the character must fulfill the following criteria.

Skills: Gather Information 4 ranks, Knowledge (arcana) 6 ranks, Scry 4 ranks, Spellcraft 10 ranks

Feats: Craft Wondrous Item

Special: An information mage must be able to cast arcane spells.

Class Skills

The information mage's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Alchemy (Int), Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Decipher Script (Int, exclusive skill), Disguise (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Knowledge (all skills, taken individually) (Int), Move Silently (Dex), Scry (Int, exclusive skill), Speak Language, Spellcraft (Int), and Use Magic Device (Cha, exclusive skill).

Skill Points at Each Level: 6 + Int modifier

Class Features

All the following are class features for the information mage prestige class. The DCs for required skill checks are included where appropriate.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The information mage is proficient in simple weapons and light armor.

Spells: When a new information mage level is gained, the character gains new spells and caster level as if she had also gained a level in a spellcasting class she belonged to before she added the prestige class. She does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained. If the character had more than one spellcasting class before she became an information mage, she must decide to which class he adds each level of information mage for purposes of determining spells when she adds the new level.

Spell Mastery (Divination): Information mages are experts in the art of divination. At 1st level, each mage chooses a number of divination spells equal to her Intelligence modifier (they must be spells the mage already knows). From that point on, the information mage can prepare these spells without referring to a spellbook.

Identify (Sp): At 1st level, the information mage can cast *identify* once per day as a spell-like ability.

Bonus Feat: The information mage receives a bonus feat at 2nd and 5th level. These feats are in addition to those granted to every character by level regardless of class. The character may take any item creation feat that she is qualified for. She may also take the new Information Network feat even if she does not meet its prerequisites.

THE INFORMATION MAGE

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells Per Day
1	+0	+0	+2	+2	Spell Mastery (Divination), Identify	+1 level of existing class
2	+1	+0	+3	+3	Bonus Feat	+1 level of existing class
3	+1	+1	+3	+3	Clairaudience/Clairvoyance	+1 level of existing class
4	+2	+1	+4	+4	Quality Workmanship	+1 level of existing class
5	+2	+1	+4	+4	Bonus Feat, Scrying	+1 level of existing class
6	+3	+2	+5	+5	Analyze Dweomer	+1 level of existing class
7	+3	+2	+5	+5	Personal Connection (object sense)	+1 level of existing class
8	+4	+2	+6	+6	Greater Scrying	+1 level of existing class
9	+4	+3	+6	+6	Personal Connection (remote use)	+1 level of existing class
10	+5	+3	+7	+7	Master Diviner	+1 level of existing class

Clairaudience/Clairvoyance (Sp): At 3rd level, the information mage can cast *clairaudience/clairvoyance* once per day as a spell-like ability.

Quality Workmanship: At 4th level, the information mage learns how to use the finest materials to reduce the strain of enchanting a magic item. The information mage may halve the experience point cost of creating a magic item by doubling the price paid for raw materials. The time to create the item remains the same.

Scrying (Sp): At 5th level, the information mage can cast *scrying* once per day as a spell-like ability.

Analyze Dweomer (Sp): At 6th level, the information mage can cast *analyze dweomer* once per day as a spell-like ability.

Personal Connection: As the information mage's mastery of divination and the enchantment of magic items increases, she gains the ability to put a little bit of herself in the items she creates. This personal connection allows the mage to sense and ultimately control the items she creates.

This connection does not come without cost, however. The mage must place a special "maker's mark" on any item that she wishes to have a personal connection with. Any item with a maker's mark requires twice as many experience points to create as a normal item of its kind. (The information mage may use Quality Workmanship to divide the doubled experience cost in half. The item would then cost the normal amount of experience points and twice as many gold pieces as normal to create.)

At 7th level, the information mage may cast *scrying* or *greater scrying* on the magic item as if it were a creature that the mage is familiar with. (In other words, the DC for the Scry check is 5.) The mage may use her *scrying* abilities or a memorized spell.

At 9th level, the information mage may activate or use the magic item regardless of its location. Activating the item requires a Concentration check (DC 10 + the caster level of the item), and the mage must concentrate while the item is in use. It's not necessary to cast a *scrying* spell on the item to use it, but it's usually a good idea to be able to see what you're doing.

Not all magic items can be used with this ability. Most armor, rings, potions, shields, and weapons are not affected by Personal Connection, since they are always on or must be consumed or worn to be used. However, the mage may be able to cast spells that are stored in them or activate a self-directed weapon like a *dancing sword*. Most artifacts, rods, staves, scrolls, wands, and wondrous items can be used, often to devastating effect. The GM has sole jurisdiction over what items may be used remotely.

Any effect that the item has occurs at the location of the item, not the mage. Of course, if the mage is near enough to the item — whether that's across the room or across the planet — she may be subject to its effects.

Greater Scrying (Sp): At 8th level, the information mage can cast *greater scrying* once per day as a spell-like ability.

Master Diviner (Sp): At 10th level, the information mage may use her Identify, Clairvoyance/Clairaudience, Scrying, Analyze Dweomer, and Greater Scrying spell-like abilities at will.

POLITICIAN

"Politics" derives from the Greek word for citizen, and all politicians answer to the citizens they represent. The only question is: which citizens are they representing?

The answer varies according to politician's ambition and the system that he works within. A politician may represent her home province, a particular class of citizens, or a select group of special interests. She may openly represent one group while quietly furthering the interests of another. She may work selflessly for a cause, or work only for herself.

An aristocrat may become a politician, if she seeks more power than she inherited. Some societies keep commoners out of politics, while other societies embrace the ordinary man who rises to power. Almost any adventuring class is suited for politics, though rogues and bards have an advantage due to their "people skills."

One disadvantage of becoming a politician is that politicians do very little dungeon-crawling. On the other hand, they can accomplish far more on the floor of a senate than some adventurers will accomplish in a lifetime of dragon-slaying.

Hit Die: d4

Requirements

To qualify for the politician prestige class, the character must fulfill the following criteria.

Skills: Diplomacy 8 ranks, Perform (oratory) 4 ranks, Sense Motive 6 ranks

Special: The politician must possess an office or position within the political system of her culture. This may be won by election, appointment, inheritance, trial by combat, purchase, or whatever method is typical to the culture.

Class Skills

The politician's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Appraise (Int), Bluff (Cha), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Gather Information (Cha), Innuendo (Wis), Knowledge (law, history, and local) (Int), Perform (oratory) (Cha), and Sense Motive (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 6 + Int modifier

Class Features

All the following are class features for the politician prestige class. The DCs for required skill checks are included where appropriate.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The politician is proficient in simple weapons.

Political Office: The politician may only advance in class levels if she currently holds a political office. Nobles in a feudal society almost always have a political office as part of their title.

Languages in Common: Many of the politician's abilities depend on her ability to speak. Those abilities are useless if she is unable to speak, or if she does not share a language with her audience.

Audience: Several of the politician's abilities require an audience. Each member of an audience must be able to see and hear the politician, and must be willing to listen to her.

Personal Touch: Politicians are skilled at making a personal connection with the people they meet, even if they've never met them before. When a politician greets someone, the politician may make a Knowledge (local) check (DC 15) to remember a flattering fact about him. The politician may make this check for each character she meets, but she may only make it once every 24 hours for any specific character.

If the politician succeeds at the check, she may mention this fact in her greeting and gain a +2 bonus to one Bluff, Diplomacy, or Sense Motive check involving that character. The bonus must be used within one hour after it is received.

Sense of the Room: The politician may make a Sense Motive check (DC 18) to learn the needs and goals of a group of people. Each attempt requires ten minutes of conversation with the members of the group.

If the check is successful, the politician understands what each person in the group hopes to accomplish and why. She is aware of any differences in agenda between the members of the group, and which members of the group (if any) are withholding relevant information. This ability is useful for zeroing in on hidden agendas or possible

🏛 THE POLITICIAN

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special
1	+0	+0	+0	+2	Personal Touch, Sense of the Room
2	+1	+0	+0	+3	Compelling Promise
3	+1	+1	+1	+3	Matching Speech
4	+2	+1	+1	+4	Satisfying Ambiguity
5	+2	+1	+1	+4	Quid pro Quo (both parties bound)
6	+3	+2	+2	+5	Public Appeal
7	+3	+2	+2	+5	Seniority
8	+4	+2	+2	+6	Quid pro Quo (politician is not bound)
9	+4	+3	+3	+6	Public Support
10	+5	+3	+3	+7	Aura of Power

disagreements within the group that may be exploited to the politician's benefit.

Compelling Promise: At 2nd level, the politician gains a +2 influence bonus to Diplomacy checks when she makes a promise to be fulfilled later. She is not required to fulfill the promise, but flagrant or regular oath-breaking may render this ability ineffective at the GM's discretion.

Matching Speech: At 3rd level, the politician learns how to vary speech rhythms and vocabulary to mirror whomever she is talking to. She inspires confidence and trust by talking in the same way as the person she is trying to influence. This gives the politician a +2 reaction bonus on Bluff, Diplomacy, Disguise, and Perform (oratory) checks.

Satisfying Ambiguity: Sometimes a politician has to satisfy several agendas at once. At 4th level, the politician learns how to communicate several different (sometimes even contradictory) messages within the same words. To do so, the politician makes a Perform (oratory) check (DC 16) while speaking with the audience she wishes to affect.

The politician may choose to send a number of messages equal to half her class level, and may choose which members of her audience receive which message. Each message requires at least five minutes of oratory to communicate and adds +2 to the difficulty of the Perform (oratory) check.

For audiences of 10 or less, the politician may choose which individual receives which message. For audiences of more than ten, she may divide the group along simple differences. Race, class, and alignment are all useful differences, whether separately or in combination.

For example, a 6th-level politician addressing a crowd of 50 humans, dwarves, and elves could specify three messages. Elves might hear the message that the politician supports and trusts them. Good humans might hear that while the elves may have good intentions, they need to be carefully watched. Evil humans and all dwarves might hear that the politician thinks that elves should be persecuted. A speech or conversation communicating all three ideas would have to be at least 15 minutes long to be "understood" by all parties involved.

Quid pro Quo (Sp): At 5th level, the politician gains the ability to make unusually binding deals with another party. The politician and the other party must agree to a deal that imposes obligations on both parties. Both parties then make a Diplomacy check.

Both parties must now keep the deal to the best of their ability. If either party wishes to break the deal, that party must succeed at a Will save versus the higher result of the two Diplomacy checks. The other party remains bound by the deal whether the party trying to break it succeeds

at the Will save or not. (The other party may still try to break the deal on its own, of course.)

At 8th level, the politician is no longer bound to the deal, and automatically succeeds at the Will save to break it. The other party remains bound by the deal, though it may attempt to break the deal as described above. If two 8th-level (or higher) politicians make a Quid pro Quo deal with each other, both parties make a Diplomacy check as described above. The party with the higher result is not bound by the deal; the party with the lower result is.

Public Appeal (Sp): At 6th level, the politician may compel an audience to perform a simple, non-violent task for her. The politician must speak to an audience for at least 10 minutes. She may then attempt a Perform (oratory) check (DC 25).

If the politician succeeds, she may compel the audience to perform a simple set of instructions. The instructions may be no more than 50 words long, and they may describe no more than three actions. For example, the politician could give the instructions: "Go home. Write a letter to the king. Tell him in the letter that elves are not to be trusted."

The politician may not compel the audience to perform suicidal or obviously dangerous tasks, though he may ask them to perform actions that may not be in their best interests. (For example, "Give me every ducat you have.") If the politician asks the audience to perform such an action, each member may make a Will save (DC 10 + the politician's prestige class level + the politician's Charisma modifier). For large audiences, the GM may wish to make a Will save for every 10 or even every 100 audience members.

Any politician or PC may always make a Will save to avoid being compelled by another politician's Public Appeal. Politicians receive a +2 competence bonus to the Will save.

The politician may use Public Appeal once per day. She may compel up to 50 audience members for each of her class levels. Public Appeal is a mind-affecting *charm* ability.

Seniority: At 7th level, the politician gains the benefit of seniority over her fellow politicians. She receives a +2 reaction bonus to Bluff, Diplomacy, and Intimidate checks when dealing with a politician with fewer levels in the politician prestige class than she has.

Public Support: At 9th level, the politician can rally the people to her cause. She must speak to an audience for at least 30 minutes. She may then make a Perform (oratory) check. The DC is 15 + 1 for each 100 members of the audience. For example, an audience of 558 people would present a DC of 20.

If the politician succeeds, she gains a +1 competence bonus for each 100 members of the audience. (In the example above, the politician would receive a +5 competence bonus if she succeeded.) She may use this bonus for any one Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, or Perform (oratory) check on any matter on which the opinion of that audience has a bearing. She must use this bonus with 24 hours of receiving it.

The politician may use the bonus gained from addressing one audience to make a difficult Perform (oratory) check and gain the support of an even larger audience. If time and logistics allow, the politician could speak to a series of audiences and gain a tidal wave of Public Support. This is a risky proposition, however. If the politician fails a Perform (oratory) roll to gain Public Support, he may not attempt the roll again for a month of game time.

Aura of Power (Su): A 10th-level politician wears her power like a magnificent cloak. Any character who can see and hear her must make a Will save (DC 25 + the politician's Charisma modifier) to voice a disagreement with her or disobey her direct commands while in her presence.

Aura of Power is a mind-affecting *charm* ability

RELIGIOUS LEADER

Spare the rod and spoil the state. Most clerics, druids, and paladins make faith a personal pursuit. They tend their flocks, explore their relationships with the gods, and occasionally save the world. That's all well and good, but sometimes you have to look at the bigger picture.

If ordinary religious characters tend the faith of individuals, religious leaders tend the faith of nations. They build the power of their religious organizations and set the moral tone of their land. They can be a check on the power of a king obsessed with the material world, or they can be a terrible scourge if left unchecked themselves.

Becoming a religious leader requires a deep commitment to order and faith. It's not a path for the faint of heart. Those clerics and druids who can live up to the responsibility enjoy the pride of being their gods' most powerful mortal servants.

Hit Die: d6

Requirements

To qualify for the religious leader prestige class, the character must fulfill the following criteria.

Alignment: The religious leader must have the same alignment as the god he follows.

THE RELIGIOUS LEADER

Level	Base Attack Bonus	Fort Save	Ref Save	Will Save	Special	Spells Per Day
1	+0	+2	+0	+2	Followers	+1 level of existing class
2	+1	+3	+0	+3	Enthralling Speech	+1 level of existing class
3	+2	+3	+1	+3	Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God	+1 level of existing class
4	+3	+4	+1	+4	Moral Authority	+1 level of existing class
5	+3	+4	+1	+4	Divine Experience	+1 level of existing class
6	+4	+5	+2	+5	Gift of Tongues	+1 level of existing class
7	+5	+5	+2	+5	Seniority	+1 level of existing class
8	+6	+6	+2	+6	Divine Power	+1 level of existing class
9	+6	+6	+3	+6	Divine Armor	+1 level of existing class
10	+7	+7	+3	+7	Aura of the Divine	+1 level of existing class

Base Attack Bonus: +6

Skills: Knowledge (religion) 10 ranks

Feats: Leadership

Spellcasting: Ability to cast 3rd-level divine spells

Class Skills

The religious leader's class skills (and the key ability for each skill) are Concentration (Con), Craft (Int), Diplomacy (Cha), Heal (Wis), Knowledge (religion) (Int), Perform (oratory) (Cha), and Sense Motive (Wis).

Skill Points at Each Level: 4 + Int modifier

Class Features

All the following are class features for the religious leader prestige class. The DCs for required skill checks are included where appropriate.

Weapon and Armor Proficiency: The religious leader is proficient in simple weapons.

Spells: When a new religious leader level is gained, the character gains new spells and a caster level as if he had also gained a level in a spellcasting class he belonged to before he added the prestige class. He does not, however, gain any other benefit a character of that class would have gained. If the character had more than one spellcasting class before he became a religious leader, he must decide to which class he adds each level of religious leader for purposes of determining spells when he adds the new level.

Dedicated to the Cause: A religious leader who changes alignment, leaves the organization he is a part of (whether voluntarily or involuntarily), or gains a level in any other class (except cleric) loses all of the religious leader's class abilities. He may not regain them or gain additional levels as a religious leader until he returns to the fold and atones as per the *atonement* spell.

Followers: A religious leader receives a +4 modifier to his Leadership score for recruiting cohorts and followers.

Enthralling Speech (Sp): A religious leader can hold an audience spellbound with a fiery sermon. This ability is identical to the demagogue's 2nd-level special ability. If the religious leader already has Enthralling Speech from the demagogue class, he gains a +2 bonus to his Concentration and Perform (oratory) checks while using this ability.

Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God (Sp): At 3rd level, the religious leader may make a terrifying speech

about the powers of his god. As a full round action, he may make a Perform (oratory) check. Any creature that can see the religious leader and hear the speech must make a Will save against the result of that check. If the creature fails, it suffers the effects of the *cause fear* spell as if the religious leader had successfully cast the spell upon it. The religious leader may use this ability once per day.

This is a mind-affecting spell-like ability.

Moral Authority: At 4th level, the religious leader gains a +4 competence bonus to Diplomacy and Perform (oratory) checks when he argues in favor of an official position of his religion.

Divine Experience (Su): At 5th level, the religious leader undergoes a divine experience. He gains a +2 inherent bonus to either his Wisdom or Charisma score.

Gift of Tongues (Su): At 6th level, the religious leader may cast the *tongues* spell on himself at will as a free action.

Seniority: At 7th level, the religious leader gains the benefit of seniority over his fellow believers. He receives a +2 reaction bonus to Bluff, Diplomacy, and Intimidate checks when dealing with a worshiper of the same god who has fewer levels in the religious leader prestige class than he has.

Divine Power (Su): At 8th level, the religious leader gains the metamagic feat Maximize Spell if he does not have it already. Once per day, the religious leader may spontaneously use the Maximize Spell feat on a divine spell, ignoring the requirement to prepare the spell as if it were three levels higher. The spell is cast using its normal spell slot.

Divine Armor (Su): At 9th level, the religious leader gains the ability to manifest supernatural armor around himself. Once per session, he may gain a +10 sacred or profane bonus to AC for a number of hours equal to his Charisma bonus, to a minimum of one hour. Determine whether the bonus is sacred or profane based on the alignment of the character's god; the GM decides which bonus best applies to neutral gods.

Aura of the Divine (Su): At 10th level, the religious leader may designate any die roll — even that of another character — as a "natural 20." He may do this once per play session for every 5 total character levels he has. He must make the declaration before the GM reveals the result of that roll (whether the attack or skill check or saving throw succeeded or failed).

MAKING THE MOST OF YOUR CLASS

Most of the usual fantasy roleplaying characters work perfectly well in a political fantasy game. Barbarians, rangers, and sorcerers all have their parts to play — especially since even a politically active party has reasons to slay monsters and loot dungeons. (Somebody's got to pay for the senator's election, after all.)

That said, success in the political arena requires different skills and aptitudes than dungeon-crawling. Consider the recommendations below when choosing new abilities for your character; they may be helpful in beating the challenges of a political campaign.

BARBARIAN

Barbarians aren't subtle, and kicking the door down and screaming is more likely to frighten the town council than to persuade it of the merits of your position. That doesn't mean that barbarians can't be powerful political figures. Their strength and power translates well into force of personality.

Intimidate is a key skill for the politically minded barbarian. Terrifying the town council has its uses, after all. Diplomacy is also useful, but it is an expensive cross-class skill. Your barbarian will also need plenty of Charisma if she wants to make friends and influence people.

The chieftain is an excellent prestige class for ambitious barbarians, but requires careful preparation. Barbarians can't be lawful and chieftains can't be chaotic, so the character must walk a careful line in the neutral, neutral good, or neutral evil alignments. The high Sense Motive requirement is also hard for barbarians to fulfill, but multi-classing as a rogue or bard can help.

The bodyguard is another good prestige class for barbarians. It's easier to develop, and hitting people that threaten the powerful can be just as much fun as being powerful yourself.

BARD

Bards love political campaigns. They're people persons, and their class skills reflect this. Any bard who spreads points between Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, and Sense Motive will be a potent political force.

Perform (oratory) is an exceptionally powerful skill for bards. Not only can they use their gift of gab to win debates or elections, but they can use all their traditional powers of enchantment as well. Bards with Perform (oratory) are devastating as politicians and demagogues.

CLERIC

"Always the advisor, never the advisee." Clerics often aid the powerful rather than gaining power themselves. They're short on skill points, and their divine magic protects people better than it influences them.

That said, clerics have some interesting options. They can emphasize Diplomacy and develop Bluff and Sense Motive as cross-class skills to become excellent diplomats. The religious leader class is tailor-made for them, and working up the hierarchy of your order can be a fascinating challenge.

Clerics can make good use of the Patronage feat, since they are usually members of powerful religious orders. Their most useful spells are divinations and spells that detect lies or force other characters to tell the truth. The ability to predict the future or uncover treachery is also extremely valuable.

DRUID

Druids don't mix well with politics. They are the opposite of bards in many ways, and their affinities lie with nature, not human nature. Druids can put their shapeshifting and stealth abilities to good use as spies, but most of their talents are not applicable to political games.

Giving your druids or cleric a pet issue often helps integrate them into political campaigns. A druid might normally be left tongue-tied in the queen's court, but not if he's seeking her protection for a sacred grove. Pursuing a goal like this keeps the druid PC involved, draws in other PCs who have helpful political skills, and ensures that some of the action will take place outdoors where the druid can shine.

FIGHTER

Like clerics, fighters don't have many skills to work with. Unlike clerics, fighters have lots of feats. Their bonus feats may be reserved for battle, but they can use their regular feats to boost their political potential without sacrificing many of their traditional abilities.

A fighter with a high Charisma can use feats like Brothers in Arms, Commanding Voice, Leadership, and Inspired Leader to build an army of followers.

(Brothers in Arms and Commanding Voice *can* be bought with the fighter's bonus feats.) Many generals have used their armies to become emperors; your fighter may follow that path.

Smart fighters make excellent bodyguards and chieftains, though a fighter who wishes to become a chieftain should probably multiclass as a rogue and pick up Diplomacy or Intimidate as a class skill.

MONK

Monks focus on perfecting their bodies and minds, which is in some ways a distraction from the messy world of politics. On the other hand, the monkish reputation for being "above it all" can be a powerful asset when trying to influence others.

Like the other religious classes, monks are at their best when they act in the service of a cause. The Fanatic feat is a good fit for them, and many monks also enjoy Patronage. They make excellent diplomats and bodyguards.

PALADIN

Paladins have one big advantage in a political campaign: Charisma is already an important ability for them. A charismatic paladin has useful powers and a strong base with which to build up political skills. Unfortunately, paladins don't get many skill points. Like fighters, they must rely on their martial prowess and natural abilities to win loyalty and respect.

Like clerics, paladins are often associated with a religious organization, and can build a power base there. The Paragon feat is especially useful for paladins.

RANGER

Like druids, rangers have few political skills and tend to work alone. Unless the game's political issues revolve around wilderness issues, they normally have little place in a political campaign.

Where they do have a role to play, it's most likely to be as scouts and skirimishers in a diplomatic crisis. Rangers can use their wilderness skills to supply information on troop movements or to help slip spies across borders. Very few rangers turn out to be returning kings, but sometimes they can provide valuable help to them.

ROGUE

Rogues are one of the most flexible classes in a political game. They have plenty of skill points to work with and almost every important political skill is a class skill for them. Rogues have lots of choices — so which ones are the best?

There are three areas rogues can focus on: traditional thievery, people skills, and confidence games. Traditional thievery is a good choice for campaigns where another character is the ambitious political character and the rogue helps that character out with underhanded schemes. Skills like Diplomacy, Gather Information, and Perform (oratory) are suitable for a rogue who wants to be a skilled but ethical politician. Less-ethical politicians should go the con man route and make the most of their Bluff skill.

Any of these approaches can lead to success, but it's important to be consistent. If you want to play a sneaky character, go right ahead — but respected senators should not be sneaking through their opponents' offices on a regular basis. They've usually got other people to do that for them.

Rogues have an affinity for the conspiracy leader, discreet companion, and politician prestige classes. Rogues on the wrong side of the law can also make good use of the Escape Plan feat.

SORCERER

Like the paladin, a sorcerer gets a lot of use out of her Charisma ability. She may be weak on skills, but arcane spells do a lot to redress the political balance. Spontaneous Casting gives sorcerers a lot of flexibility, but the short spell list requires some careful choices.

Charm spells are nice, but information magics are even better. Always keep an eye out for spells that will let you learn or anticipate the moves of your character's political opponents. Countermagic can protect your side from your opponents' spies, as well.

Information Network is an important feat for sorcerers. Their high Charisma lets them make the most of their Gather Information checks, and the feat lets them do so without risking their fragile bodies.

WIZARD

Wizards are in much the same situation as sorcerers, but they have a wider array of spells. Wizards can also

specialize and make their best politics-oriented spells more powerful.

Divination is the perfect specialty for most political wizards, since they can spy better and give up whatever school is least useful for them. Abjuration or Illusion are good specializations for wizards who want to prevent spying or present disinformation — Illusion is also good for creating special effects and grand settings for public speaking. Wizards should never take Divination as a prohibited school — information spells are just too useful in a political game.

Another good area for wizards is magic item creation. There are many items that can hide spies or serve as spies themselves, and buying these items from others is often indiscreet. Making sure your wizard knows the right spells to create these items is always a good idea.

HOW TO MAKE FRIENDS AND INFLUENCE PEOPLE

Every political system has its own paths to power, but there are techniques that will succeed in any system. Here are some tips that will make any political campaign easier.

TALK TO PEOPLE

Always be ready to talk, even with your worst enemy. If nothing else, you're likely to learn something you can use later. You might also be able to make a useful deal or discover a common goal.

Not all important conversations are with important characters. Maids and stable hands see more than their betters think they do, and are often happy to share that information. You can learn a lot with a little courtesy and respect.

Talk to everyone, but don't take too much time doing it. If a character has useful information, he will usually reveal its existence within the first few minutes of a conversation. If you're getting nowhere talking to an NPC, say your goodbyes and move on.

STUDY MOTIVATIONS

The first step to success is to know who your friends and foes are. The second is to know what they want. What are their goals? What do they believe in? What do they fear? What are their weaknesses?

Knowing these things helps you bring your allies closer and deal more effectively with your enemies. Allies are more enthusiastic when you enlist their help on issues that support their interests. The personality of an enemy often determines whether he is best handled using persuasion, negotiation, threats, or force.

KNOW WHEN TO LIE

The truth is not always your friend. Important people have large egos, and many of them brook no disagreement with their policies or prejudices. Sometimes the wisest course is to keep your mouth shut or murmur meaningless agreement.

Politics often depends on trust, though. It's easy to get away with a lie the first time you tell it, but bad reputations spread quickly. It's hard to make deals when your word can't be trusted.

Remember that misleading somebody is not the same as lying. If you can encourage someone to fool themselves while telling the truth — or at least most of the truth — you can preserve a reputation for fair dealing while being as sneaky as you like.

COMPROMISE!

Total victory is nice, but compromises get things done. Giving someone what they want in exchange for something you want is easier than convincing them to want what you want.

When you negotiate a deal, decide what your goals are. Do whatever is necessary to accomplish those goals, even if it means making a painful compromise. As long as you get the concessions you need, you can renegotiate the rest of the agreement later. The deal doesn't have to be perfect for either side — it just has to be acceptable to both sides.

POLITICAL MANEUVERS

Politics is a lot like combat. Characters jockey for position, then launch devastating strikes at each other. They knock each other off balance, spring surprises, and seek out the holes in each other's defenses. Combat settles differences with sharp edges and heavy objects. Political battles do the same thing with words and will.

This chapter presents various combat systems for politics. The systems that follow can be used any time you want to resolve an argument, a vote, or an election.

POLITICAL DEBATES

The following systems can be used to adjudicate political debates. Simple debates are used for minor confrontations, "super-simple" debates for easily decided sidetracks, and complex debates for situations central to the plot of the campaign. It's up to the GM to decide which is appropriate for the circumstances.

THE SIMPLE DEBATE

Sometimes you don't need a detailed system. The issue may be a diversion, or a chance encounter between two rivals. Maybe it's late and everyone just wants to finish the adventure and go home. Whatever the reason, to resolve a political conflict with a single set of die rolls perform the following steps:

Each player character involved in the conflict chooses to use either the Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidate, or Perform (oratory) skill in the conflict. After every player has chosen a skill, each character gets a turn to make her case for whatever point she's arguing. The character who's currently making an argument is known as the "speaker."

The first speaker is the character with the highest skill bonus in the skill she has chosen to use, followed by the character with the next highest bonus in the skill that he has chosen to use, and so on down to the character with the lowest skill bonus.

As the speaker makes her case, each other character involved in the conflict may make one interjection. This can be a question, a jeering comment, or any other short objection to the speaker's case. The speaker must respond to the objection as best she can. The response can be an answer, a rebuttal, a cutting remark, or an explanation of why the objection is irrelevant. Any response that is brief and to the point is acceptable.

If the speaker responds quickly and effectively to the objection, she receives a +1 bonus to the skill check that follows. If the speaker does not respond quickly and effectively, she receives a –1 penalty to the skill check. The GM is sole judge of the response's quality.

When the speaker is done, the GM judges whether or not the she has spoken appropriately and to the point. The character must have communicated in a way that supports the skill roll she has chosen: a Bluff check must be supported by lies and exaggerations; Diplomacy checks must be supported by offers of compromise; Intimidate checks must be supported by threats and aggressive language; Perform (oratory) checks must be supported by stylish language and reasoned argument. The speaker must also address any important points raised by previous speakers. (This is easy for the first speaker.) If the speaker has accomplished both of these goals, she receives a +2 bonus to the skill check to follow.

A player should never be forced to roleplay her character's turn as speaker. If the player decides to skip the speech and go right to the skill roll, the player makes a skill check with no bonuses or penalties

The speaker's turn then ends. The person with the next lowest skill becomes the new speaker and begins to make his case. The other characters may interject and the GM judges the speaker's performance as described above. Each character's total bonus or penalty should be noted at the end of her turn at speaker.

When all the speakers have taken their turn, each speaker makes a skill check using the previously selected skill, adding all appropriate bonuses and penalties. The character with the highest skill check wins the conflict.

THE SUPER-SIMPLE DEBATE

Hey, sometimes you just don't want to mess around. In that case, skip the speechmaking. Everyone picks a relevant skill and rolls a skill check. The highest result wins.

We now return you to your regularly scheduled complicated rules.

THE COMPLEX DEBATE

Sometimes you want to play through the cut and thrust of politics. When the election hangs on a crucial debate, or your characters must convince the king's ministers of the rightness of your cause, these rules help you make the most of the occasion.

These political debate rules are based on the following principles. Each character involved in the debate is trying to influence an audience, but the audience is less important than the battle between the characters. During the debate, characters take actions that represent their rhetorical tactics and verbal attacks. The effectiveness of each character's action is affected by the most recent action his opponent has taken, so the characters constantly change tactics and try to get the rhetorical upper hand. Just like combat, the goal of a political debate is to outmaneuver your opponent and leave him unable to fight back.

Most political debates occur in formal situations with rules of argument. Those aren't important as far as the maneuvers listed below are concerned — there's always a way to sneak an underhanded tactic into a debate, even if the rules forbid it. (Included here are also maneuvers that represent objections to "illegal" tactics.)

What is important is that most political debates occur between balanced teams of debaters; if there are two on one side, there are usually two on the other side. This is important because — just like in physical combat — the side with more voices is likely to overwhelm the side with fewer voices. Most formal debate situations recognize this and limit the number of participants to preserve fairness. This isn't always the case, though.

Legal cases are political debates with balanced teams. Councils of war and juries are political debates where the teams may be completely unbalanced. (Henry Fonda's character in *Twelve Angry Men* must have had many more character levels than his fellow jurors, for example, to turn the consensus of opinion to his side.)

Debate Rounds

Debates are broken up into rounds. Each character gets one action per round, which may be split into two half-actions. Rounds are abstract and may represent seconds, minutes, or hours of debate.

Initiative

Before the first round, each character involved in the debate makes an Initiative check. The GM makes Initiative checks for non-player characters involved in the debate. While Initiative is based on Dexterity, it is used here to represent the character's quick wits and ability to react to events as they occur. It is rolled normally and all the usual bonuses or penalties are applied.

Each round, the characters involved in the debate act in order of Initiative.

Political Defense

Each character has a Political Defense score, which is the debating equivalent of Armor Class. A character's Political Defense is 10 + the average of the character's skill bonuses in the following skills: Bluff, Diplomacy, Intimidation, and Perform (oratory).

Example: Lord Graymalkin has the following skill bonuses: Bluff +14, Diplomacy +12, Intimidate +11, Perform (oratory) +3. (He has no Perform skill ranks, but still adds his Charisma modifier.) The average of these four skills is 10, so his Political Defense is 20.

Political Points

Add up each character's Constitution and Charisma modifiers. The total is how many political points the character has. A character always starts a debate with at least one political point, even if the total of his Constitution and Charisma modifiers is zero or less than zero. When a character has no political points left, that character is out of the debate.

A character's political points are tracked separately in each debate. The character receives all her political points at the beginning of each debate, even if she is participating in two debates at once or interrupts one debate to participate in another.

Example: Lord Graymalkin has a Constitution of 13 and a Charisma of 16. His +1 Constitution bonus and +3 Charisma bonus gives him 4 political points.

Character Actions

When a character's turn comes up in the Initiative sequence, that character performs one action, which may be split into two half-actions. The character chooses an action or two half-actions from the political maneuvers listed below. At the end of each maneuver, the character makes whatever skill checks are called for by the maneuver(s) and resolves their effects. Most of these skill checks are "attacks" that inflict "damage" upon an opponent's position, reducing his political points.

Characters may also take other actions during the round, including combat actions. If a character takes an action that is not a political maneuver, the debate round is almost

always equivalent to a combat round. A political half-action is equivalent to a partial combat action, while a political action is equivalent to a full combat action.

The GM may also decide that a debate round is long enough to accommodate more-complicated non-combat actions. It's usually reasonable for a player to perform one skill check instead of a debate action.

Attacks

A political "attack" is an attempt to reduce an opponent's political points. Most of the maneuvers listed below lead to attacks. Each such maneuver specifies the skill that the attack uses.

When resolving an attack, the character chooses a target opponent, then cross-references his maneuver with the last maneuver the opponent took on the Political Maneuver Table included in this chapter. This table shows an attack modifier for every possible combination of maneuvers, (If the opponent did not take a maneuver, the modifier is +0.) The character then makes a skill check, adds the attack modifier and any other bonuses or penalties, and tries to beat the Political Defense of the target opponent.

If the character beats the opponent's Political Defense, the attack scores a hit and the opponent must make the Will save described below to avoid losing political points. If it doesn't hit, the maneuver has no effect upon the opponent.

Example: Lord Graymalkin is arguing with the unscrupulous Baron Rydell. After listening to the baron's distracting patter for a few minutes, Graymalkin gets fed up and begins peppering his opponent with hard questions about the baron's position.

"Forceful Interrogation" is an Intimidation maneuver that gives a +2 bonus against the baron's "Distracting Patter." Graymalkin's Intimidation skill bonus is +11, for a total bonus of +13. Baron Rydell's Political Defense is 24. Graymalkin rolls a 12, adding 11 for his Intimidation skill plus 2 more for the political maneuver for a total attack roll of 25. He scores a hit on the baron!

Roleplaying the Attack

Any player may declare her character's political maneuvers as abstract actions. There's no need to go into the minutiae of a particular position or rhetorical flourish, but players who want to roleplay their characters' maneuvers are encouraged to do so.

If a player presents her character's maneuver with an entertaining description or speech, the GM may award the player a +2 bonus on the skill check for that maneuver.

The GM should not award this bonus for descriptions and speeches that are inappropriate, tedious, or repetitive.

Damage

When a character is hit by an opponent's political attack, the character must make a Will save. The DC of the save is equal to the attacker's skill bonus plus the damage bonus of the maneuver. Some maneuvers provide additional damage bonuses in specific situations.

If the character fails the Will save, the character loses one political point. If the character fails the Will save by more than 10, the character loses an additional political point. Keep track of how many political points of damage each side causes as well as those that individual characters lose — the information may be important for determining a winner.

Any character who has zero or fewer political points must withdraw from the debate. That character can no longer take debate-related actions or be attacked with political maneuvers by other debaters.

Example: Baron Rydell must make a Will save after being hit with Graymalkin's Forceful Interrogation. The baron's Will save is +12, and the DC he must save against is 21 (11 for the Intimidation skill bonus, 10 for the political maneuver's damage bonus). The baron rolls a 7, failing the save and losing 1 political point.

Political Critical Hits

When you make an attack roll and get a "natural 20," you succeed regardless of the target's Political Defense. The DC of your opponent's Will save is increased by 5, and the opponent loses an additional political point if that save is failed. (Note that the immunity to critical hits possessed by creatures such as constructs, elementals, oozes, plants, and undead does not apply to political critical hits; Vlad the Vampire Lord is still subject to a brilliant argument though he isn't vulnerable to a sword.)

Example: Baron Rydell responds to Lord Graymalkin's interrogation with a few hard questions of his own. Rydell's maneuver fails, but Graymalkin faces a penalty by continuing his interrogation. He does so anyway and rolls a natural 20 — a critical hit!

The baron must make a save at DC 31 (+11 for Intimidation skill, +10 for the Forceful Interrogation damage bonus, +5 for the additional damage bonus provided by the previous Forceful Interrogation, +5 for the political critical hit) and fails miserably with a total of 15. He loses 3 political points — one for the normal damage, one for failing the save by more than 10, and one for the political critical hit.

Ending the Debate

There are several ways a political debate can end. The GM should choose one that matches the political setting of the game. Keep in mind that none of these methods depend on a specific amount of time. Because this system is abstract, five debate rounds might take five minutes or five hours.

Possible conditions include:

- Only one side still has political points. This simulates talking until the group comes to a consensus. It's also possible to end the debate when more than one side remains in play. The debate could end when a certain number of sides or individuals have been eliminated.

- After a set number of rounds. This can simulate a legal case or a formal debate that is meant to end at a specific time. A variant is to end after X + 1d6 rounds, where X is a set number of rounds. 5 to 10 rounds is usually a pretty good set length for a debate.

- When all parties agree to end the debate. It's possible to resolve the debate when this happens, but it's more common for the parties to adjourn the debate and resume it later. Each character retains his current number of political points until the debate is resumed. (Of course, if you get rid of an opposing character in the interim, you also get rid of that character's political points.)

- A debate can also end unexpectedly, usually because one side has stormed out or begun hitting another side with walking sticks. In this situation, the GM must decide if the debate is resolved normally or whether it is resolved at all.

Resolving the Debate

If only one side of the debate remains in the debate — whether that side is one or several characters — that side has won.

If more than one side is still in the debate, then each side adds together its remaining political points and the number of political points of damage that it caused opponents to lose during the debate. The side with the highest total wins the debate.

Awarding Experience

If a player character wins a political debate, the party gains experience based on the challenge rating of each NPC that the PC defeated. If all the characters involved

in the debate were player characters, the experience is figured based on the average level of the party.

POLITICAL MANEUVERS

The following actions can be used during a political debate. Each of the maneuvers below follows this format:

Maneuver Name

[A brief summary of the maneuver.]

Skill Used: Which skills are used for an attack roll with this maneuver.
Damage Bonus: Add this bonus to the DC of a character's Will save to avoid loss of political points. If this line specifies "No Damage," the target doesn't make a Will save; any special effect is certain to happen on a successful attack roll.
Length: Action or Half-Action
Special: Any special rules or unusual effects.

The Big Lie

You wave your laundry list and scream about traitors in the heart of the government. You rave that your opponent is a cunningly disguised balor. Whatever the fib is, it's so outrageous that foolish people believe everything you say.

Skill Used: Bluff
Damage Bonus: +20
Length: Action
Special: If you fail the attack roll, you must figure the damage and make a Will save against that DC. If you fail, you lose political points as per the usual damage rule.

Build the Argument

You methodically establish each point of your argument and defend it with inexorable logic.

Skill Used: None
Damage Bonus: No Damage
Length: Half-Action
Special: If your next attack uses the Diplomacy or Perform (oratory) skill, it gets a +2 bonus. You can stack bonuses from this maneuver, but the maximum bonus you may accumulate from successive uses of Build the Argument is +6.

Dazzling Rhetoric

Your words soar. You paint castles in the sky for your audience, and they're ready to pack their bags and move in.

Skill Used: Perform (oratory)

POLITICAL MANEUVERS INTERACTION TABLE

Maneuver Chosen		Build Argu.	Regroup	Shor. Def.	Support Ally	Big Lie	Distract. Patter	False Authority	Quest. Conclus.	Sly Insinuat.	Expose Flaw	Gentle Persuade
General	Build the Argument	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Regroup	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Shore Up Defenses	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Support Ally	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bluff	Big Lie	+0	+2	+2	+0	+2	+2	+0	+0	+0	-2	+0
	Distracting Patter	+0	+2	+0	+2	+0	-2	+0	+0	+2	+0	+2
	False Authority	-2	+2	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	+2	-2	-2	+0
	Questionable Conc.	+2	+2	+0	+0	+0	+0	-2	-2	+0	-2	+0
	Sly Insinuations	+0	+2	+2	-2	+0	+2	+2	+2	-2	+0	+0
Diplomacy	Expose Flaw	+0	+0	-2	+2	-2	-2	+2	+2	+0	-2	+0
	Gentle Persuasion	+0	+2	+0	+0	-2	+0	+0	+0	-2	+0	+2
	Offer Compromise	+0	+2	+0	+0	-2	+0	-2	+0	+0	+2	+2
	Present Evidence	+0	+2	+0	+0	+0	+0	+2	+2	+2	+2	+0
	Profound Conclus.	-2	+2	-2	+0	-2	+0	+2	+0	+0	-2	+0
Perform	Dazzling Rhetoric	+0	+2	+0	+2	+0	-2	+0	+2	+0	+0	+0
	Eloquent Argu.	+2	+2	+0	+0	+0	-2	+0	+2	+0	+0	+2
	Humorous Jab	-2	+0	+0	+2	+2	+2	+2	+2	+0	+0	+0
	Invoke Faith	+0	+2	+0	+0	+2	+0	+2	+0	+0	+2	+0
	Point of Order	+0	+0	+0	+0	-2	+2	+0	+0	+2	+0	+0
Intimidate	Forceful Interro.	+0	+2	+0	+2	+0	+0	+2	+2	+2	+0	+0
	Hint at Conseq.	-2	+0	+0	+2	-2	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0
	Smear Opponent	+0	+2	+2	+0	-2	+0	+2	+0	+0	+0	+0
	Tantrum	+2	+2	+2	+2	+0	+2	+0	+0	+2	+2	+0
	Threat	+0	+2	+0	+2	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	-2

Damage Bonus: +10
Length: Action
Special: You may damage two opponents with this attack. If you choose to do so, calculate separate modifiers for each opponent, adding your skill bonus and any other relevant bonuses (including that opponent's last maneuver). Then make a single attack roll and add it to each of the two modifiers to generate two separate results.

Distracting Patter
You make a series of quick and nonsensical points, confusing your opponent while you set up your real attack.

Skill Used: Bluff
Damage Bonus: +5
Length: Action
Special: Whether or not you succeed in this attack, your first subsequent attack that is not Distracting Patter gains a +2 bonus. You may store up to a +6 bonus with successive uses of Distracting Patter.

Expose Flaw
You uncover a flaw in your opponent's logic.

Skill Used: Diplomacy
Damage Bonus: +5
Length: Half Action
Special: None

False Authority
You know what you're talking about and have evidence to back up your claims. And you know, with just a little bit of stretching, it does!

Skill Used: Bluff
Damage Bonus: No Damage
Length: Action
Special: Make a Bluff check and add the usual attack roll modifiers. The result becomes your Political Defense for the next 1d6 rounds; the effect begins immediately.

Forceful Interrogation
You batter your opponent with questions, seeking to disorient her and expose important information.

Skill Used: Intimidate
Damage Bonus: +10
Length: Action
Special: If your attack is successful and your opponent fails the Will save, you gain an additional +5 damage bonus to your next attack. If your opponent succeeds at the save, she gains a +5 damage bonus to her next attack. No matter who gains the damage bonus, the attack must be successful or the bonus is lost.

🐺 POLITICAL MANEUVERS INTERACTION TABLE

Maneuver Chosen — **Opponent's Previous Maneuver**

		Offer Compromise	Present Evidence	Profound Conclus.	Dazzling Rhetoric	Eloquent Argu.	Hu. Jab	Invo. Faith	Point Order	Force Inter.	Hint Cons.	Smear Oppo.	Tantrum	Threat
General	Build the Argument	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Regroup	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Shore Up Defenses	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
	Support Ally	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
Bluff	Big Lie	+0	+0	+0	+0	-2	+0	+0	+0	-2	+0	+0	-2	-2
	Distracting Patter	+0	+2	-2	+0	+2	+0	+0	+2	+0	+2	+0	+0	+0
	False Authority	+0	-2	+0	+0	+0	-2	+0	+0	+0	+2	+0	-2	+0
	Questionable Conc.	+0	+0	+0	+0	-2	+0	+0	+0	-2	+0	+0	+0	+0
	Sly Insinuations	+0	+2	+0	+0	+2	+0	+2	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0
Diplomacy	Expose Flaw	+0	+0	+2	+2	+0	-2	+0	+0	-2	-2	+0	+0	+0
	Gentle Persuasion	+2	+0	+0	-2	-2	+0	+0	+2	+0	+2	-2	+0	+0
	Offer Compromise	+2	+2	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	+2	-2	+0	+0	-2	-2
	Present Evidence	+0	+0	+0	+2	+0	+0	+0	+2	+2	+0	+0	+0	+0
	Profound Conclus.	+0	+0	+0	+0	+2	-2	+2	+0	+0	+0	-2	+0	+0
Perform	Dazzling Rhetoric	+0	+0	+0	+2	+0	+0	+0	-2	+0	+0	+2	+0	+0
	Eloquent Argu.	+2	-2	-2	+0	+2	+0	+0	+0	-2	+0	+2	+0	+0
	Humorous Jab	+0	+2	+0	+2	+0	+0	+0	-2	+2	+0	+0	+2	+2
	Invoke Faith	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	-2	+0	+2	+0	+0	+0	+2	+2
	Point of Order	+0	+0	+0	+2	+0	+0	-2	+0	+2	+0	+0	+0	+2
Intimidate	Forceful Interro.	+0	+2	+0	+2	+0	-2	+2	+0	-2	+0	+2	+0	+0
	Hint at Conseq.	+2	+0	+0	+0	+2	-2	+0	+0	+0	-2	+0	+0	+0
	Smear Opponent	+0	+0	+0	+0	+2	+0	+2	+0	+2	+0	-2	+0	+0
	Tantrum	+0	+0	+0	+0	+0	-2	-2	-2	+2	+2	+2	+2	-2
	Threat	-2	+0	-2	+2	+0	-2	-2	+0	+0	+2	+0	-2	+2

Gentle Persuasion

Using quiet, reasoned arguments, you cajole your opponents and the audience to your side of the debate.

Skill Used: Diplomacy
Damage Bonus: +5
Length: Action
Special: If you succeed at your attack roll and your opponent fails his Will save, you gain a political point in addition to the usual consequences.

Hint at Consequences

You almost suggest that unpleasantness might result from the foolish course of action that your opponent is suggesting. Not that you'd have anything to do with it, of course.

Skill Used: Intimidate
Damage Bonus: +5
Length: Half-Action
Special: None

Humorous Jab

You bedevil your opponent with a quick joke or a witty remark.

Skill Used: Perform (oratory)
Damage Bonus: +5
Length: Half-Action
Special: None

Invoke Faith

You connect your argument to whatever gods or ideals are worshiped in your society.

Skill Used: Perform (oratory)
Damage Bonus: +10
Length: Action
Special: If you have levels in one or more classes with divine spellcasting abilities, you may add those class levels to the damage bonus.

Offer Compromise

You find a point of agreement between your position and that of an opponent, and then offer to build a greater agreement from that promising beginning.

Skill Used: Diplomacy
Damage Bonus: +10
Length: Action
Special: After succeeding at this attack, you may increase the damage bonus by staking political points. Each political point you risk adds +5 to the damage bonus. If your opponent succeeds at his Will save, you lose the political points you staked on this maneuver.

Point of Order

You question an opponent's protocol or methodology. This confuses the opponent and delays him as he explains how he is observing the correct procedures.

Skill Used: Perform (oratory)
Damage Bonus: No Damage
Length: Half-Action
Special: If you succeed at your attack roll, your opponent loses his next action.

Present Evidence

You counter your opponent's arguments with hard facts.

Skill Used: Diplomacy
Damage Bonus: +10
Length: Action
Special: None

Profound Conclusion

You make a firm point that's impossible to argue with.

Skill Used: Diplomacy
Damage Bonus: +15
Length: Action
Special: If your attack succeeds and your opponent fails his Will save by more than 10, you may make a Perform (oratory) check. If the result is higher than the Political Defense of each of your opponents, you may declare the debate over. Each side totals its remaining political points and the political damage it caused, and a winner is determined.

Questionable Conclusions

Having stretched your facts, you weave spurious interpretations into a silken argument.

Skill Used: Bluff
Damage Bonus: +10
Length: Half-Action
Special: None

Reality Check

Your facts interfere with your opponent's lies.

Skill Used: Perform (oratory)
Damage Bonus: +15
Length: Half-Action
Special: None

Regroup

You pause to think and prepare you next set of arguments in your mind.

Skill Used: None
Damage Bonus: No Damage
Length: Half-Action
Special: Add +5 to your Initiative check for the rest of the debate.

Shore Up Defenses

You anticipate objections, defending against your opponents' arguments by strengthening your own.

Skill Used: None
Damage Bonus: No Damage
Length: Half-Action
Special: Your Political Defense score is increased by your Intelligence modifier for 1d4 rounds; the effect begins immediately.

Sly Insinuations

You undermine an opponent with comments that skate on the edge of insulting.

Skill Used: Bluff
Damage Bonus: +5
Length: Half-Action
Special: None

Smear Opponent

You attack your opponent directly, suggesting that his morals, motives, knowledge, or authority are tainted or inadequate.

Skill Used: Intimidate
Damage Bonus: +10
Length: Action
Special: If you fail the attack roll, make a Perform (oratory) check. The DC is equal to your opponent's Political Defense. If you fail this check, you lose one political point.

Support Ally

You make a series of minor points that buttress the arguments of another character.

Skill Used: None
Damage Bonus: No Damage
Length: Half-Action
Special: The character you are supporting receives a +2 bonus on his next skill check. No character may receive more than a +6 bonus from Support Ally for any one attack roll.

Tantrum

You use your talent for yelling, throwing things, and hitting the table with your shoe to prove that you are dangerous and should be taken seriously.

Skill Used: Intimidate
Damage Bonus: +10
Length: Action
Special: In addition to the attack roll, make a Perform (oratory) check. The DC is equal to your opponent's Political Defense. If you fail this check, you lose one political point.

Threat

You make an explicit threat to your opponent. If he doesn't do what you want, on his head be it.

Skill Used: Bluff or Intimidate
Damage Bonus: +15
Length: Action
Special: If your attack fails or your opponent succeeds at his Will save to avoid damage, you lose one political point.

ELECTION SYSTEMS

Sometimes winning a political conflict is more about building support than destroying your opponent. That's what the rules below are for.

Votes happen in a variety of situations and settings. Juries, ruling councils, general staffs, and guilds all make important decisions with votes. Even when a single powerful figure such as a monarch or general makes the final decision, that authority often takes into account the opinions of an advisory body. Win their approval, and you win the caesar's approval as well.

The first question to answer when creating a voting situation in a game is: how many voters are there? If the vote rests in a few individuals, use the individual voting rules. If the vote involves tens or hundreds of individuals, use the faction voting rules. If you're dealing with thousands of voters, use the election rules.

INDIVIDUAL VOTING

Individual voting is handled with a mixture of roleplaying and strategy. It requires preparation, so if time is short you may be better off running a direct conflict using the complex debate rules above. This system works best with a dozen or fewer voters.

The first order of business is to define the issue. What do the PCs hope to accomplish, and how many minds do they have to change to do it?

There's no reason to play through any voting situation that the PCs are certain to win. That doesn't mean the characters shouldn't have the occasional easy victory,

but the details of those votes aren't very interesting. If the PCs are going to have no trouble enacting trade sanctions against the elves, ask for a quick skill check and declare the matter closed.

This voting system exists for situations where the PCs are behind and need to build a winning position. They may not have started out behind in the vote — perhaps a charismatic rival has undermined a once-commanding majority — but the action shouldn't start until the characters are in a position where they will be defeated if they don't act. Skip the preliminaries; play the main event.

Setting Up the Situation

With this in mind, decide what the issue is, how many voters are involved, and what constitutes a winning majority. This system works best with a dozen or fewer voters — the number of members on a typical city council — though it can be stretched to two dozen. Most winning majorities are more than half the votes or (for grave matters) more than two-thirds of the votes. On rare occasions, an issue is so important that it requires a unanimous vote. The exact majority is mostly flavor text, however — what's important is the number of votes the PCs need to get, not the number of votes they have.

To randomly determine how many votes the PCs have to get, roll 1d6. The result is how many voters they have to convince to gain a winning majority, whatever that number is. If there are 4 to 6 voters, roll 1d3. If there are 2 to 3 voters, use the simple or complex debate rules above.

The next step is to determine the specifics about the individuals involved in the vote. Each voter needs a name, an attitude, a Shift Resistance, and a leverage point, as described below. Important voters can be given character sheets and developed in as much detail as you like — an easy task if they're already regular characters in the campaign. Other voters need little more than a name like "Third Councilor on the Left."

As always, any player character participating in the vote controls his opinions and actions. Do not develop attitudes, Shift Resistances, leverage points for player characters, and don't count the PC as a vote the other characters have to win.

VOTERS AND THEIR ATTITUDES

To randomly determine an attitude for each voter NPC, roll 1d8 or choose an attitude from the ones listed on the following table. When dealing with well-established and familiar NPCs, you should choose the attitude based on the NPC's previous interactions with the player characters.

1d8	Attitude	Shift Resistance Modifier
1	Reactionary	+6 pro change, +0 pro status quo
2 – 3	Conservative	+4 pro change, –2 pro quo
4 – 5	Moderate	+0
6 – 7	Progressive	–2 pro change, +4 pro status quo
8	Revolutionary	+0 pro change, +6 pro status quo

After determining the attitude of each voter, rank them in order from Reactionary to Revolutionary and choose which voters oppose the player characters. If the player characters' position involves changing the status quo, then the voters opposed to the PCs are the ones on the Reactionary end of the scale. If the player characters' goal involves preventing change to the status quo, then the voters opposed to the PCs are on the Revolutionary end of the scale.

If you want a Revolutionary or Progressive to oppose the PCs' attempt to change the status quo — perhaps because that voter is a personal enemy or rival of a PC — go right ahead. As long as the number of voters opposed to the PCs remains the same, it doesn't matter which voters are chosen to oppose the PCs. Note that it's much easier for the PCs to win over like-minded voters than voters on the other end of the political scale.

Voter Shift Resistances

Attitude is only the first important factor in a voter's decision. The second factor is Shift Resistance, or how hard that voter is to influence politically.

If the voter has a character sheet, that voter's Shift Resistance equals her Will save modifier + 10 + the Shift Resistance modifier from the attitude table above. If the voter does not have a character sheet, determine the voter's Shift Resistance with the table below.

Pay attention to the average level of the PCs while setting the experience levels of the voters. Low-level voters aren't much of a challenge to high-level PCs, and high-level voters are hard for low-level PCs to sway. Either result can be fun and appropriate for the game, but neither situation should be entered into lightly.

To use this table, choose an experience level for the voter. Then roll the indicated dice and add the Shift Resistance modifier from the attitude table above to calculate that voter's Shift Resistance.

Voter	Example	Typical Levels	Roll
Novice	Villager	1st – 5th Level	1d4+13
Average	Townsman	5th – 10th Level	1d6+16
Expert	City Leader	11th – 15th Level	1d6+22
Master	National Leader	16th – 20th Level	1d8+28

Leverage Points

The leverage point indicates the idea or promise that is most likely to change a particular voter's opinion in favor of the player characters. This is secret at first, but if the characters can figure out the leverage point (or guess it correctly) they may gain a substantial edge in gaining that character's vote.

Determine a leverage point for each voter NPC by rolling 1d12 or choosing an attitude from the ones listed on the following table. When dealing with well-established and familiar NPCs, choose the leverage point based on the NPC's previous interactions with the player characters.

1d12	Leverage Point	Game Effect
1 – 3	Ambition	+2 bonus to influence attempts that promise political gain to the voter
4 – 6	Constituency	+2 bonus to influence attempts to promise benefits for the people the voter represents or takes care of
7 – 9	None	No bonus
10	Greed	+4 bonus to influence attempts that promise monetary gain to the voter
11	Hate	+4 bonus to influence attempts that promise harm to the specific thing (GM chooses) the voter hates
12	Idealism	+2 bonus to influence attempts that show how supporting the player's position promotes the common good.

Winning Votes

After the voters have been detailed, the player characters may try to gain votes with a series of influence attempts. Depending on the situation, each attempt may take minutes, hours, days, or weeks. No matter how long each individual attempt is, the characters have only a few opportunities to swing the vote their way. To determine the number of attempts the PCs may make to influence the voters, the GM rolls 1d4 and adds the number of voters that the characters must influence.

Each attempt to influence a voter can be roleplayed in detail or resolved with a skill check. A detailed influence attempt can include deal-making, bribes, threats, magic, or any other means of influence the players can imagine. A single influence attempt can easily become a complete adventure.

If the attempt is not played out in detail, one player character must make a skill check. (Each tactic discussed below includes some suggestions for the most appropriate skill to use.) The DC of the skill check is equal to the Shift Resistance of the voter. If the PC succeeds, that

voter joins that PC's side and votes according to the character's wishes. If the PC fails, the voter is unaffected.

Other characters may interfere with the PC's attempt to influence the voter, however. Any character who interferes also makes a skill check. (Appropriate skills are also suggested below.) The PC making the skill check to influence the voter must beat any interfering skill checks as well as the Shift Resistance of the voter.

Example: Tarlan the Elder has a Shift Resistance of 27. Morag Swift-Tongue proposes a lucrative deal to Tarlan and gets a 29 on his Diplomacy check. Tarlan decides to vote for Morag's proposal to outlaw gnomes.

Morag then goes to secure the vote of Delbar Covet-Gold, who also has a Shift Resistance of 27. Morag appeals to Delbar's well-known love of gold — getting a +2 bonus to his skill check in the process from Delbar's leverage point of "greedy" — and gets a 28 on his Diplomacy check.

During the negotiations, however, Delbar is cornered by Morag's political rival, Valdor the Easily Angered. Valdor threatens Delbar and gets a 30 on his Intimidation roll. Morag has beaten Delbar's Shift Resistance but not Valdor's Intimidation check, so Delbar decides the safest course of action is to turn down Morag's offer and vote against the new law.

After the PCs have made all their attempts, count the votes in their favor. If enough voters have changed sides, they win!

Awarding Experience

The GM should reward successful influence attempts with experience points. The experience points for any individual voter who is a full-fledged NPC — in other words, a regular character in the campaign who has a detailed set of game statistics — is figured according to that character's challenge rating.

Individual voters who are not full-fledged non-player characters do not count for a reward. However, the player characters do receive an experience reward if they win the vote. The EL of the reward is equal to the average level of the party. If the PCs had to influence more than four individual voters, including full-fledged NPCs, the reward is doubled.

TACTICS

A variety of tactics that players can use to influence voters are listed below.

Negotiation

The most basic technique for influencing a voter is to talk the issues out and find common ground. The player characters may be able to change a voter's mind by offering political concessions, personal rewards, or a sympathetic ear.

If the voter is a regular character in the campaign, the PCs may already know what that character's goals are. If not, they can find out by researching the voter's attitude and leverage point. Most voters value their power, and do not sell it cheaply, so the PCs must be ready to make major concessions if they follow the route of negotiation. If the characters' offer doesn't make them hesitate, they're probably not offering enough.

Sometimes getting access to the voter is more difficult than winning an agreement. To get an opportunity to talk, the PCs may have to crash parties and meetings, bribe secretaries, sneak past guards, or even kidnap the voter. Overcoming obstacles like these can inspire many adventures.

Most negotiations use the Diplomacy skill. Each major concession the PCs make to the voter gives them a +2 bonus on the skill check. The leverage point is a particular example of this kind of concession.

Deception

Not all negotiations are in good faith. Political figures sometimes make promises they never intend to keep, but it's a dangerous practice. Most people in positions of power have long memories. They don't forgive trickery lightly, and they tell their allies about it.

Spreading disinformation that indirectly influences a voter is a more effective tactic. An ambitious councilman who thinks he's the mayor's handpicked successor might be quick to support a policy he thinks the mayor supports. The mayor may hate the councilman, the policy, or both, but supporters of the policy can profit from helping the councilman fool himself.

Deception attempts use the Bluff skill, but deceiving an experienced political character is difficult. The target voter's Shift Resistance is increased by +4 if the PCs use false promises or insincere negotiations.

Threats

Threats may be spectacularly successful, or they may lead to disaster. You can get a political figure to do almost anything if you find out what she cares about and prove that you can destroy it or take it away from her.

Slip up once, though, and you've got an angry and powerful opponent on your hands.

To make a credible threat against a voter, the PCs must first find out what that voter values most. This is usually family, wealth, position, or a prized possession. The player characters must then prove that what the voter values is vulnerable, without exposing his plans to other voters or the law. Any failure can lead to vicious reprisals.

Threat attempts use the Intimidation skill. The player characters must know what the target values and prove that it is vulnerable; if they cannot, the target voter's Shift Resistance is increased by +4. If the PCs fail at the skill check, they suffer a –4 penalty to all future attempts to influence this voter.

Gathering Information

Sometimes the PCs know a lot about the voters they're trying to influence. When they don't, however, they need to do research.

There are a many ways for player characters to learn more about the political landscape. Mentors and retired political figures can provide valuable insights and introductions. Secretaries and other underlings usually pay close attention to what their betters are doing, and even the man on the street can sometimes supply useful observations.

Gathering information counts as an influence attempt. Learning basic facts like which voters support a particular issue does not require a skill check, though. Learning the attitude and leverage point of a particular voter requires a Gather Information skill check (DC 15). The PCs can gain information on more than one voter at once; each additional voter raises the DC of the skill check by +3.

The PCs can also gain specialized information about a voter, such as the ally most likely to influence her. This also raises the DC of the skill check by +3.

Enlisting Allies

Sometimes the best thing you can do for your case is to ask somebody else to make it. This can be a powerful ally of the PCs or a trusted friend of the voter. Senior advisors, sympathetic nobles, religious leaders, and idealistic clerks are all possibilities. Whoever the ally is, he is presumably easier to convince of the rightness of the PCs' case than the voter herself is.

The characters must have a specific ally in mind to attempt this tactic. The GM must decide if the ally has enough of a connection with the voter to influence her; if not, the PCs may want to gather information and find a more suitable ally.

The action of enlisting an ally could involve one of several skills — Diplomacy, Intimidate, or Bluff are all possibilities — but may also be roleplayed as an interaction with the ally character. If the characters enlist an ally with a reasonable chance of influencing the targeted voter, they receive a +4 bonus to their skill check for a later influence attempt. However, enlisting an ally uses up two influence attempts instead of one.

Enlisting Public Support

The masses can be a powerful ally. Even dictators must pay attention to public opinion, and many politicians depend on the support of the people. If the PCs can get the masses on their side, winning support among the decision-makers becomes much easier.

Winning over public opinion takes time and planning. It usually takes days or weeks to build support through speeches and meetings, so there are many votes where this tactic is useless. This tactic is often played out as a complete adventure or a political debate.

Enlisting public support counts as an influence attempt. Each player character may make a Perform (oratory) check (DC 12). The PCs receive a +1 bonus on their next two influence attempts for each character who succeeds.

FACTION VOTING

The voting system above works well when influencing a few individuals, but it breaks down when dealing with a large assembly like a Roman Senate or a Viking Thing. Trying to build a winning majority one person at a time would take much too long to be fun in these cases.

Fortunately, most political assemblies splinter into several large factions. Convert a few people in one faction to your side, and the rest will follow. These faction voting rules deal with this kind of situation.

As with the individual voting rules, the first step is to introduce the political layout. Figure out how many factions are in play, and what their relationships to the player characters are. Again, the first assumption to make is that the characters will lose the vote unless they take steps to win it.

Most political assemblies have 100 to 150 members. Larger assemblies are not uncommon, especially in empires, but they're awkward and involve many subcommittees. The exact size of the assembly is less important than the number and size of the factions within it.

As with individual votes, most assemblies consider more than 50 percent of the voters to be a winning majority. However, some assemblies require a supermajority

(more than 66 percent of the voters) to make important decisions. Votes requiring the unanimous consent of the assembly are rare except in ceremonial situations.

Winning a supermajority is more difficult in faction voting than it is in individual voting, and winning a unanimous vote is almost impossible. On the other hand, defeating a vote that requires unanimity or a supermajority is easy. Keep this in mind when designing voting situations and figuring experience.

Generating Political Factions

Roll 1d6+1 to determine the number of political factions involved in the vote. Then consult the table below to determine how big each faction is, expressed as a percentage of the total assembly. Multiply the number of voters in the assembly by the percentage generated to determine how many votes each faction has. "Remainder" equals the percentage of the available vote that is left over after all the other factions are accounted for. "DC to influence" is the Difficulty Class of whatever skill checks need to be made to win that faction's favor.

If the PCs are established political figures, it's possible that they control one or more of the factions generated by this table. If so, decide which faction(s) the characters control. This faction automatically votes in the characters' favor — the other factions must be convinced to do so.

After the factions are established, create a leader for each faction. As with the individual voting above, this leader can be either an established non-player character or a voter generated with the individual voter rules above. This provides the players with a couple of avenues to approach each faction. They can try to influence the faction as a whole or use individual lobbying to win the support of its leader.

Winning Votes

The faction voting rules use the same situations and tactics as the individual voting rules, especially if the player characters choose to influence individual leaders instead of trying to sway the faction as a whole. The characters still negotiate, threaten, gather information, and enlist allies or public support. The difference is that they have fewer chances to succeed and a smaller margin of error.

The player characters are allowed a number of influence attempts equal to the number of factions (including their own, if they lead one) plus 1. For example, if the vote is split into 3 factions, the PCs get 4 influence attempts. Some tactics use up more than one influence attempt; see below.

If the player characters choose to influence the faction leaders, they use the same tactics and rules as detailed above in individual voting. If they win over a leader, they gain the votes of that leader's entire faction.

Weak or sympathetic leaders can be won over more quickly and easily than large factions. Large factions are easier to sway than an experienced or strongly unsympathetic leaders — but swaying factions always takes more time, which makes a failure that much more damaging. The player characters must choose their battles carefully if they wish to succeed.

Most of the rules in the individual voting section above still apply to influencing entire factions, as well; the PCs can use the same tactics. What's different is that any tactic used to influence an entire faction uses up two influence attempts. The characters must choose whether they are trying to influence a leader or an entire faction when they announce the attempt.

🌀 POLITICAL FACTIONS TABLE

Number of Factions	% of the available vote (DC to influence)						
	1st Faction	2nd Faction	3rd Faction	4th Faction	5th Faction	6th Faction	7th Faction
2	30+3d10 (35)	Remainder (30)	—	—	—	—	—
3	30+2d10 (30)	20+2d10 (30)	Remainder (25)	—	—	—	—
4	25+2d10 (30)	15+1d10 (30)	15+1d10 (25)	Remainder (25)	—	—	—
5	20+2d10 (30)	10+1d10 (25)	10+1d10 (25)	1d10 (20)	Remainder (20)	—	—
6	20+1d10 (30)	10+1d10 (25)	5+1d10 (25)	5+1d10 (20)	1d10 (15)	Remainder (20)	—
7	20+1d10 (30)	5+1d10 (25)	5+1d10 (25)	1d10 (20)	1d10 (20)	1d10 (15)	Remainder (20)

Once the player characters have used up all their influence attempts, count the votes of the factions that have been successfully influenced. If the PCs have enough votes on their side to win, they succeed!

Awarding Experience

After a faction vote, the players receive experience points for influencing full-fledged NPCs as detailed in the individual voting section above. They do not receive experience points for influencing voters that are not full-fledged NPCs or for influencing factions as a whole, but they receive experience points if they win the vote.

To figure the encounter level for winning a faction vote, start with the party's average level plus 1 and add or subtract the following modifiers (all of which stack). The result is the encounter level of winning the faction vote.

Modifier	Situation
+1	Influenced more than four factions or individual leaders (including full-fledged NPCs)
+1	Won a vote by gaining a supermajority of 66% or more of the vote, whether it was required or not

+1	Won a vote unanimously, whether it was required or not
–1	Won a vote by being on the "no" side and preventing a supermajority of 66% of the vote
–3	Won a vote by being on the "no" side and preventing a vote from being unanimous

ELECTIONS

Winning an election is different from winning an ordinary vote. Instead of trying to influence a few distinct factions, you are trying to convince many individuals that you would represent them well. The voters may share basic beliefs or political affiliations with each other, but they will ultimately vote for their individual preferences.

These election rules are about day-to-day campaigning, not a few crucial events. They reward steady effort, endurance, and the occasional big success.

Unlike individual and faction voting, the PCs are not the only important factor in resolving the election. Each candidate's progress must be tracked, and the race goes to the candidate who is in the lead when the election ends.

Elections provide a lot of adventure opportunities. You can use the election as a hook for adventures in which the PCs try to fulfill obscure legal requirements or win support for their side. The details can take weeks to play through, but most elections can also be concluded in about an hour of abstract conflict.

Preparing for the Election

The first step in running an election is to decide how long the election campaign is. This can be from a few days to a couple of years, but the most convenient period for role-playing games is about 30 days. The GM sets the election period.

Next, the GM determines the starting vote score for each candidate in the election. This score is equal to the character's Diplomacy skill bonus plus his total character level. NPC candidates who do not regularly appear in the campaign do not have to be fleshed out in detail, but

the GM should decide what each NPC's character level and Diplomacy score are.

Winning Votes

There are two approaches to winning an election: public appearances and private meetings with influential leaders. How often the characters pursue each option depends on how democratic the society is and how large the election will be. A general election in a democracy involves many public appearances and a few private deals, while choosing the chairman of a legislative assembly may depend almost entirely on back-room deals.

Public appearances are like influencing factions in the faction voting system, while private meetings are like gaining votes in the individual voting system. What's different is that the election system tracks each character's overall progress instead of trying to keep track of many shifting allegiances.

Public Appearances

Once per day of game time, each candidate may make a roll to increase his vote score by making public appearances. The character must encounter at least 50 character levels worth of potential supporters that day in order to earn a roll. This could be five 10th-level characters, fifty 1st-level characters, or any other combination of characters whose levels add up to 50 or more.

The candidate may meet potential supporters at a rally, a series of meetings, or just walking down the street pressing the flesh. (Any or all of these activities can be the beginning of a detailed adventure, of course.) Depending on whom the candidate meets and under what circumstances, decide how friendly the audience is and what skill the character uses most to win support.

The character may use Bluff, Diplomacy, or Perform (oratory), to influence his potential supporters. They may be classified as Hostile, Unfriendly, Indifferent, Friendly, and Helpful. Once the relevant skill and attitude have been determined, the character makes a skill check on the table below. This table is intended for PC candidates. You may use it for NPC candidates as well, or you may simply roll 1d4–1 for each candidate on each day spent campaigning. The result is added to the NPC's vote score.

Attitude	DC	Result
Hostile	35	+1d4+2 vote score, –2 vote score of an opponent of the character's choice
Unfriendly	30	+1d4+2 vote score, –1 vote score of an opponent of the character's choice
Indifferent	25	+1d4+2 vote score
Friendly	20	+1d4 vote score
Helpful	15	+1 vote score

Other modifiers may also apply to the DC of the public appearances skill check, as described in the following table.

Situation	Skill Check Modifier
Character campaigns more than 5 days in a row	–1 each consecutive day of campaigning* thereafter
Character makes a campaign promise that pleases his potential supporters	+2 circumstance bonus
Character supported by a political party or endorsed by a respected political figure	+2 circumstance bonus
Character is incumbent campaigning for reelection to the same post	+2 circumstance bonus

* This penalty can be avoided by making a Constitution check (DC 10 + the total number of consecutive days spent campaigning), and ended by taking a full day to rest.

Private Meetings

Instead of taking her chances with the public, a candidate may build up her vote score by meeting privately with an influential leader. This meeting replaces the daily public appearances roll described above with a skill check to overcome the Shift Resistance of a powerful non-player character. The NPC must be in a position to influence other voters — senior politicians, guild-masters, crime lords, and religious leaders are all typical possibilities. Wealthy supporters are also likely in elections where money is an important resource.

When choosing the private meeting approach, the candidate agrees to risk between 1 and 3 points of her vote score. The character also announces which leader she wishes to approach for support.

Figure the target leader's attitude, Shift Resistance, and leverage point using the tables below. (The attitude and Shift Resistance tables are similar to those of the individual voting systems, but there are minor differences.)

Once the target leader's statistics have been set, the candidate chooses an approach based on the tactics described in the individual vote system. If the candidate succeeds at her influence roll, she adds double the points she risked to her vote score. If she fails, she loses the vote points that she risked.

Determine an attitude for the target leader NPC randomly by rolling 1d8, or choose an attitude from the ones listed on this table. When dealing with well-established and familiar NPCs, choose an attitude based on the NPC's previous interactions with the player characters.

1d8	Attitude	Shift Resistance Modifier
1	Hostile	+5
2 – 3	Unfriendly	+3
4 – 5	Indifferent	+0
6 – 7	Friendly	–3
8	Helpful	–5

If the target is a regular NPC, his Shift Resistance equals his Will save modifier + 10 + the attitude modifier determined above. If the target is not a regular NPC, set his Shift Resistance based on the vote score points that the candidate has risked; roll on the table below and add the attitude modifier determined above.

Vote Points Risked	Roll
1 point	1d4+12
2 points	1d6+15
3 points	1d8+20

Determine a leverage point for the target. You may either roll randomly or choose an attitude from the ones listed on table below. When dealing with well-established and familiar NPCs, choose the attitude based on the NPC's previous interactions with the player characters.

(This is the same table as the individual voter system, reprinted here for convenience.)

1d12	Leverage Point	Game Effect
1 – 3	Ambition	+2 bonus to influence attempts that promise political gain to the voter
4 – 6	Constituency	+2 bonus to influence attempts to promise benefits for the people the voter represents or takes care of
7 – 9	None	No bonus
10	Greed	+4 bonus to influence attempts that promise monetary gain to the voter
11	Hate	+4 bonus to influence attempts that promise harm to the specific thing (GM chooses) the voter hates
12	Idealism	+2 bonus to influence attempts that show how supporting the player's posi tion promotes the common good.

Scoring the Election

Keep the vote scores secret during the campaign, though a candidate can find out how well she is doing with a standard Gather Information check (DC 15). If the check is successful, the character learns what positions the candidates are in and roughly how big a gap in vote scores there is between each candidate. If the check fails, the GM supplies false information.

Compare the vote scores on the last day of the campaign. The candidate with the highest score wins the election!

Awarding Experience

If a player character wins the election, the PCs receive experience for each non-player character involved in the election as a candidate. The experience is figured based on the NPCs' challenge ratings. This award does not preclude experience awards for winning political debates or facing other challenges.

If all the candidates in the election are PCs, the players receive an experience award based on the average level of the party.

ADVENTURES IN POLITICS

Good political adventures challenge players and their characters. Sometimes the challenge is life and death, just as is fighting a dragon or evading a lethal trap. More often, the challenge is to the characters' goals or beliefs. Designing these challenges isn't difficult, but it does take some planning.

If you're a GM, this chapter shows you how to develop an adventure from an initial idea to a detailed string of encounters. Most of the advice is useful for any kind of adventure, but it's essential for balancing the interpersonal conflicts that drive political games. If you're a player, this chapter will show you the structure of an adventure so you can better recognize the hints the GM drops.

STARTING POINTS

Building political adventures means starting with one core idea and then adding layers of complication and detail to it. Let's start by looking at some of the sources for an adventure idea.

ADVANCING A CAMPAIGN

Chapter Seven talks about building campaigns. As discussed there, most campaigns have an overarching storyline in which the PCs either gain power or prevent a villain from doing some kind of harm. If you've already got a plot for the campaign, many adventures can start with the question, "What happens next?"

In a power-driven campaign, the player characters are trying to fulfill ambitions. They plan to reach a position of influence, and each step of that plan can inspire an adventure. The same is true in reverse for action-oriented campaigns, where the villains have a plan that the player characters are trying to stop. The plans are often very similar in both campaigns — what's different is the side the PCs are on.

To figure out what happens next in the player characters' or villains' plans, ask yourself the questions below. The answers should suggest deeds that need to be accomplished if the plan that drives the campaign is to succeed. Pick out an interesting and plausible response to use as the inspiration for the current adventure, and save the rest for later plots.

Questions to Ask

- What formalities or rituals need to be honored for the plan to succeed?

- What resources have to be acquired? Money? Magic? Secrets? Allies? What must be done to get these resources?

- Whose consent or blessing is needed for the plan to succeed? What must be done to obtain it?

- Who can interfere with the plan? What can be done to prevent that interference?

- What are possible complications? What must be done to prevent these complications or make them go away?

- What loose ends are left over from previous adventures? How can the loose ends harm the plan, and what can be done to tie them up?

ENCOURAGING AN ACTIVITY

Another good beginning point is to design an adventure around an activity the players would enjoy. Activity ideas should be broad enough for the entire party — it's no fun sitting on your hands for a session because there's nothing for your character to do.

After choosing an activity for the player characters, put that activity into context. Why are the characters performing this activity? What will they gain from succeeding at it? What will they lose if they fail? Who might help them? Who wants to stop them?

Sample Activities

- Debating a rival

- Fighting in a duel

- Delivering valuable documents

- Exploring the capital of a mysterious new race

- Finding lost things or people

- Guarding a dignitary

- Infiltrating a conspiracy

- Negotiating a treaty

- Organizing a rally

- Participating in a tournament

- Preparing for and fighting a war

- Preventing an assassination

- Rescuing a political figure from a dungeon

- Quelling a rebellion

- Rigging an election

- Solving a mystery

- Spying on an enemy

- Stealing a secret document

- Tricking a rival

USING A SKILL GROUP

Another way to generate ideas is to look at which skills the characters favor. Which skills are used the most? Which are neglected?

Most skills fall into one of five skill groups. Consider each group in turn, and decide if that skill group should be emphasized or de-emphasized in the course of the adventure.

Interpersonal Skills

Political adventures feature lots of talking, so interpersonal skills are usually the most important skill group. That works fine most of the time, but most political games also benefit from the occasional all-action adventure.

Adventure activities that use lots of interpersonal skills include negotiating deals and treaties, buying and selling goods, political debates, election campaigns, and infiltrating restricted areas or organizations. Exploring sometimes uses interpersonal skills. Physical combat, treasure hunting, and solving puzzles rarely use interpersonal skills.

The most important interpersonal skills are Bluff, Diplomacy, Gather Information, Intimidate, Perform, and Sense Motive.

Combat Skills

How much combat your campaign has depends on the style of your players and the setting of the game. Revolutionaries and anarchists, and barbarian warriors see plenty of action, but nobles in a peaceful kingdom may never fight outside of the occasional tournament.

Adventure activities that use a lot of combat skills include dungeon crawls, tournaments, assassination attempts, wars, and duels. Infiltrating restricted areas or delivering important items sometimes involves combat, but combat can often be avoided. Negotiating deals, solving puzzles, and tricking rivals rarely involve combat.

Most combat "skills" aren't skills. Combat-oriented characters emphasize attack bonuses, combat feats, Initiative, and hit points.

Sneaking Skills

Many political adventures have a little sneaking, but it usually isn't the main activity. Most parties have one or two specialists who do that work for the group, so the best way to vary this situation is to create adventures where most of the party has to move quietly.

Sneaking situations usually come up when the player characters need an edge. Knowledge of the other side's plans can be useful for all sorts of things, from negotiating deals to freeing a political prisoner.

The most important sneaking skills are Disable Device, Disguise, Escape Artist, Hide, and Move Silently.

Thinking Skills

Political adventures are more about people than puzzles, so thinking skills are usually the least important skill group. However, the occasional adventure built around solving a mystery can be an excellent change of pace.

Murders, kidnappings, and other unexplained disappearances are all good mysteries, as is figuring out how an unusual magical item or artifact works. Infiltration adventures often involve problem-solving, and unearthing the right fact can provide a useful bonus during a political debate. Thinking skills are rarely used in combat adventures, election campaigns, and diplomatic negotiations.

The most important thinking skills are Appraise, Gather Information, Knowledge (especially specialties like law, geography, or the nobility), Spot, and Search.

Magic

Magic is rarely the focus of a political adventure, but it's almost always useful. Adventures that focus on magic usually involve a particular spell or magic item that presents a problem for the PCs. Magic is also useful in combat, infiltration situations, and negotiations. (This last requires care and subtlety, since most negotiators object to being magically influenced. Using covert magic effectively makes a great challenge.)

It's usually a bad idea to force players to solve a problem with a particular spell — the adventure will stall if they don't think of the solution, and playing through the solution itself is likely to be dull. Most adventures run much better if magic is simply one of many possible responses to a challenge.

Eliminating magic from an adventure is usually a bad idea. Spellcasters invest a lot of time and effort into their abilities, and their players do not take well to having that effort wasted. On the other hand, making a favorite spell useless (usually by some sort of countermagic) often leads to creative uses of other spells.

Spells and magical feats are the most important abilities for a spellcasting character. Important magic skills include Alchemy, Knowledge (arcana), Scry, and Spellcraft.

TURNING AN IDEA INTO A PREMISE

Once you have an idea you like, the next step is to turn it into a premise. A premise is a single sentence that tells what happens during the adventure and shows how the player characters are involved in that event.

There are two ways to phrase a premise:

Phrasing 1: The PCs can [DO THIS] to [GAIN THIS BENEFIT].

This kind of premise is most common in power campaigns. It provides an opportunity for the player characters to advance towards their goal. Examples include:

- The PCs can explore a local dungeon to find treasure.

- The PCs can lead a raid on a rival tribe to win respect from their fellow barbarians.

- The PCs can challenge Representative Kwann to a debate to win support for their proposal to increase spending on the army.

- The PCs can speak to the local potters' guild to gain votes in next week's election.

- The PCs can go undercover as street beggars to meet an underworld figure with important information.

Phrasing 2: [THIS HAPPENS]; the PCs must [DO THIS] or [THAT HAPPENS].

This kind of premise is most common in action campaigns. It describes an adventure in which the PCs become aware of a situation and must respond to it. THIS HAPPENS is an event that will affect the PCs in some way. THAT HAPPENS is a consequence of THIS HAPPENS; it's an (often unpleasant) event that would happen if the PCs didn't exist or didn't do anything. DO THIS is an action the PCs should take to prevent THAT HAPPENS.

Examples of the premise include:

- Orcs overrun the countryside; the PCs must find their lair and destroy it before they cause more damage.

- Sneaky gnomes stuff the ballot boxes at a dwarvish election; the PCs must prevent their dirty work from electing a corrupt candidate.

- Drow agents stir up the population; the PCs must find them and end their influence or anti-government conspiracies will form.

- A shapeshifted dragon presents herself at court and flatters the king; the PCs must expose her plans before she makes him her puppet.

Once you have a premise, you can begin to fill in the details.

THESIS, ANTITHESIS, AND SYNTHESIS

To add detail to a premise, break it down into three major parts: thesis, antithesis, and synthesis. These concepts are the backbone of most stories; they give the players somewhere to start, somewhere to end, and something to do along the way. When you describe the adventure as three connected situations, you turn the premise into a plot.

THESIS

The thesis is the adventure as the players first understand it. It's usually similar to the premise, because it is what the story seems to be about. The player characters may have to complete a task, investigate a problem, or defeat a foe. Whatever it is the PCs have to do, the job seems to be straightforward. The surprises come later.

Let's take some of the premise ideas from the last section, give them titles so we can keep them straight, and then develop a thesis for each premise. In each premise, we're trying to describe the first important situation of the adventure and show how it connects to the player characters.

"Stop Those Gnomes!"

Gnomes have been hired to create mechanical tabulators for the first election of a dwarvish democracy. The PCs are asked to guard the central tabulator and prevent interference with the vote.

"Secret Agent Drow"

Drow have been reported lurking near a series of public disturbances. The PCs must expose them and stop their activities.

"The Smiling Dragon"

The king is infatuated with a lady in the royal court. The PCs must figure out what her hold is upon him — Beauty? Wit? Magic? — and break it.

"Dangerous Allies"

One of the PCs is running for election, and must speak to the potters' guild to gain its endorsement.

"Buddy Can You Spare Some Info?"

The PCs must pose as beggars to locate "the king of the beggars," a halfling named Anton who has vital information for them.

ANTITHESIS

The antithesis is an unexpected complication, a plot twist, a surprise that forces the players to think and change their original plans.

An antithesis doesn't so much block the players' original plans as make them unattractive. The characters may be able to fight their way past a powerful golem guard, but why risk lives when there might be a better way? A good antithesis rewards developing a new approach instead of forcing players into a particular set of actions.

Here are some antitheses for our premises. In each case, we're looking for an event or piece of information that changes the situation the characters are in.

"Stop Those Gnomes!"

While guarding the tabulator, the PCs learn that the gnomes have programmed a fake result that will elect a corrupt candidate. If the PCs let this happen, it could

ruin the dwarves' fledgling democracy — but so could the scandal from exposing the gnomes!

"Secret Agent Drow"

After tracking down the drow, the PCs discover that the drow agents were hired by the same senator who hired the PCs! Did he set up the drow? The PCs? Both? Why?

"The Smiling Dragon"

The PCs learn that the lady is both a dragon and a distant ancestor of the king. She is not evil and has only his best interests at heart, but her dragonish ideals could ruin the kingdom. How do you oppose a powerful being that's only trying to help?

"Dangerous Allies"

While meeting with the potters' guild, the PCs make a frightening discovery — it's actually a front for a secret guild of assassins!

"Buddy Can You Spare Some Info?"

Anton has been abducted by decadent young nobles looking for violent thrills. The PCs have only a couple of hours to save him — but they are unarmored, lightly armed, and will get no help from the authorities.

SYNTHESIS

The synthesis reconciles thesis and antithesis to resolve the plot. The players must adjust to the curveball the antithesis throws at them, and they must still accomplish their characters' original objective as stated in the thesis.

The synthesis is never fixed, because it's in the hands of the players. (That's part of the fun.) However, a skillful GM can plan a satisfying ending to the adventure and plant clues that encourage the players to choose it.

Here's a likely synthesis for each of our premises:

"Stop Those Gnomes!"

After interrogating the gnomes' head programmer, the PCs can reprogram the tabulator so that it spits out accurate results. (The PCs can also rig it to support a candidate of their own choosing.) To do this, they must make a perilous journey through the building-size works of the machine, dodging its inner guardians and risking life and limb to change the gear settings that control its calculations.

"Secret Agent Drow"

The senator plans to use the unrest caused by the drow to increase his influence over national security while using the PCs to eliminate the drow agents. The dark elves are annoyed by the senator's duplicity, but causing civil disturbances fits their own agenda, so they'd prefer to eliminate the PCs and exact revenge on the senator later. The PCs can save themselves by convincing some of the drow to change their minds.

"The Smiling Dragon"

If the PCs kidnap the king, they can deprogram him away from the dragon's influence. Given time, the king will realize that thinking like a dragon will only hurt his realm — but the PCs don't have much time. The dragon will be searching for them, and an angry dragon is no laughing matter.

"Dangerous Allies"

The PCs know that most of the "potters" are assassins. The assassins know that the player characters know, and they've got the party outnumbered ten to one. On the other hand, the PCs are public figures and their disappearance would lead to difficult questions. The PCs and the assassins can negotiate a deal that both sides can live with — and then deal with whomever can't live with the deal.

"Buddy Can You Spare Some Info?"

By calling in the help of some newfound friends from the streets, the PCs can arrange a beggar's brigade to invade a dockside warehouse and free Anton from the torments of the nobles.

FLESHING IT OUT

One you have the basics worked out, it's time to add the details that will engage your players and make your adventure memorable.

THE TEASER

The thesis, antithesis, and synthesis are the beginning, middle, and end of the story. However, you can't just dump the PCs into the plot and expect them to take off running. You must engage their interest and give them time to settle in before they face the challenges of the adventure. You need a teaser to get things started.

The teaser is the beginning of the beginning. It sets up the plot and introduces the players to the thesis. The teaser doesn't tell the players what to do — that's the next step in the adventure — but it provides the first clues about what's happening and encourages the players to find out more.

A teaser usually involves a minor challenge to the player characters. This encounter should have a challenge rating no higher than the level of the PCs.

Sometimes impressing another character is important to the outcome of the teaser and the development of the plot. In these situations, it's usually a good idea to set the challenge rating of the teaser encounter at a level or two below that of the player characters. This makes it likely that the PCs will excel, giving the observer a reason to offer them a job, trust them, or take whatever other action will advance the plot.

Not all teasers have to be easy, though. If the plot depends upon the PCs suffering a defeat, than they should face a challenge at least six levels above their own. Most players don't give up easily, so the encounter should depend on skill use and non-violent confrontations instead of combat encounters that might leave the party unexpectedly dead.

Teasers are frequently unusual events. The PCs may smell something strange, notice that a local fishmonger is unusually late for work, or find a dead body. Anything is possible, as long as the unusual event provides a way to learn more. The PCs should be able to follow the smell to its origin, learn the fishmonger's home address, or find a signet ring on the body. Always present a clue for the characters to investigate.

Many GMs require a Gather Information, Spot, or Search check while gathering clues. At this point in the adventure the DC of such a check should be low — DC 10 is about right. Finding clues should be easy; figuring out what they mean is the part that should tax your players' brains.

Here are a few teasers for the premises under development. Each one is intended to introduce the situation and encourage the player characters to learn more.

"Stop Those Gnomes!"

A clockwork "cog-popper" escapes from the gnomish tabulator and roams the city making dangerous adjustments to the ventilation and water systems. The PCs deal with the runaway device and catch the attention of the gnomes, who ask for a meeting.

"Secret Agent Drow"

A senator asks to meet with the PCs, but on the way to her office the characters are nearly run down by a fleeing crowd. The city guard has just quelled a riot, and the PCs must sneak or talk their way past a police cordon.

"The Smiling Dragon"

The player characters attend a grand ball. Five minutes before midnight, a beautiful woman descends the grand staircase and sweeps the king into a romantic dance. (The queen is livid.) As the stranger passes the player characters, the spellcasters in the party detect charms and shapeshifting magic around her.

"Dangerous Allies"

A leader of the potters' guild meets the PCs at a political event. He's interested in how their candidate's positions will affect his guild's interests, and invites them to speak to the guild members. Just as he's taking his leave, a deranged attendee rushes the candidate. The disturbance is easily handled, but sharp-eyed PCs notice that the potter reacted with unusual speed and swiftness.

"Buddy Can You Spare Some Info?"

The PCs need information, and a halfling beggar named Anton has it. Finding Anton proves difficult, though. The beggars are subdued — almost fearful — and nobody's talking. Polite attempts to gather information are fruitless, and aggression or intimidation causes the beggars to flee screaming.

THE PITCH

The teaser intrigues the players; the pitch invites them into the plot. You offer a direction for the story, and the players decide if they want to follow it.

The pitch is tricky, because it hands control of the adventure over to the players. By giving them the opportunity to choose whether or not they want to follow the storyline, you encourage them to make a commitment to the story. If they choose to go on, then they are pushing themselves rather than being dragged by you, and that makes the adventure much more enjoyable.

For a pitch to work, however, it must present the players with a real choice — and that means the players must be able to say "no, thanks." That outcome should be rare, not least because it's a little rude for your players to reject an adventure that you've spent a lot of time and effort on. However, it's your job to "sell" the adventure to the players.

On those rare occasions when the players do reject the pitch, it's a good idea to have a backup adventure handy. If it doesn't matter what happens next, this can be a simple dungeon crawl or unrelated adventure. (Atlas Games' *En Route* collection has lots of adventure ideas and spur-of-the-moment encounters suited for this.) If the tension is high and every moment of game time counts, you should figure out what happens as a result of the PCs refusing to get involved in the story, then move on to the next adventure.

Sometimes the players do follow the plot suggested by the game moderator, but tackle the adventure in an unexpected way. That's not a problem as long as you alter the adventure's encounters to fit their approach. It's better to save an encounter for another day than have it fall flat because the players feel they've been forced into it.

Covering the Bases

The pitch should give the players everything they need to tackle the plot. Usually this is information — they need to know what's happening and what they're expected to do about it. That information isn't always available at this point in an adventure, but the players should know what they don't know and how to start looking for it.

Many pitches take the form of a mission briefing or a meeting with an important NPC. This is a good way to feed information to the players, but it's easy to fall into a rut. Remember to keep the pace snappy and to filter the information presented through the NPC's viewpoint.

You should also look for other ways of presenting the pitch to the players. These can include invitations to parties, religious or mystical ceremonies, dreams, the delivery of a death threat or a ransom note, or any other interaction that presents both information and a choice.

When you want to skip over a couple of days of waiting or routine investigation, the best pitch is a simple summary. Tell the players something like, "It takes three days to find out whom the baron was meeting in the Dead End Pub. A minor clerk at the Foreign Ministry recognizes your description of the man he met as the special assistant to the Hegemony ambassador. You still don't know why they met, but the Hegemony embassy is holding its spring ball tomorrow night. Your clerk friend thinks he can get you invitations — do you want to go and investigate further?" That pitch is less than a minute long, but it gives the players the information they need, a direction that they can go, and a choice to make.

Here are pitches for the premises we've been developing:

"Stop Those Gnomes!"

The gnomes meet with the player characters, show them the tabulator, explain their fears of tampering, and offer the characters a job guarding the tabulator during the election.

"Secret Agent Drow"

After the PCs get through the police cordon, the senator tells the characters that she suspects drow agents are behind the recent civil disturbances. She asks the PCs to investigate and stop the drow, and hints that she's not picky about what methods they use.

"The Smiling Dragon"

Over the next few days, the court is abuzz with stories of Glimrail (GLIHM-rah-ihl), the beautiful woman who is dominating the king's attention. The normally level-headed king is infatuated with her. Everyone mutters that "something *must* be done," but nobody seems to be willing to risk the king's wrath. Do the PCs want to do anything about it?

"Dangerous Allies"

After asking if the PCs want to make any special preparations for their visit to the potters' guild, the GM skips ahead a few days to the speech. If the candidate is a PC, she can present an excerpt from her speech and attempt to influence the non-player characters. While the speech is happening, though, the PCs notice that many of the potters carry themselves with a surprising dexterity and grace.

After the speech, the potters disappear through an unimpressive door at the back of the meeting hall. The last one leaves it just a little bit ajar …

"Buddy Can You Spare Some Info?"

After an unsuccessful encounter with the beggars, an observant shopkeeper scoffs, "t'aint no use tryin' to get information out of 'em. Unless they're askin' for guilders, them beggars don't talk to no one but their own." Ask what the characters are doing next while that remark is fresh in the players' minds.

THE TWIST

After the plot gets rolling, the PCs should experience a series of encounters of increasing difficulty. Before detailing these encounters, though, decide when the other shoe will drop on the plot. When do the characters encounter the plot twist of the antithesis?

To figure this out, ask yourself, "Which part of the adventure is more interesting? The part before the twist or the part after?" You want the players to have fun, so you should spend most of the adventure on the part with more exciting events in it.

If the PCs are guarding a person or thing, the events after the twist are likely to be more interesting than those before. If the PCs are trying to reach a particular person or goal, the trials they undergo before the twist may be the heart of the adventure, and dealing with the twist may take only a single encounter. In general, the more routine the characters' situation is, the sooner the twist should arrive.

With that in mind, let's look at our adventures-in-progress:

"Stop Those Gnomes!"

Guarding a machine isn't very interesting. A brief preliminary encounter may help set the scene, but the characters should find out about the gnomes' real plans as soon as possible.

"Secret Agent Drow"

Chasing a drow conspiracy has lots of possibilities. They are crafty opponents, and pursuing them can get the PCs in all sorts of trouble. The resolution to the twist is likely to be interesting as well, so the GM should plan to give it some time. This twist should be discovered about two-thirds of the way through the adventure.

"The Smiling Dragon"

Here, the twist depends on the players discovering Glimrail's true nature and her plans for the king. Figuring out she's a dragon shouldn't be very difficult. Doing something about it should consume the majority of the adventure. The twist should be revealed about a third of the way through the adventure.

"Dangerous Allies"

Making a speech is routine work for a group of PCs engaged in a political campaign. What makes this adventure interesting is the cat-and-mouse game between the PCs and the assassins. The beginning of the adventure should lead right into the revelation that the potters are assassins.

"Buddy Can You Spare Some Info?"

Pretending to be beggars is an unusual situation for most player characters. Instead of being the toughest heroes on the block, they're trying to blend in with a group of dirty, hungry, unarmed, and frightened people. If the players feel a little helpless in their new roles, so much the better — their reaction will build their sympathy for the kidnapped beggar they're trying to find.

The second part of the adventure is equally important, though, because overcoming the kidnappers allows the players to turn the limitations of their disguises into strengths. This is another adventure where the plot twist should be in the middle.

CHOOSING ENCOUNTERS AND CHALLENGES

When designing encounters, the most important consideration is making sure that each player has opportunities to shine. Most characters (and players) have unique strengths within their parties, so design encounters that play to those strengths.

With this in mind, break down the plot into a logical sequence of events that tests a variety of skills. (The skill groups discussed earlier can be very helpful here.) The teaser and pitch provide a good start to this process, and figuring out the events that follow is often as simple as asking yourself, "What happens next?" The most entertaining possibilities are the ones that should be developed into encounters.

Most political adventures should have three to five major encounters. The first encounter should have a challenge rating equal to the average level of the player characters; each encounter that follows should increase the challenge rating by one or two levels.

Our adventures are starting to look pretty detailed now:

"Stop Those Gnomes!"

A sharp-eared PC hears one gnome worker tell another worker, "Perfect. The dwarves will never know." The characters can sneak after the gnomes and listen in as the gnomes review their plans to fix the election. (Sneaking skills)

The player characters know the gnomes are up to no good, but need to find out more. If they capture and interrogate the gnome leaders, they can learn how the tabulator is rigged and how to reprogram it. (Fighting and interaction skills)

To reprogram the machine, the characters must journey deep into the works of the tabulator, wriggling through tight spaces full of spinning gears and other sharp menaces. The PCs will have to cope with deafening noise, flashing lights, and clockwork automatons that patrol the inner works. (Fighting skills and using magic)

Once they reach the heart of the machine, the PCs must defeat any guardians that remain and reprogram the machine to get the results that they want. (Fighting and thinking skills)

Changes to Anticipate: The PCs might take the problem to the dwarves instead of solving it themselves. If this happens, the dwarves ask the PCs to reprogram the tabulator before the election is ruined. If the PCs fail to get the correct information from the gnomes, finding the machine and reprogramming it is more difficult but not impossible. If the characters fail completely, the wrong candidate gets elected and the PCs must deal with the consequences in a later adventure.

"Secret Agent Drow"

If the PCs investigate the site of the riot, they can find some clues: the ash of a tobacco that can only be grown underground, and footprints from several pairs of boots in the very latest style. (Thinking skills)

By asking the best boot-makers in town, the PCs can learn about a group of university students who recently bought fashionable boots together. The "students" (actually disguised drow agents) have a favorite bar, and the player characters can meet them by going to it. The drow are good at maintaining their cover, but observant PCs notice small clues, such as hand signals or a slight deference between inferior and superior agents. (Interaction and thinking skills)

When the "students" retire for the evening, the PCs can follow them back to their lodgings. The drow go into a secret room within their lodging house. With careful spying or scrying, the player characters can watch the drow make plans and worship their spider god. (Sneaking skills and using magic)

The PCs have a chance to surprise and capture the drow. They may or may not succeed, since the dark elves are tough fighters. No matter who ends up interrogating whom, however, the PCs and drow quickly learn that both groups were hired by the same senator. (Fighting and interaction skills)

The PCs probably won't like being used; the drow certainly don't like it. The PCs may let the agents leave town and report their own "failure" to the senator, or the drow and the PCs may collaborate on an entertaining revenge. (Interaction and possibly other skills)

Changes to Anticipate: The PCs may blow the investigation. If so, a smart city guardsman who's also on the trail can drop valuable hints while seeking the characters' help. They may also simply kill the drow, or turn them over to the guard without interrogating them. If so, the characters can discover proof of the senator's complicity among the dark elves' treasure and documents. The characters may or may not do anything with that information in this adventure, but at least they'll learn that the senator is up to no good.

"The Smiling Dragon"

The PCs need to know more about Glimrail. Ways to find out more include searching the palace library for

her lineage, examining her personal possessions, and casting spells to learn more about her magic and intentions. All of these are difficult, but lead to the correct conclusion: Glimrail is an ancient gold dragon. (Thinking skills, sneaking skills, and/or using magic)

Once the PCs figure out Glimrail is a dragon, the best way to find out more is to ask the dragon herself. If approached with diplomacy and flattery, she will explain her connection to the king and her plans for the kingdom. Glimrail recently woke up from a century-long nap, and is appalled with the current chaotic state of the kingdom. She intends to marry back into the family and restore perfect order. (Interaction skills)

Unless the PCs want every aspect of their lives run by a dragon, they have to stop Glimrail. Within the palace, though, the dragon has the upper hand. Most of the court is already under her thumb, including the king. The PCs' best chance for breaking the dragon's spell is to get the king away from the palace — which is essentially kidnapping. (Any and all skills)

Once the king is removed, the PCs have to break Glimrail's hold over him. Meanwhile, the dragon is searching for her king, and she intends to teach those uppity and obviously chaotic PCs a stern lesson. The characters must hold off the dragon and deprogram the king so that he can tell her to go away for good. (Fighting and interaction skills)

Changes to Anticipate: Directly opposing the dragon is a bad idea. Glimrail should be powerful enough to thrash the PCs in both combat and political conflict, but she should also be merciful. This situation forces the players to think outside the box, which means they may be stumped. A sarcastic cook or maid may be able to help the characters out by overhearing their discussions of what to do and making a rude — but useful — suggestion.

"Dangerous Allies"

The PCs follow the potters upstairs and discover that the guild is a front for an assassins' guild. Moments later, a couple of assassins discover the PCs. (Sneaking skills)

The assassins' first priority is to prevent the player characters from escaping. The PCs are more powerful but outnumbered. After some fighting, it should be clear that a stalemate is developing. (Fighting skills and using magic)

Both sides are in a tricky situation. The assassins can't just kill off a political candidate, but they can't let the PCs ruin their operation, either. The PCs probably don't want the assassins running loose, but trying to stop them is likely to prove fatal. The PCs and the assassins must work out a way to let each other live. (Interaction and thinking skills)

Changes to Anticipate: The PCs might get away from the assassins. If so, the assassins track down the characters. (This should be easy, given that at least one of the player characters is a public figure.) Unless the PCs want to leave town, they'll have to deal with the assassins one way or another.

The PCs may also defeat the assassins without negotiating. There should be enough assassins to make this unlikely — but if the PCs pull this off, allow them to bask in their own glory.

"Buddy Can You Spare Some Info?"

Having decided to pose as beggars, the player characters must create believable disguises and fit in with life on the streets. Begging is harder than it looks, and the characters must put up with a number of indignities. At the same time, they can meet and befriend some of the other beggars. (Thinking and interaction skills)

That night, one or more of the PCs encounters a trio of young nobles bent on kidnapping a beggar. Depending on how the encounter is handled, the PCs may interrogate the nobles or follow them to a large warehouse. At the warehouse, the characters learn that the nobles have captured and are tormenting the man they're looking for. (Fighting skills, and interaction or sneaking skills)

There are too many nobles for the PCs to attack, the police won't listen to a bunch of ragged beggars, and there's not enough time for the PCs to prove their true identities. The PCs come up with a plan that lets them free Anton with their limited resources and new friends. (Fighting and interaction skills, and using magic)

Changes to Anticipate: The player characters may defy the odds and attempt a frontal assault by themselves. If so, they'll probably fail and be captured. The GM should figure out how the nobles will hold the PCs prisoner and what opportunities the characters have to escape.

ADDING THE EXTRAS

Once the encounters are filled in with plot details and game statistics, take a step back and look at the adventure at a whole. What's missing?

Many adventures will be ready to run at this point. Others will benefit from an extra element or two. The items below should be treated like spices — a little bit adds a lot of flavor.
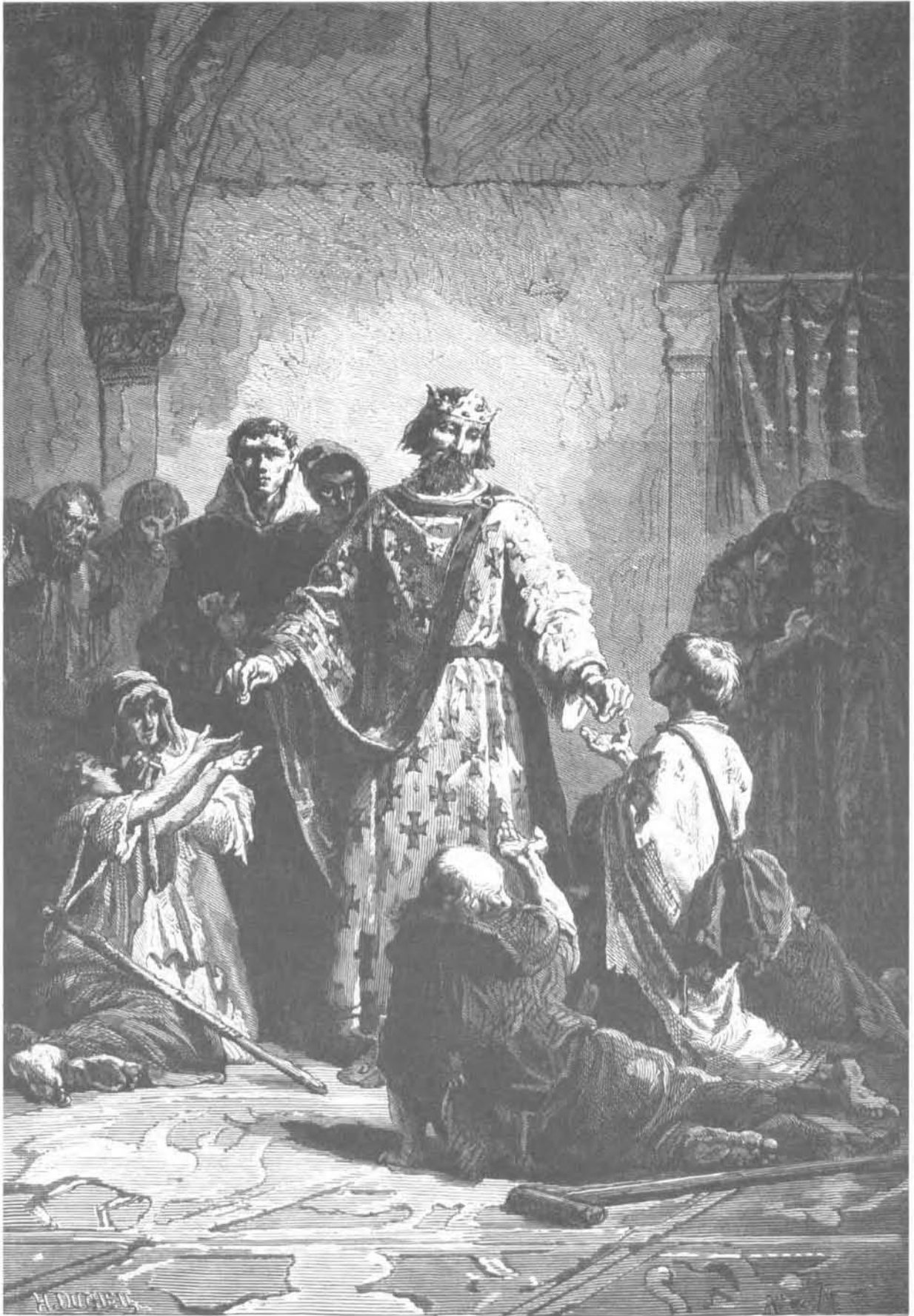
COMEDY

One of the pitfalls of political plots is their square-jawed seriousness. Gaming is about having fun, and that's more difficult when the fate of the nation is at stake and every decision is critical. If an adventure feels too serious, look for opportunities to slip in humor.

Humor works best when it provides the players with an opportunity to be funny. A sarcastic non-player character might make the players laugh, but they'll laugh harder if a pompous NPC lets them get off their own zingers. Embarrassing or silly situations can also provide opportunities for players to portray a funny reaction or fast-talk their way out of trouble. An action scene that ends with the characters naked in the patrician's duck pond might be funny — but their explanation of their presence to the patrician's stuffy butler is funnier.

ACTION

If the adventure involves a lot of investigating or interaction, it might be a little too quiet. Intense storytelling is good, but fantasy adventures thrive on action and combat. If there isn't much action in the adventure, add some!

Fortunately, gratuitous fights aren't hard to come by. A wandering monster or a few drunken barbarians can supply a quick fight scene in almost any situation. Villains can also start fights by sending some thugs to inconvenience the PCs.

Not all gratuitous action has to involve combat. Runaway horses, collapsing buildings, races, out-of-control spells, and dance contests can get the characters up and moving around. Don't forget comedic action, either. A rooftop chase can end with the characters falling off a building, bouncing from awning to awning, and landing in a herd of very surprised swine.

PERSONAL CONNECTIONS

Sometimes a plot can seem sterile because the characters don't have much connection to the situation. What they're doing may be exciting and important, but it's something that any group of mighty heroes could handle.

It's always good to find a personal connection between the PCs and the plot. Perhaps a friend is affected by what's happening or what the characters are doing about it. A villain can threaten a relative to distract or frighten off the player characters. Another option is for the characters' wealth or reputation to be at risk because of their involvement.

Personal connections can also be subplots with little connection to the main plot. A romantic PC may be trying to win the heart of a love interest. A rogue might see an opportunity to pull off a lucrative scam while on a mission to retrieve secret government documents. Subplots are fun, but they need to complement the main plot rather than distract from it. When adding a subplot, make sure it's something the characters can do while they pursue the main plot, rather than instead of it.

NARRATIVE TECHNIQUES

Many political thrillers feature unusual narrative tricks. These are worth experimenting with, especially as part of an action campaign, but it may take the players a little time to get used to them. It's a good idea to warn them when an adventure has an unusual structure, and to reward them with extra experience for dealing well with its conventions.

Here are some techniques to try:

The False Ending

The evil scheme has been stopped, the villain is safely dead or jailed, and everything seems to be okay. The characters can just go home and relax, right?

Not necessarily. Somehow the villain survives or escapes, and he comes after the characters one last time, in a place where they feel completely safe. There's no subtlety in the villain's actions, just naked vengeance. The villain attacks, does his best to kill the player characters, and is probably killed himself.

False endings show up a lot in suspense novels and movies, but are more difficult to set up in a roleplaying adventure. Most players try to make sure their foes stay down, and arbitrarily bringing back a villain can strain their suspension of disbelief.

The best way to explain a returning villain is to give her a little help. An ally who escapes justice can free the villain from jail or nurse her back to health. In fantasy backgrounds, a high-level cleric can resurrect a dead villain. Sometimes the ally might even be the villain in disguise!

To be effective, a villain's ally must be known to the player characters and must seem relatively harmless. If the ally seems sympathetic or powerless, the PCs may allow him to escape, or at least leave pursuing him for another day. More-powerful allies need a foolproof escape plan — ducking out while the heroes are busy dealing with the villain often works. Or an early departure from the plot might be called for — just because the ally hasn't been seen since the middle of the adventure doesn't mean that he can't come back in the end!

If there's no ally to help out, then the villain needs to be sent off-stage so that she can make a miraculous return. If the villain is killed, her death should result in the traditional missing body. (The missing body is such a *cliché* that the players are almost certain to expect the confrontation that follows. That's okay, as long as everybody enjoys the inevitable showdown.) Explosions, collapsing buildings, long falls, and rising waters are just a few ways to create a situation that "no one could possibly have survived!"

Escapes require less advance preparation. The players are usually more than willing to believe that the villain can escape the authorities — after all, if the local cops were any good at keeping the villain from making trouble, they wouldn't have needed the players' help stopping her in the first place.

But no matter how the villain escapes, the GM should always have an explanation for how it happened. If the players don't mind knowing what's coming next, present a brief scene showing how the villain survived or escaped. (In movies, this is often the hand clawing its way out of the pit or the unwary guard who walks too close to the jail cell and is grabbed.) If you want to skip this scene, the villain can tell the PCs how he survived as he pursues them around their home with a cleaver. Players can help the explanation along by having their characters ask the villain questions like, "How could you possibly have survived that fall?"

One false ending adds to an adventure. Two false endings is too many. Fortunately, most PCs will make sure the villain doesn't come back a second time.

The Ticking Clock

Deadlines add tension. When every second counts, the characters must focus their attention and make the most of any opportunity that comes their way. They also have limited resources, especially when the deadline is less than 24 hours away and spellcasters are unable to renew their spells.

Players can make the most of a ticking clock adventure by planning ahead. If you're tracking time carefully, encourage the players to develop plans that require split-second timing and precise hand-offs of responsibility between the characters. And be sure to reward them when they do.

Ordinary Joes

Sometimes the heroes of a story only show up after other people have discovered and failed to solve a problem. Your players might have a lot of fun playing those other people until their regular characters arrive on the scene.

If you're going to use ordinary Joes, create the characters in advance and hand them to the players at the start of the session. Tailor the characters' abilities and personalities to the plot, but try to give the players some choice about which characters they play. The best way to do this is to prepare some extra characters and let the players select the ones they like.

Ordinary Joes should be low-level characters, just tough enough to get a good look at the situation before they're killed or run away. Remind the players that these characters are temporary, and that they shouldn't feel like they've failed if their hapless miners are killed in a cave-in ten minutes into the adventure.

Even though ordinary Joes are meant to be disposable, players can make the most of them by making them as lively as their regular characters. The players should keep what their regular characters know separate from what their substitute characters learn, but they should also look for ways for the Joes to transfer information to the heroes. Maybe they'll go to the PCs for help, or leave a message behind with some clues.

Variants on this technique include letting the players play high-level heroes, or even take the roles of the villains of an adventure.

Scrambled Scenes

Almost all roleplaying adventures assume a linear time structure: Scene A happens before Scene B, which happens before Scene C. That's not always the case in movies and books, which mix up the action with flashbacks, flashforwards, or stories that hop around in time.

Using these techniques in a roleplaying game is difficult — players hate not knowing what's going on, and it's hard to rewrite a roleplaying session and remove inconsistencies. If you're interested in this idea, though, flashbacks can be an effective storytelling technique.

Flashbacks are useful for establishing motivations. In many campaigns, the characters have known their friends or foes for years, even if the player is seeing an NPC for the first time. A flashback can establish the characters' relationships by showing how they've dealt with each other in the past.

Another use for a flashback is to minimize planning time. You can jump right into the action, flash back for a moment to show the characters planning their next move, then return to the present and show what happens because of it. Mixing the planning and action scenes keeps the plot moving and makes the action more spontaneous.

Players can make the most of scrambled scenes by being careful not to contradict established fact. If the villain is

alive now, don't waste time trying to kill her back then. However, a flashback is the perfect time to put an item or piece of information into play that you can use in the "present" time of the story. Maybe you can't kill the villain in a flashback, but you might be able to plant a magical tracking device on her or spare her life so she owes you a favor.

Flashforwards are much more difficult to use. They're great for showing the consequences of the PCs' actions, but they should always be treated as possibilities instead of definite future events. If the player characters make choices that lead to that future, great. If not, it's just a might-have-been. Always remind the players that their characters don't *have* to take actions that lead to the future portrayed — whether they do or not is the players' choice.

Completely non-linear adventures that go back and forth in time are possible but impractical. You can try to keep careful track of when the "present" of the story is, and tailor whatever happens in the past or future to fit, but the complications are almost certain to overwhelm the players and the GM.

Altered Perceptions

This technique seems simple, but there are many pitfalls to avoid. The action of a roleplaying game depends on the GM and players presenting information to each other. The players assume that their characters are seeing what you say they see, so it's important to let them know that they can't trust their characters' perceptions.

Once the players know something's wrong with their characters, altered perceptions can be a lot of fun. Sorting sort out what's happening based on symbolic or surreal images can be a fascinating puzzle as long as the players know the puzzle exists.

One way to clue the players in is to make the scene obviously bizarre. The characters may think what they see is real, but the players know something's wrong. The garden club scene in *The Manchurian Candidate* is an example of how to handle this situation.

In this scene, Chinese generals examine a squad of brainwashed American prisoners. The prisoners have been hypnotized to believe that they are at a garden club luncheon. As the scene progresses, director John Frankenheimer mixes up the images of soldiers, generals, and dowdy housewives. What the characters see changes in ways that don't bother them, but disorient and horrify the audience.

Keep surreal scenes short. The sooner the characters return to a normal state of perception, the sooner they can figure out what's going on and do something about it. This keeps the players from twiddling their thumbs because they know what's happening but their characters can't act on it.

Another way to mess with the characters' perceptions is to make subtle alterations in what they see. This can be as simple as tailoring a description to fit a character's mental state. A paranoid character will see secret sneers and looming shadows whether they exist or not. It's still important for the players to figure out that something is wrong, however. Even though the scenery appears normal, you should include obvious "errors" and inconsistencies. Once the players notice the inconsistencies and ask about them, don't leave them hanging by acting coy. Always tell them if the inconsistencies they've noticed are a part of the plot that they need to unravel.

POLITICAL CAMPAIGNS

Rome wasn't ruined in a day. Political plots are complicated, and you can get a lot of adventures out of a revolution or an attempt to become the king.

If you're a game moderator, the tools presented here will help you choose a style for your campaign, develop villains, construct plots, and respond to your players' crazy ideas. If you're a player, this chapter will give you a look behind the scenes so you can make the most of the opportunities the GM presents.

SETTINGS AND CHARACTERS

Most political games work better if you sit down as a group before the game begins and design a compatible party of characters. By doing this, you can make sure that the characters fit the setting and each other.

Choose the setting first — it's easier to change a few characters to fit the setting than to push and pull the setting to fit all the characters. Pick a setting that you feel comfortable running and try it out on the players. If they like it, you can develop the details and turn them loose in it.

Once you have a setting, talk about what characters are needed for it. A game of senatorial politics probably needs some senators. An elite group of bodyguards to the king had better be able to protect him. The players should choose classes and abilities that make them effective in the game's setting.

Decide how experienced the characters are based on what the players want to accomplish and the nature of the setting. Beginning characters that claw their way to the top are a lot of fun, especially in games that mix traditional dungeon crawls with political maneuvers. Most professional politicians are mid-range, though, and it takes a lot of experience to rule a powerful nation or protect the people who do.

Good starting levels for a political campaign include:

1st Level — ordinary adventurers and villagers, law enforcement trainees, young nobles and squires

4th Level — political neophytes, village leaders, knights, inexperienced law enforcement

8th Level — experienced politicians, skilled law enforcers, soldiers, and government workers, minor nobles, revolutionary cell leaders

12th Level — senators and other senior political figures, elite law enforcement, commanding officers and government department heads, powerful nobles, revolutionary organization leaders

16th Level — heads of state, top government officials, top generals and warlords, the most powerful nobles in the land

If you're basing the characters' starting level on a powerful villain, the characters should begin 4 to 5 levels below the villain. This gives the villain a big initial advantage that erodes steadily as the PCs gain experience. The guidelines above can be used to set the levels of both the player characters and the villain — for example, if elite city guardsmen are pursuing a rogue general, then the general should be about 12th level and the guardsmen should be about 8th level.

Long campaigns may feature more-powerful villains, but if so there should be at least one minor villain who is only 4 to 6 levels higher than the PCs. Defeating minor villains keeps the players from becoming frustrated as they grow powerful enough to challenge their primary foe.

Finally, the player characters need a cause to give the campaign direction and unite them as a group. "Take over the world" will work in a pinch, but it's not very inspiring. The PCs will do better in the campaign if they choose a mission that inspires other characters and wins them support.

The party doesn't have to be united, of course. A campaign about competing political figures can be interesting, but it requires a flexible and committed group of players. The players must be able to oppose each other without forcing their characters into inaction, and they must be willing to wait while the GM deals with different factions separately. Only experienced players should try to work against each other in a political game — beginning players have more than enough to deal with working together!

VILLAINS

Good villains are essential to most political campaigns. They come in all shapes and sizes, but they all have power bases, goals, motivations, and some kind of edge over the PCs.

POWER BASES

Every villain needs a power base — a source of influence that can be used to accomplish his goals. Possible power bases include:

- *Information.* Some villains are trusted authorities whose insidious recommendations are followed to the letter. Others simply know where the bodies are buried, and gain influence for not revealing that information.

- *Networking.* What you know may not be as important as who you know. A villain can sit at the center of a web of contacts and accomplish his goals with a few words in the right ear. He may trade favors, introduce potential allies to each other, or set events in motion by telling the right thing to the wrong people.

- *Position.* Political and military positions provide villains with authority, subordinates to order around, resources to appropriate, and protection from interference. A popular president may defy criticism or investigation. An organization may find it prudent to cover up an illegal act.

- *Wealth.* A wealthy villain can buy all the votes, publicity, information, protection, assistants, assassins, judges, and blessings he needs.

GOALS

Villains always want something. Wealth and power are classic goals, but other possibilities include:

- Popularity, respect, or fame

- Social status from a good marriage or a prestigious title

- Restoring the family mansion, or the family's good name

- Equal rights for all, or special rights for some

- Traditional values, or new ones

- Better government, perfect government, or no government at all

- Free trade, or the protection of favored industries

- Exterminating or protecting a hated minority

- Combining religion and politics, or keeping them apart

- Saving the country from traitors, or incompetent leaders, or unworthy citizens

- World peace

- Any or all of the above, but for the benefit of a child, or another relative, or the general good of society

Many villains have foolish or selfish goals, but it's important to remember that those goals always make sense to them. A wealthy man may trample the poor because he doesn't understand their suffering. A racist human may convince herself that it's merciful to exterminate half-orc "abominations." How a villain rationalizes a goal is as important as the goal itself.

MOTIVATIONS

A goal is what a villain wants. Motivation is why he wants it, and it's just as important. A merchant prince seeking wealth for his family may behave honorably or

despicably depending on whether he's driven by a sense of duty to his family or contempt for others.

Here are some likely motivations:

- *Anger.* A person or event has roused the villain's ire. He wants to punish or expose those who provoked him.

- *Duty.* The villain feels obligated to live up to a promise or the expectations of another person.

- *Envy.* The villain wants what someone else has, and will do anything to get it.

- *Fear.* The villain fears a person or event, either for something that has happened or something that will happen.

- *Greed.* No matter how much he already has, the villain wants more.

- *Hate.* The villain hates a person or group of people, and is committed to humiliating or destroying them. Anger usually spends itself in a single act of revenge; hate is something to which a villain devotes a lifetime.

- *Love.* The villain loves a person (or less often, a creature, god, or thing) and seeks to possess or prove his worthiness to the object of his love. Love can be noble and tragic, or just plain creepy.

- *Loyalty.* The villain wants to protect and help the object of his loyalty, whether that is a person, an organization, a nation, an ideal, or something else.

- *Need.* The villain needs something and can't survive or be happy without it. A villain who needs food for his family or weapons for his endangered people may be a sympathetic figure; one who is addicted to drugs or magic may be no less needy but much less sympathetic.

"Insanity" or "evil" are not motivations. A villain may be insane or evil, but evil and insane people are still driven by passions and needs like the ones listed above.

AN EDGE

Player characters always have something special about them, something out of the ordinary. Good villains do too. Edges make them a match for a well-equipped and capable party of player characters.

Typical edges include:

- *Charm.* Some villains can sell umbrellas to dragons, and the players will need equally powerful persuasion skills or dirty tricks to defeat them.

- *Allies.* If a powerful ally prevents the player characters from interfering with villain's plans, the characters must eliminate the ally or turn her against the villain before they can stop him.

- *Experience.* Most villains have more skills, greater abilities, and can fight better than the player characters. The PCs need to gain experience themselves to have the tools they need to defeat the villain.

- *Friendship.* Most characters try to go easy on a misguided friend, and a villain can use this reluctance against a group of PCs. This edge doesn't last long, but it's amazing what a well-timed show of remorse can do to extend it.

- *Leverage.* A villain's blackmail or threats against a loved one can leave player characters with an unspeakable choice. At the very least, the villain gains time while the PCs secure whatever he threatens to take away from them.

- *Magic.* Many villains compensate for weaknesses with magic, from warning spells to golem bodyguards to magical disguises to amulets that protect against scrying. To cancel this advantage, players must find a weakness for which the villain has forgotten to compensate, or a situation where he neglects to use magic.

- *Minions.* From brutish thugs to cunning seconds-in-command, an army of minions can insulate the villain from meddling player characters.

- *Obscurity.* Some villains bury themselves in false identities or faceless organizations. The PCs must follow trails of money and influence to learn who their enemy is.

- *Popularity.* It's hard to dispose of a villain who spends his life in the public eye, especially if he has thousands of fanatical followers eager to tear apart anyone who harms their leader.

- *Planning.* Some villains have a plan for every contingency and know what the player characters are doing before they do it. Most brilliant planners are overconfident, though, and the best chance the PCs have to cancel this edge is to convince the villain that he has them right where he wants them.

- *Toughness.* Like Rasputin, some villains just keep coming back for more. The player characters may have to kill the villain three times over and burn the body before they can breathe easy — and even then they can never be quite sure he's gone.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

Power bases, motivations, goals, and edges ensure that the villain is a challenge to the player characters, but it's the GM's portrayal of the villain that makes the challenge enjoyable. Make sure to give your villain all the quirks and personality that you would give to one of your own PCs. The elements above are the villain's skeleton; it's up to you to give him a face.

Here are some sample villains that combine some of the elements above:

- Rolf Thunderfist is the mayor of a dwarvish city. He is gregarious, generous, and popular, but he's also siphoning cash from the town treasury to pay for his family's failed investments. Rolf plans to return the money as soon as he can, but an election is coming up and he can't risk losing it to anybody. If he takes just a little bit more from the town coffers, he may be able to buy the election.

- Gorge is a half-orc gang boss who wants to punish the town of Hart's Ford for a lifetime of slights and indignities. He's taking it over one neighborhood at a time, and murdering any noble or guild master that speaks out against him. Gorge takes special delight in tormenting the wealthy and influential members of the Chantal family, and it's rumored that they are his human relatives.

- Colonel Richard Cotterson is appalled by the decadence of the reigning duke. The ramrod-spined officer knows he can clean up the province with a few months of martial law, and he's recruited a conspiracy of like-minded soldiers to frame the duke for treason against the king.

CAMPAIGN STYLES

There are three approaches to a political campaign. In power campaigns, the game is about how the player characters gain power and what they do with it. In action campaigns, the PCs react to the ambitions of other characters. An advanced campaign combines the previous styles and focuses the game on how the PCs manage the political system as a whole.

THE POWER CAMPAIGN

Power campaigns are built around one goal: the players guide their characters to power and enjoy its benefits. In this kind of campaign, the kingdom is another kind of treasure. Power campaigns are not deep, but they are fun.

In a power campaign, most NPCs react to the PCs' actions rather than initiating plans of their own. The villains of the game are rivals competing with the PCs for political power. The issues facing a government are important only because the PCs exploit them or use their power to solve them.

PLANNING POWER CAMPAIGNS

Most power campaigns follow a simple structure. There are variations, but a satisfying campaign usually includes the following kinds of adventures in the following order.

The Shakedown Cruise

Unless you're starting with high-level characters, the first few adventures should minimize the political angle. Ambitious characters need money and fame, and dungeon crawls are good way to get both. The "usual" low-level adventures also give the party a chance to get to know each other and learn how to work as a team.

Even though these adventures don't focus on politics, this is a good time to introduce the characters to the political world around them. An established politician may hire the party to do a job. A tax increase might take a bit out of the characters' purses, or a PC could run afoul of an inconvenient law. Meeting influential people and hearing about political events gives the characters information and contacts they can use later.

The Call to Power

Unless the characters start off wanting to rule the world, they should have an experience that awakens them to the possibilities. This doesn't have to be a complete adventure, but it should be an event that changes the characters and commits them to a goal.

This kind of adventure is easy to plan in a setting with an unjust government. Most player characters are do-gooders, and seeing the sheriff seize a poor widow's property is the kind of event that inspires them to Change the System. Use whatever pushes the character's buttons,

whether it's the taunts of a rival, the promise of vast wealth and influence, or a chance to stop injustice.

The First Time

The decision to pursue power should feel important and a little scary. Look for ways to mark this moment with a ceremony. The characters may make a speech, or take part in a ritual combat, or recite an oath. No matter what the event is, it should show that the characters have reached a turning point in the campaign.

Rising Action

As they seek power, the characters must win allies and build up influence. If the PCs live in an anarchy, they can hunt down bandits, raise buildings, or recruit other characters to help them organize a government. Feudal characters may prove their worthiness in battles or tournaments, make alliances with other nobles, or build up a reputation for wit and wisdom in the royal court. In a democracy, the PCs might stand for election or try to win an appointment to an important office.

There are many options, and the players may not be sure what to do first. Use adventures to point out opportunities to them and give them choices about how they want to gain power. If you're running a power campaign in a democracy, announce that an election is imminent and give them a chance to run for office. Each step up the political ladder should be should be an adventure for the player characters.

Be ready to respond to the players' ideas, too — guide them when they don't know what to do next, but follow their lead when they come up with good ideas of their own. If the players decide to take over a guild instead of running for mayor, run with it and see what happens.

It's also a good idea to take breaks from the quest for power to run other adventures. This gives the players a chance to relax a little, do something different, and perhaps build up wealth or other resources for the next push upwards. Consider dividing this part of the campaign into groups of four adventures. Within each group, there should be two Rise to Power adventures, one adventure that's a Character Piece, Consequence, Rival's Plot, or Setback (these types are detailed below), and one side adventure that's a simple dungeon crawl or monster hunt.

The order of the adventures isn't important, but it should change from group to group. The groups give the players a sense of rhythm and progression, while varying the order provides variety.

Character Pieces

Most of the time, your players will be looking forward to their next level or political triumph. However, sometimes it's good to kick back and get to know the characters a little better.

Most Character Pieces draw from the backgrounds of one or two PCs. They can be inspired by previous events in the game or by the history that the player has developed for his character. The GM can also introduce new history into a PC's background, but this should only be done with the express permission of the character's player. Nothing sours a game like being saddled with a long-lost but beloved cousin that you neither anticipated nor wanted your character to have.

Even though one or two characters may be the "star" of a particular character piece, the plot must involve the rest of the party as well. Whatever problem or opportunity the character is facing should require everyone's skills to deal with. Character Pieces should also rotate to focus on different characters — if you use them in your campaign, then each PC must be given a chance to shine.

Character Pieces can be comic or tragic. They can involve love interests, old friends, recurring dreams, complications with religious vows or promises, or even just the urge to have a night out on the town. They're a good excuse for silliness or a leisurely in-character conversation. They are common early in a campaign and become rare as the Climax approaches. However, it's not unusual to stop the action for one last look at the characters — sometimes light-hearted, sometimes serious — just before a campaign ends.

Consequences

PCs make waves and cause trouble — that's what makes them fun to play. However, sometimes that trouble comes back to bite them.

A Consequences adventure follows up on something the player characters did (or didn't do) earlier in the campaign. Unlike a Character Piece, the goal is not to explore an aspect of the characters' personalities. A Consequences adventure shows how the characters have already affected the world around them.

It's not enough just to show what's happening. The PCs must be able to do something about it, and the players must have a reason to care. One way to motivate them is to present an unexpected (but logical) problem caused by a clever idea they used in a previous adventure. Another way is to give them a chance to fix a previous failure.

The PCs may notice the problem themselves or another character can call it to their attention. It's often a good

idea to bring back an ally or contact to introduce the new problem — a little conversation about "what old Sven's been up to since the ice storm" can remind the players of the relevant details from their past adventure and fill them in what they need to know this time.

It's also possible to involve the characters in the problem without telling them that they had a hand in creating it. Learning they are the cause makes a good plot twist, but it needs to be handled carefully. Unless the players have a reason to think back to their previous adventures, it can be hard for them to make the connection. Plant plenty of clues within the adventure and be ready to remind the players of what happened before.

(It's normal for players to remember fewer details of a previous session than the game moderator does. GMs organize their memories with the act of planning their games, something players rarely get to do. As always, it's your responsibility to make sure the players recall what they need to know.)

Not everything in a Consequences adventure has to be resolved immediately. The lasting effects of a problem may force the players to change their plans, rethink their ambitions, or tackle the problem again in another adventure. However, it's important for Consequences adventures have some resolution. Either the players should be able to fix most of the problem, or they should fail so completely that they decide to give up on it for now.

Rival Plots

If something is worth having, then somebody else probably wants it. Political characters often encounter rivals who have conflicting agendas or want the same positions to which the player characters are aspiring.

Political rivals should be used sparingly. If there are too many in play, the players will have trouble keeping track of them. A rival who hatches a fiendish plan every once in a while is more exciting than one who bothers the party with a dimwitted plot every other session.

Rivals are usually introduced early in the campaign, and should stick around as long as they are entertaining. This may not be for the whole campaign, but it often is — many rivals are defeated in the Climax of the campaign. It's possible, however, that the PCs will rise above, eliminate, or reconcile with a rival shortly after he is introduced. That's not a problem — you can always introduce a new rival later on.

Rival Plot segments tend to be battles of wits, full of moves and counter-moves.

Setbacks

Everybody fails occasionally, but sometimes things really go wrong. A Setback adventure is what happens when disaster strikes the player characters. An ally or relative dies. A PC is arrested on suspicion of murder. Barbarian hordes raze the village. The situation is usually unrelated to the main plot of the game, but it threatens everything the characters have been working toward.

Many players hate having bad things happen to their characters, and you must make it clear to them that they will have the chance to respond to and deal with the situation. The point of the adventure must be "How will the PCs overcome the problem they face?" — not "Let's watch the characters suffer."

That doesn't mean the characters shouldn't suffer. Just about any torment you can imagine is fair, as long as there's always a good answer to the question, "Okay, what does your character do now?" If the character is unable to take action — whether it's to fight, flee, make a deal, or even just to press the red button marked "Danger! Do not press red button!" — the adventure becomes pointless.

That doesn't mean the players must overcome every setback their characters face. Setback adventures are about dealing with adversity. As long as the characters can escape the situation and regroup, the adventure is as fair as it needs to be.

Setbacks often do double duty as Character Pieces. Facing misfortune is a test of character; how a PC deals with it says a lot about the character's strengths and the skills of the player.

The Climax

Getting there is only half the fun. Sooner or later, your players are going to want to resolve their characters' quest for power — preferably by attaining it. This is the Climax of the campaign.

The Climax adventure should be the biggest challenge of the game — the one that tests the characters' abilities to the limit. A Climax can be the final days of an election, an assassination attempt, a duel between the true heir and the pretender to the throne, a filibuster speech before the senate, or revolution in the streets. Any direct and final confrontation between the characters and their rivals will work.

To be satisfying, a Climax should be both inevitable and surprising. The players should know that this is going to be "the big finish," and that their hopes will be dashed if they don't play their very best. Some of this build-up can be accomplished "outside" the game. As game modera-

tor, you can tease your players, counting down the weeks until the Big Game and dropping hints about what's in store for the characters.

You can also prepare the way within the game itself. Rise to Power adventures build anticipation for the Climax. If the characters are participating in an election, they know what will happen on election day. If they're conspirators planning a revolution, they know they will eventually take to the streets. It's easy to see the end coming.

Nobody wants a Climax to be completely predictable, though. There should always be a plot twist that forces the players to think on their feet. The revolution might get out of control when the people arise earlier than expected, or the characters may discover at the last moment that the election is rigged against them. Whatever the twist is, it should surprise the players without leaving them helpless.

During a Climax, there must always be a significant chance that the players will fail. The players want to win, but they also want the win to mean something. This is a good time to trust in your players' abilities, and give them the toughest challenge that they can possibly overcome. Even if they fail, it will be in such an epic fashion that they'll enjoy telling the story.

The Aftermath

Once the Climax is done, the campaign is almost over. It's time to wrap up the loose ends and let the characters enjoy (or suffer) their just desserts.

If the PCs failed, they may have been killed or politically destroyed. If so, the best thing to do is wrap up the campaign with a few kind words and a wish for better luck next time. It's more fun to start a new game with new characters than to try to rebuild a group of wrecked PCs. If the group isn't too badly off, though — or if the players relish a challenge — they can try again with another chain of Rising Action stories and a new Climax. It's just like running another campaign, except that the player characters are already well established.

If the PCs have succeeded, then the players will want to enjoy the rewards of power. It's a good idea to run a few short adventures that let them use their new power and authority. Many Climaxes leave a villain or two unaccounted for; and dealing with them can be satisfying to both the players and their characters. There may also be big problems — marauding dragons, invading barbarians, a pesky den of assassins — that the characters finally have the authority to do something about.

After a couple of aftermath adventures, however, it's time to think about something new. The players may want to keep playing their characters and exploring the intricacies of their power. If they do, the campaign becomes an action campaign. The characters' power may occasionally be threatened — they may even lose power and have to regain it, returning the campaign to its original style — but the game becomes focused on how the players use their power to respond to events instead of what the players do to gain power.

The PCs may also decide to pursue bigger goals. If they control a town, they may wish to take over a nation. If they rule a nation, they may seek to build an empire. If so, return to the Call to Power event, create a new chain of Rising Action adventures, and develop a new Climax.

POWER CAMPAIGN OUTLINE: HEIRS TO THE THRONE

Here's an example of how the power campaign structure can be used to build a game. This would be a good game to run for three or four players over about 18 sessions.

The setting is the Grand Duchy of Stevmere, a small and not-very-wealthy monarchy mostly surrounded by the Empire of the Owls (see Chapter Two). The duchy is ruled by the aging Duke Cameron, a kind but indecisive ruler with several daughters and sons.

In the duchy, the crown doesn't necessarily go to the eldest son. The duke chooses his heir, who is almost always one of his own children. Cameron has been training all of his children to rule the duchy, but has put off declaring his official heir for years. His health is failing, however, and he knows that he must make a choice soon.

Each of the players is a member of the duke's household and a candidate for the crown. The most likely candidates are the duke's children, and you should encourage the most ambitious players to play those roles. However, the players can also play the duke's councilors, the petty nobles of the duchy, guardsmen, scholars, or trusted servants.

With in mind, let's sketch out some adventure ideas that fit the power campaign structure.

The Shakedown Cruise

The campaign begins with two or three adventures designed to show normal life in the duchy and establish the characters as leaders within the community:

- The PCs are asked to investigate strange lights in the marshes that make up most of Stevmere.

- A sheep farmer discovers an entrance to some old ruins. The duchy's treasury is usually empty, and exploring the ruins might turn up some much needed gold.

- A dispute breaks out between the villagers and a gypsy caravan when a boy from the caravan and a girl from the village disappear. Each side is convinced that the other is hiding their child. The PCs must find the children and resolve the dispute.

The Call to Power

After a successful adventure — preferably the gypsy/villager dispute — the duke calls his children into his favorite garden. While he doesn't admit his health problems (he has regular chest pains and tires easily), he tells them that he's ready to hand down his crown and retire. He needs to pick his heir, and will be evaluating his children as they take on some of his responsibilities. The first thing he wants to know is, "Who wants to rule this land?"

The First Time

The duke has been training his children all their lives, but the choosing of his heir is finally at hand. It's a rite of passage, and the duke commemorates this with a small ceremony. He and his heirs join hands, and he leads them in the family's oath of service to the duchy and to each other.

This short vignette can be played through at the end of the Call to Power or the beginning of the first Rising Action adventure. It exists to remind the PCs that they are a team and need to work together even as they compete for the crown.

Rising Action

As the weeks pass, the duke sets his potential heirs to a variety of assignments. Most depend on teamwork, but the duke pays close attention to who accomplishes what. The missions include:

- The duchy's best clerics interview the heirs about their beliefs and goals for the land, then ask them to stand a night's vigil. During the vigil the characters encounter the troubled ghost of an ancestor.

- All the heirs must live through a day as a street beggar. It's meant to be a learning experience, but things get out of control when the characters encounter a necromancer looking for victims who won't be missed.

- A young firebrand wanders the duchy preaching the overthrow of the duke in favor of a democratic society. The heirs are sent to investigate. Is he an elvish plant? He's a pain in the neck and a potential danger to the dukedom, but will shutting him up cause more problems than it solves?

- A black dragon takes up residence in the swamps of Stevmere and must be dealt with.

- The characters must negotiate a trade agreement with the nearby Dwarves of the Silver Deeps (see Chapter Two), a task made difficult by the fact that Stevmere's only abundant resource is peat.

As the campaign progresses, the characters take on more difficult and complex responsibilities. Meanwhile, the duke's worsening health adds tension to the game, as does the sneaky behavior of the characters' rivals.

Character Pieces

Character Pieces are developed after the players have created their characters. However, there are possibilities that can be anticipated. One of the children is almost certain to have a troubled relationship with the duke, and this can be resolved when the two characters face perils together during a hunting trip. Another character is likely to be a cleric, a monk, or a paladin — what do they do when their order's desires conflict with their interest (or lack of interest) in becoming duke?

Consequences

This kind of adventure is also hard to predict in advance. However, it's a sure bet that any character who engages in open conflict with the duke's son Duncan (see below) is going to be singled out for special attention later.

Rival Plots

One of the duke's children is an NPC and a rival. Duncan wants the throne, and despite his oily charm he's the worst possible choice for it. He'll try to improve his chances by lying, cheating, and arranging accidents for his relatives.

The other likely rival is Windsong, an elvish emissary. Windsong is a diplomat and a spy, and her assignment is to bring the duchy under the influence of the neighboring empire. She'll investigate the duchy's military readiness, try to poison its relationship with the dwarves, and seduce any member of the duke's household whose favor might help the elves' interests.

Setbacks

One of the characters slips on a loose floor tile, risking a nasty tumble down some stairs. At first, this seems to be one of Duncan's plots. It's just an accident, but complications may develop before the PCs are convinced of this. This Setback could happen any time after the evil son's behavior becomes suspicious.

As the intrigue heats up, the duke has a heart attack — preferably when the heirs are angry at each other. The characters face the possibility that he may die before he can designate an heir, and must decide what they will do if he does. This Setback takes place late in the Rising Action sequence, and leads almost directly into the Climax.

Climax

Healers arrive to tend the ailing duke, but some of them are agents of the empire. They kidnap the duke so they can brainwash him into surrendering the duchy. The PCs must find the duke — who's being smuggled over the border — and retrieve him. Based on who excels most at planning and executing the rescue, the duke finally chooses his heir. Depending on how his relationship with the PCs develops, Duncan may or may not rebel and throw his lot in with the empire.

(It's worth noting that while the heir character is now first among his equals, the heir's player is still just one member of the group. The players still decide things and act as a group; the GM should handle the heir's status as the leader without putting the heir's player in control of the action.)

Aftermath

The empire isn't so easily dismissed, however. When an army is sent to teach the duchy a lesson, the party must rally the people to fend it off. If it hasn't been resolved already, the evil son storyline ends in either reconciliation or a fatal confrontation. Assuming all goes well, the old duke retires, the new duke is crowned, and just about everybody lives happily ever after!

RUNNING THE GAME

Once you have outlined the basic structure of the campaign, the game is almost ready to begin. All you have to do is develop the first adventure and turn the players loose in it.

It can take time to develop a good political adventure, which is why the Shakedown Cruise section is a good idea. Dungeon crawls are easy and fun, and they give you breathing space to develop more complex adventures. They also serve much the same role later in the game — they're rest breaks for both players and the GM.

Work up each adventure from your campaign outline as the game progresses, but don't be afraid to change your outline. The game will go in different directions than you expected, and you'll think of new ideas that you like better. The campaign outline is a guide, not a straitjacket.

THE ACTION CAMPAIGN

Action campaigns are not based on the ambitions of the player characters. The PCs gain levels and abilities as the game progresses, and they may gain new responsibilities or positions of power. However, they do not win by ascending to a position of power. They're more likely to be preventing villains from realizing their own evil ambitions.

An action campaign doesn't have to involve violent conflict or amazing stunts. Most games are more fun when the PCs get to do some running and jumping and fighting, but an action game can take place in a courtroom or the debating floor of a national congress. What makes the campaign an "action" game is that it's driven by the plans and deeds of its heroes and villains.

In a power campaign, the player characters seek to *become* great. In an action campaign, the player characters and non-player characters seek to *do* great things.

Good villains are crucial to action campaigns. Their plans and schemes — and the player characters' efforts to foil those plans — are what drives the game. They use their personalities and skills to exploit the weaknesses of a political system, influencing public opinion, twisting the law to their advantage, or hiding their actions in mazes of bureaucracy.

Most political campaigns require that the PCs occupy positions with responsibility and authority. They may be politicians, lords, soldiers, city guards, advisors, or bureaucrats. They may even be conspirators or revolutionaries. What's important is that they have an interest in helping society, and are able to discover and oppose the plans of the villain.

PLANNING THE ACTION CAMPAIGN

Action campaigns depend on games of cat and mouse, on building tension from adventure to adventure until the game reaches an explosive ending. They draw their inspiration from thrillers like *The Manchurian Candidate*, *Seven Days in May*, and the television series *24*.

Without the PCs' ambitions advancing the game, the game moderator has to push harder to move the plot forward. She has to puzzle her players with mysteries to be solved and surprise them with unexpected plot twists. At the same time, she can't push the players *too* hard; they must be engaged with the game themselves, and looking forward to their next adventure.

Action campaigns are usually short. There's usually one major villain — who may have lesser minions — and most of the adventures are focused on dealing with that foe. The tension must rise often, and it can only go so high before it peaks. With this in mind, most action-oriented campaigns follow this structure:

The Teaser

Even a short campaign can benefit from an adventure that establishes the player characters' positions in the game. If the player characters are experienced heroes in a position of authority, there only needs to be one teaser adventure. If the characters are beginners, the teaser should be several adventures that play out like the Shakedown Cruise discussed in the power campaign section above.

A Teaser is a standalone adventure with no obvious connection to the main campaign. It's a simple mission with a clear objective; there's little or no time spent drawing the PCs into the situation. The goal is to get the players into the story and establish the characters by showing what they can do.

If the PCs have superiors, the superiors can assign the mission and provide whatever information is necessary. If the PCs work for themselves, the GM can inform them of what they're doing and why. This can be a little tricky because some players may object if the mission does not fit their conception of their characters. One way to avoid this is to specify the kind of characters you expect — if lone-wolf chaotic evil barbarians don't fit the game, the best time to say "No!" is during character creation.

You must also understand the motivations of the characters you allow into the game. Usually those motives are pretty simple: "do my job," "get money," "save the world," and "revenge myself on the six-fingered man who killed my father" are the most common. As long as the Teaser mission is compatible with the motivations of the PCs, the players should have no reason to object.

Once the PCs go into action, each character *must* get a "scene" in the adventure. This is a good idea in any adventure, but the point of the Teaser is to show what the characters can do. Each PC should have one crucial task that demonstrates how that character is a vital part of the team.

Most of the Teaser should have nothing to do with the rest of the campaign. The players are busy getting to know each other and their characters' abilities — they can't spare much attention to dig out cunning details about the plot or setting. Save vital information until the second adventure, when they're settled in and waiting for it. However, it doesn't hurt to reveal one obvious clue about the villain and the story of the campaign early. If the PCs come across this clue near the end of the adven-

ture, it'll spark further investigation so that you can introduce more information later.

First Encounter

The second adventure in the campaign should be the First Encounter between the villain and the PCs. It may not be a face-to-face encounter — in fact, the player characters might get only a hint of the villain's existence. However, the PCs should learn that something is wrong and be encouraged to investigate further. The adventure should also take into account the possibility that the villain will find out that the PCs are investigating, and indicate what his response will be.

By the end of the adventure, the PCs should know that something is happening, realize that they need to deal with it, and have an idea of what to investigate next. They should know at least one piece of the following information: the identity of the villain, what the villain is doing, or when and where the villain is going to act next. If the players have one or two of those pieces of information, they can push the plot of the campaign forward.

Rising Action

Rising Action adventures develop the conflict between the player characters and the villain. Each adventure should alter the status quo, advancing or spoiling the villain's plans. The balance between the PCs and the villain should change after each adventure — even stalemates should use up resources and eliminate minions or allies.

As in other games, sometimes the players need a break. The PCs may be tireless warriors for truth and justice, but every campaign has sessions where the players are coming off a hard day and just want to slay some orcs. Side adventures should be rare — in a tense political thriller, once every four or five adventures is enough — but it's never a bad idea to have one prepared for those nights when nobody's in the mood for the usual game.

The Rising Action of a campaign should be about 6 to 10 adventures long. Of these adventures, half should be of the Move/Countermove variety. The player characters, the villain, and his minions should be pushing each other and trying to better their positions. The other half should be a mix of Investigations, Red Herrings, Setbacks, side adventures, Character Pieces or Golden Opportunities; these are described below.

Character Pieces

Action campaigns explore roleplaying by putting the characters under extreme stress. There's little need for Character Pieces that show off surprising or unexpected aspects of the player characters. Character Pieces can

make good side adventures, however. They are discussed in more detail in the Power Campaign section, above.

Golden Opportunity

If at all possible, there should be one fantastic opportunity to smash the villain's plans sometime in first half of the campaign. This is a calculated risk that can prematurely end a campaign, but the results can be spectacular.

The adventure is built around the idea that the villain can be stopped in his tracks by the right situation or event. This can be anything from exposing a corrupt politician to going back in time and preventing the villain from being born. The task is challenging and dangerous, but if the PCs succeed they will completely defeat their foe.

The challenge must be difficult, and success must be unlikely. If the players beat the odds, however, you must be willing to let the players enjoy their success even if it ends the campaign. An unexpected happy ending is more satisfying than a campaign that continues because the GM snatched away the players' greatest victory.

Most of the time, the out-leveled and out-numbered PCs should fail at the Golden Opportunity. Their defeat should be painful but never damaging. There's nothing wrong with failure, but losing valuable allies or possessions because the GM set you up for a fall discourages the players from taking more risks.

Investigation

Investigations take place early in the Rising Action. There are many things the players and their characters need to know, and this is when they find out. Each Investigation should offer the answers to one or more of the following questions:

- What's happening?

- Who's causing the situation? Why? What is the person behind the plot like?

- Is this person acting alone or as part of a conspiracy or organization? Does this person have a boss, minions, both?

- What is this person good at? What makes this person dangerous?

- What is this person's weakness? How and when can it be exploited?

- Should this person be stopped or helped? What will we need to do this?

No single Investigation should answer all of the players' questions at once — doing so would overload them with information. They need time to absorb each fact and decide what to do next.

Investigations also supply information to the villain. After each adventure, ask yourself what skills and abilities the PCs have demonstrated. What has the villain learned about the characters and their motives? How will he use this knowledge in future adventures?

Move/Countermove

Every other adventure or so, the villain should take an action that advances his plan. With a few exceptions, the Move/Countermove adventure begins when the players first become aware that the villain is doing something.

A Move/Countermove adventure is about the interaction of the villain's plan and the player characters' efforts to stop it. The villain acts. The PCs learn about that action and respond. The villain learns about the response and responds to it in turn. There may be no change to the original plan, but you must consider each action the PCs take, decide if the villain or his minions know about it, and figure out what they do differently because of that information.

That can be difficult, especially in 30 seconds with five shouting players and a caffeine buzz. Advance preparation helps a lot. While planning the adventure, imagine a few potential responses for each action the villain takes. Think about what the PCs might do, then contemplate how the villain or his minions might respond. During the actual game, the player characters will probably do something different from what you imagined, but the exercise of imagining two levels of response gives you a sense of the possibilities.

Every so often, the player characters will try to take the conflict to the villain and initiate actions of their own. This is a good thing, and should be encouraged — but it's reasonable to ask for some advance notice. If the players want their characters to make a move against the villain, the best time to make this intention clear is during the end of an adventure, preferably with portentous statements like "Now the duke will get a taste of his own medicine!"

The players don't need to submit a detailed plan, but they should tell you whether they plan a physical, magical, diplomatic, or political approach to their problem. That gives you a chance to prepare by envisioning potential situations and responses. You'll be improvising during the game itself, but exploring the possibilities ahead of time makes that much easier.

Finally, you may solicit a move against the villain from the player characters. (Such a solicitation may be a Golden Opportunity, discussed above.) In this situation, the first

step of the adventure is to show the players that an opportunity exists. Since much of an action campaign involves responding to the villain, make it absolutely clear that on this occasion the ball is in the players' court.

Once the players understand the opportunity, their characters should be free to use it however the players like. Most of the time "how to use this" is fairly obvious. However, you must always assume that the players will think of an unusual approach. These ideas should be encouraged rather than stifled.

Red Herrings

Not everything in an action campaign is what it seems to be. Sometimes it's useful to send the players and their characters down the wrong trail. (This is a good way for a villain to accomplish an important part of his plan without the interference of the PCs.)

What makes a Red Herring adventure satisfying is that the player characters are able to expose it, deal with it, and move on. If they think Prince Andrew is poisoning the pigeons, then they should follow him around the park and have an exciting adventure before discovering that he has nothing to do with the matter. One adventure suspecting the prince is entertaining; three such adventures are not.

That doesn't mean you can't surprise the players by hiding a villain in their midst for weeks or revealing that the Rod of Nibomay is just an old stick several adventures after it is found. Just don't build many adventures around one Red Herring. Spending several adventures pursuing a false lead is just wasting time.

Setbacks

Like Character Pieces, Setbacks are rare in action campaigns. The characters are usually too busy to pay attention to anything but the immediate plot.

On the other hand, a Setback can make a good subplot within another type of adventure. The death of a close friend or beloved relative may change the way a player character sees the world. Many players love playing through their character's ordinary problems as well as extraordinary crises. If you have one or more of these players, they will relish the chance to show off their characters and roleplaying skills a little.

A little bit of subplot goes a long way. If Josiah's romantic difficulties take up five to ten minutes scattered through the session, everyone will be entertained by the colorful character moments. A half an hour of continuous one-on-one roleplaying will leave everybody but the GM and Josiah's player bored to tears.

Climax

You can't raise the stakes forever. Every action campaign must bring the PCs and the villain together for a final showdown. This is the Climax, and it works a lot like the Climax of a power campaign. It should be difficult, it should be hard to succeed, and there should be a plot twist somewhere along the way.

What's different is that there should be more than the PCs' lives or success at stake. The Climax of an action-oriented campaign should be *big*, something that affects the entire political system of which the characters are a part. Presidential assassinations, landmark court decisions, war — whatever the characters are involved with should go down in history, even if their role in how it happened remains a secret.

One good way to build a campaign is to visualize an exciting Climax, then figure out what kind of villains and plots are likely to lead to that Climax.

Aftermath

Once the Climax is resolved, the tension of an action campaign falls off quickly. A single "What happened next?" adventure is often more than enough to wrap up the campaign. Sometimes you can wrap up the loose ends in just an hour of play.

The Aftermath is about restoring order to the player characters' lives. After battling for king and country, they should have a chance to remind themselves of why they did it. They may return to their homes, reunite with family members, receive medals of valor, or simply sit down for a drink and a song. Whatever their pleasure, each character should have a chance to sit back and say to herself, "I earned this."

(Then you can reveal the false ending and turn the enraged villain upon them one last time. It's traditional!)

ACTION CAMPAIGN OUTLINE: SEVEN DAYS OF DARKEST WINTER

Here's an example of a short action campaign designed to run over seven adventures with 4 to 6 players. Each adventure chronicles one day.

We start by imagining an exciting climax. How about a mad barbarian warrior, screaming to his dark gods as he seeks to steal the life of his chieftain and rule the tribe?

That's not bad — especially if we put the warrior and the chieftain on a sacred mountain beset by a raging blizzard.

That climax gives us both the villain — the mad barbarian warrior, who we'll name Rogarr (roh-GAHR) — and the setting. It's the winter solstice, and a large barbarian tribe is camped out in the sheltered valleys of their sacred mountain. (We'll call that Spirit Mountain, which is simple and straightforward.) The tribe is a democratic collection of clans — each blooded warrior has a say in the tribe's decisions, but the warriors usually follow the advice of the their war chieftain Zail and the tribe's eldest members.

Zail is a healthy 57 years old, and shows no sign of slowing down. (His father died wrestling a moose at the age of 102.) Rogarr is 40 and going nowhere fast in the tribe. He's eager to gain more influence, though, and is studying dark magic in the hope of accomplishing through enchantment what he has failed to do with leadership skills and physical prowess.

The next step is to fit the PCs into the setting. There are two good options available. The usual wandering heroes fit because they could be visiting the barbarians for a few days or months. (A warm barbarian longhouse is a good place to be on a cold winter's night.) They could also be junior members of the tribe. We want junior members so that the characters are less experienced than the villain, and because their low status will complicate their tasks later in the campaign.

As a powerful tribal chieftain, Zail should be about 12th level. Rogarr is a skilled fighter/cleric, and his position as an underling of Zail suggests that he should be about 9th level. The PCs should be around 4th level, which means that Rogarr will be a difficult challenge for them throughout this short campaign.

Day One: Teaser and First Encounter

The PCs join a hunt for a dire bear, which introduces them to Rogarr, Zail, and the other leaders of the tribe. After winning honor by slaying the bear, they stumble across a shrine to Crunor, a sinister god of the dead.

Examining the shrine uncovers signs of recent use and a blue bead worn only by the senior members of the tribe. One of the tribe's leaders must be in league with a dark god!

Day Two: Investigation

The next day, the tribe prepares for a feast in which the dire bear will be offered to the gods. The PCs may try to learn more about their discovery in the woods.

There are three possible suspects: Rogarr and two other tribal elders. All three of the senior members are accomplished hunters with good reasons to roam the forests. The characters must interact with the elders or stealthily search their belongings to find more clues.

Rogarr is careful about hiding away his tools of worship, but the characters may find a flake or two of obsidian in his clothes. They can then figure out that sacrifices to Crunor are made with obsidian knives, and that these flakes came from such a knife.

Depending on how subtle they are, the PCs may draw the attention of either Rogarr or Zail. Rogarr will not take overt action, but he studies the PCs to figure out what they know and what their weaknesses are. Zail will pose a problem to test the characters' wits, then swear them to secrecy and the defense of the tribe. He's been having bad dreams about treachery and betrayal, and fears they may be prophetic.

Day Three: Move/Countermove

On the third day, the feast begins and Rogarr makes his first move. He slips a hallucinogen into the tribe's mead and uses spells from Crunor to unleash a variety of phantasmal and spectral horrors in the longhouse. The party must cope with frightening monsters, barbarians on bad trips, and their own fever visions. If they keep their heads, however, they may be able to confirm Rogarr's involvement, follow him into the woods, watch his midnight prayers, and learn that he plans to take over the tribe before the week is out.

Day Four: Golden Opportunity

Over the next day, the PCs have several chances to confront Rogarr, starting at midnight while he's worshipping Crunor. As he's much more experienced than the PCs, Rogarr should have no trouble beating them in a direct confrontation, but he'll retreat if necessary to avoid serious injury or capture.

The characters have a better chance of accusing Rogarr before Zail or the tribe, but only if they can get proof of his activities. Rogarr has a secret cave near the shrine where he keeps his tools of worship and a journal of his activities. If the PCs can find the cave they'll have everything they need — but they have to run a gauntlet of traps and guardian spirits to retrieve the evidence.

In the unlikely event that the PCs succeed, Rogarr will grab Zail and flee into the forest to wait for the coming storm and the climax of his evil plan. The characters have a chance of catching him and wrapping up the campaign, but they probably won't.

Day Five: Red Herring

On the fifth day, one of the PCs hears whispers and chanting inside the rock of Spirit Mountain. The words sound like a chant to Crunor, implying that there may be several death-god worshippers in the tribe.

To learn more, the PCs may dig into the mountain, where they find a series of low passages. Upon further exploration, they find a troop of dwarven miners, whose muffled Dwarvish only sounded like a chilling prayer to dark gods. The dwarves have nothing to do with Rogarr's intrigues, but they don't appreciate being bothered at their work, and they know the barbarians will be angry to learn that the dwarves are digging through the tribe's sacred mountain.

Even if the player characters are willing to be reasonable about the matter, the dwarves decide that the safest course of action is to keep the party in custody while they spend the next few days mining the minerals they need. The PCs must escape or negotiate a release if they want to stop Rogarr's nefarious plans.

Day Six: Move/Countermove

Rogarr launches the next phase of his plan, casting a spell that confuses Zail and turns him into a babbling fool. He convinces the other tribal elders to let him take Zail to the top of the Spirit Mountain and help the chieftain recover from the visions that are afflicting him.

By now, the PCs should know that Rogarr is up to no good. They debate the idea in front of the elders, but winning will be difficult due to Rogarr's advantage in diplomatic skills. It may be easier to convince the elders to let them go along, at least part of the way. (Rogarr insists that the last part of the vision quest must be done alone.)

If the PCs do convince the elders to stop Rogarr, he bides his time and tries to kidnap Zail later that night. If the characters fail to convince the elders, the senior members may order the party to cease interfering and even put them under guard. Rogarr will have a free hand, and the PCs will have to escape their own tribe to stop him!

Day Seven: Climax and Aftermath

During the climax, the PCs chase Rogarr up the mountain and confront him as he tries to swap souls with Zail during a raging storm. The final battle will be as much against the weather as Rogarr, and will probably end with the evil fighter/cleric plummeting over the cliff to his death. The spell on Zail will be broken, and everybody will live happily ever after — unless the icy spirit of Rogarr bursts in during the celebratory feast that night …

ADVANCED CAMPAIGNS

An advanced campaign combines the ambition of a power campaign with the responsibility of an action campaign. However, it's more about the process of politics than the victories of the player characters.

NBC's *The West Wing* is a good model for advanced campaigns. This television drama follows a fictional United States president and his White House staff, giving nearly equal time to an ensemble cast of politicians, policy advisors, secretaries, and other support staff.

Most *West Wing* episodes are slices of life in the White House. The characters juggle crises and routine tasks. They make deals with congressmen and senators, negotiate with ambassadors, worry about the president's re-election, and are pestered by reporters. There's little action; most plots are resolved with a decision that is carried out off-camera. The focus is on the characters and the way they do their jobs.

TROUPE PLAY

If pirates are raiding the coastline, the queen, the exchequer, and the grand admiral may be very busy, but the lord justice may have little or nothing to do. Troupe play can be a good way to deal with this problem.

Troupe play assumes that the main player characters don't need to appear in every game session. When a player's main character isn't needed for a particular adventure, that character is off-stage attending to other business. The player runs another character with a stronger connection to the plot. This alternate character may be an assistant to the other PCs, a NPC who is helping the PCs deal with the current situation, or even a villain.

Alternate characters may become recurring "guest stars" who are always run by a particular player. If Violet's lord justice has nothing to do with military situations, she may put that character aside and play the minister of defense every time a military crisis develops. This keeps the player in the action, makes the minister's character more consistent, and reduces the workload for the GM. As the campaign continues, each player may develop a stable of characters and switch between them according to the demands of each adventure.

You can find more information about troupe-style play in the *Ars Magica* RPG, also from Atlas Games.

STEERING THE SHIP OF STATE

Action campaigns are about stopping villains; advanced campaigns are about making politics work. The adventure and campaign ideas discussed earlier are still useful, but the GM now has another story-generating tool to work with: the ebb and flow of change within the system.

An advanced campaign adds change to the political setting. The actions of the player characters and NPCs cause ripples of effects and unintended consequences. Solving one problem usually leads the characters to a new problem, and they must constantly adjust the direction in which their political system is heading.

All organized political systems have cycles in which young leaders become old leaders and are replaced with new leaders. There's always an election coming up or a new face in court, and even the mightiest kings grow old and die. That flow of new and old leaders creates power struggles and change. This is what power campaigns are all about, and why power campaigns are one part of the advanced campaign.

Political systems are also beset by problems. The advanced campaign takes the problem-solving structure of the action campaign and connects the problems together. One problem leads to another; villains are more of a symptom than a cause.

All these connections can be as complicated as real problems are in the real world. Fortunately, there's a tool that can simplify the connections, one of the most traditional tools in fantasy roleplaying.

Let's draw a map.

YES, WE'RE GOING BACK TO THE DUNGEON

The map to the right isn't a dungeon map, but it serves a similar purpose. Each "room" is a potential problem area for a political system. The connections between the rooms are the typical ways that dealing with one political problem can cause a new one.

The PCs start an advanced campaign in one area, and spend one or more adventures dealing with a problem in that area. When that problem is resolved, you can move them along the most appropriate connection to a new problem area. The PCs can roam the "dungeon" forever, defeating traps and villains, gaining experience, and gathering treasure.

The dungeon metaphor has other useful features. You can "split the party" and put different characters in different rooms. Their solutions to problems cause new situations in other rooms. If two or more characters act in ways that affect the same area, they may cancel each other out (preventing a problem) or reinforce each other's actions (making the problem worse). The map can also keep track of the actions and plans of villains and other powerful NPCs.

Unlike real dungeons, the political dungeon will probably never be "cleaned out." The map is constructed so that solutions lead to new problems — there's no "exit to utopia." It's your map, though. Feel free to add rooms, change connections, and even build in that exit.

PUTTING IT ALL TOGETHER

When all is said or done, political games are what you make of them. You can mix and match any of the settings or campaign styles in this book. You can transplant the rules into almost any genre. You can set a pace that ranges from lazy to thrill-ride. Political adventures stretch to fit almost any situation as long as you remember one fact: they're about people. If you can figure out who your game is about and what the characters want, the rest is just filling in the details.

Have fun ruling the world!

The Political Problem Map

GOVERNMENT ISSUES

These problem areas reflect the difficulties of good government.

```
Corruption        Taxation        Law & Order
& Waste
```

```
Wealth &                              National
Health                                Security

Freedom                    Trade
```
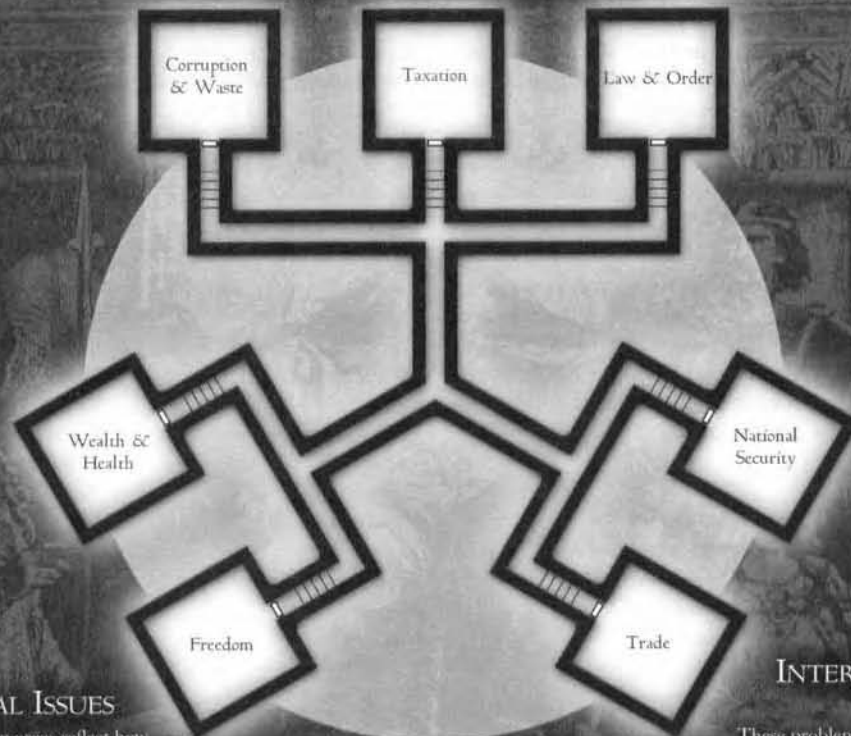
PERSONAL ISSUES

These problem areas reflect how ordinary citizens feel about their lives.

INTERNATIONAL ISSUES

These problem areas reflect the difficulties of dealing with other nations.

The following plot seeds should give you an idea of how to use each issue in your campaign. The sample outcomes explain how dealing with one problem can create or uncover others.

Corruption & Waste

Plot Seed: An important political ally is collecting huge bribes as part of his work for the Customs Office. The PCs need his support, so how can they stop his dishonesty?

Outcomes: Reducing Corruption & Waste can threaten **Freedom** and stretch police forces too far, affecting **Law & Order**.

Freedom

Plot Seed: After a bomb nearly destroys the Senate, a conservative senator presents a new law that will allow the government to place magical tattoos on anyone it deems to be "undesirable." Can wiser heads stop the law from being passed?

Outcomes: Increasing Freedom can reduce **Law & Order** and increase **Corruption**. Decreasing it stifles **Trade** and **Wealth & Health**.

Law & Order

Plot Seed: A paranoid secret policeman has slipped over the edge and launched a crusade against "subversive" halflings and gnomes. What's worse is that anybody who tries to stop him is obviously in league with the enemy.

Outcomes: Increasing Law & Order can reduce **Freedom**, encourage **Corruption & Waste**, and increase **Taxation**. Decreasing it can threaten **Trade** and **Wealth & Health**.

National Security

Plot Seed: A rogue general is building a secret army in preparation for a coup. The PCs must find it and convince him to disband it.

Outcomes: Beefing up the military can threaten **Trade**, cause **Corruption & Waste**, and increase **Taxation**.

Taxation

Plot Seed: A wild rumor sweeps the capital — the queen has declared a tax holiday, and will refund the money of anyone who shows up at the treasury! The PCs must prevent a riot, then find out who spread the rumor and why.

Outcomes: Lowering taxes can starve military, police, and social programs, causing problems with **National Security**, **Law & Order**, and **Wealth & Health**.

Trade

Plot Seed: A neighboring kingdom has used magic to improve its growing season, and its bumper crops are driving prices through the floor. The local farmers are up in arms and demanding help from the government.

Outcomes: Increasing Trade can endanger **National Security** and **Law & Order** as undesirable people and things slip over the border. Decreasing it reduces **Wealth & Heath**.

Wealth & Health

Plot Seed: A failing economy leaves many jobless and homeless. A crusading leader decides to get them off the streets, even if it means violently driving them out of town.

Outcomes: A booming economy can increase **Corruption & Waste**. Draconian measures to force failing economy to improve can threaten **Freedom** and **Law & Order**.

APPENDIX I: GOVERNMENTS AND TITLES

Most governments fall into several basic forms. However, they're called by all kinds of names and have multitudinous titles for their officials. Here's a grab bag of names for any kind of government or position.

NAMES FOR NATIONS

Here are some handy nouns, adjectives, and possessives to build nation names with. Remember that the name of a country doesn't have to have anything to do with its form of government — the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic had totally different political systems, for example.

Nouns
Caliphate
Commonwealth
Confederation
Domain
Dominion
Duchy
Federation
Empire
Emirate
Hegemony
Kingdom
League
Principality
Protectorate
Realm
Regency
Regime
Republic
State
Sultanate
Suzerainty
Union

Adjectives and Possessives
Cooperative
Democratic
Federal
Holy
Independent
People's
Popular
Royal
Socialist
Sovereign
United

OFFICIAL TITLES

Tired of calling every king a king? Here are some titles for rulers and other government officials.

The distinction between rulers, high officials, and low officials is blurry — the mayor of New York is a figure of national importance, most secretaries don't report directly to the president, and a Roman consul was one of the leaders of the republic. However, below are good typical uses of the titles.

Rulers and Leaders
Caliph
Chieftain
Czar (also Caesar and Kaiser)
Dictator
Emir
Emperor/Empress (also Imperator)
Gerent
Headman
Khan
King/Queen
Majesty
Mikado
Monarch
Mogul
Overlord
Pasha
Patriarch/Matriarch
Potentate
Prince/Princess
Rajah (also Maharajah)
Shah
Sheik
Sovereign
Sultan
Warlord

High Officials
Ambassador
Chancellor
Consul
Director
Emissary
Envoy
Factor
Governor
Justice
Legate
Minister
Praetors
Premier
Prime Minister
President
Nuncio
Plenipotentiary
Regent
Senator
Secretary
Shogun
Steward
Superintendent
Viceroy

Low and Local Officials
Alderman
Assemblyman
Attaché
Commissioner
Congressman
Counselor
Delegate
Herald
Inspector
Judge
Magistrate
Marshal
Mayor
Representative
Sheriff
Tribune

APPENDIX II: BIBLIOGRAPHY

This book was inspired by many things. Most of them are listed below, and they're a great source for plots, characters, and evil ideas.

PLAYS

The best way to appreciate a play is to see it. Fortunately, all of the plays below have excellent film versions and are frequently staged by local theaters.

Hamlet, Henry V, Julius Caesar, Macbeth, and *Richard III*, all by William Shakespeare. The Bard is always inspirational, but these five plays focus explicitly on political themes.

Inherit the Wind, by Jerome Lawrence and Robert E. Lee (1955, Bantam Books, current ISBN 0553-26915-1). The courtroom arguments in this fictionalized version of the 1925 Scopes Monkey Trial are a perfect example of a political debate that can be simulated using the maneuver system. Filmed several times, the best version is probably the 1960 release starring Spencer Tracy and Fredric March.

Twelve Angry Men, by Reginald Rose (1954, Dramatic Publishing Company, current ISBN 0871-29327-7). First presented as a television play, this intense character piece made Henry Fonda a star as the one juror who believes a criminal defendant is not as guilty as he appears to be. It's a showcase of just how much drama you can create with one room and a few people talking. The 1957 movie is also a classic.

TELEVISION

24 (Fox Television, 2001 to present). On the day of the presidential primary, CIA agent Jack Bauer (Kiefer Sutherland) tries to protect his family while foiling an assassination plot against a senator running for president. The show follows the classic political thriller structure, but each season takes place over one day and each weekly episode presents an hour of that day in real time. Everybody levels up for the second season, which pits Bauer against terrorists trying to detonate a nuclear weapon in Los Angeles.

The West Wing (NBC, 1999 to present). United States President Jed Bartlett (Martin Sheen) and his staff deal with the issues and crises of running the Free World. Creator Aaron Sorkin excels at presenting real issues and showing why they are important to the characters of the show.

BOOKS

Assassin's Apprentice, by Robin Hobb (1995, Bantam Books, current ISBN 0553-57339-X). A royal bastard is trained as an assassin but must save the kingdom when he learns that the youngest legitimate son plans to seize the throne. First in a trilogy that includes *Royal Assassin* and *Assassin's Quest;* Hobb continues the storyline with the related Liveship Trilogy, then picks up the story of lead character FitzChivalry in a sequel series that started with *Fool's Errand.*

The Chronicles of Amber, by Roger Zelazny (1970, Eos, ISBN 0380-80906-0). Immortal princes and princesses scheme to control the entire multiverse in this classic series full of outrageous plots and dirty tricks. Originally published as ten separate books, it is now available in one omnibus edition.

The Curse of Chalion, by Lois McMaster Bujold (2001, Eos, ISBN 0380-81860-4). A down-on-his-luck soldier becomes a royal tutor and must protect the heir to the throne from the many interests trying to destroy her.

Dune, by Frank Herbert (1965, Ace Books, ISBN 0441-17271-7). Quite possibly the most intricate political setting in science fiction. Herbert spent years developing the ecology, economy, politics and religion of his Imperium, then turned his characters loose in an plot of murder and revenge that would do Shakespeare proud. The moves, counter-moves, formalities, and ceremonies of *Dune's* political battles are brilliant. The series continues in a host of sequels by Herbert and his descendents, but the follow-up books lack the perfect balance of the original.

A Game of Thrones, by George R.R. Martin (1996, Bantam Books, ISBN 0553-57340-3). This sprawling epic fantasy sends three royal houses to war in a storyline inspired by the English Wars of the Roses. The two sequels (so far) are *A Clash of Kings* and *A Storm of Swords.* A collectable card game based on the books is published by Fantasy Flight Games.

The Gilded Chain, by Dave Duncan (1998, Eos, ISBN 0380-79126-9). The King's Blades are the ultimate bodyguards, trained to be the greatest swordsmen in the world and magically enchanted to be completely loyal and never sleep. But what happens when the lords the Blades protect are not worthy of the protection they receive? First in a loose series; the sequels — which can be read independently — include *Lord of the Fire Lands* and *Sky of Swords.*

Luck in the Shadows, by Lynn Flewelling (1996, Bantam Books, ISBN 0553-57542-2). A juggler arrested as a spy meets a fellow prisoner who really is a spy; the

two promptly escape and team up as adventurers for their queen. Sequels include *Stalking Darkness* and *Traitor's Moon*.

The Manchurian Candidate, by Richard Condon (1959, Jove, current ISBN 0515-09441-2). An army major plagued by nightmares realizes that his squad was captured in Korea and brainwashed. Worse, one of his squad mates has been programmed to be an assassin. The 1962 movie directed by John Frankenheimer is also a classic.

Seven Days in May, by Fletcher Knebel (1962, Bantam Books, current ISBN 0553-26956-9). President of the United States Jordan Lyman has seven days to prevent a military *coup d'etat* by General James Mattoon Scott — without letting the secret of the planned *coup* get out. Filmed by Frankenheimer in 1964 with a powerful cast and a faithful Rod Serling screenplay.

The Years of Rice and Salt, by Kim Stanley Robinson (2002, Bantam Books, ISBN 0553-10920-0). In an alternate history where Islam conquered the Western world, a handful of souls are reincarnated over and over again, gradually steering humanity toward a kinder and gentler future. This is a great tour of unusual political settings made more accessible by the recurring "player characters."

FILMS

Air Force One (1997). When terrorists capture the president's plane, the president (Harrison Ford) must call on his old soldiering skills to kick butt and take it back. Big, loud, and dumb, but still good adventure fodder.

The American President (1995). Written by *West Wing* creator Aaron Sorkin, this Rob Reiner-directed romantic comedy casts Michael Douglas as a president who falls in love with a lobbyist. The conflicts between public process and private life that are a hallmark of *The West Wing* are also featured here.

Enemy of the State (1998). A corrupt congressman seeks to destroy a lawyer who has accidentally received a videotape of the congressman committing murder.

Fail-Safe (1964). When an electrical malfunction sends American planes to deliver a nuclear attack on Moscow, the president (Henry Fonda) must find a way to prevent all-out war. This is a diplomatic thriller full of hard choices, based on a 1962 novel by Eugene Burdick and Harvey Wheeler that was first published during the Cuban Missile Crisis.

The Hunt for Red October (1990). When a Russian sub heads for American waters, CIA analyst Jack Ryan must figure out if it is defecting or launching an attack. The hunt for the sub keeps the story full of action, but Ryan's journey through a maze of conflicting agendas makes this a great political thriller. Based on the novel by Tom Clancy.

The Man Who Knew Too Much (1934 and 1956). Any Alfred Hitchcock movie can teach you how to run great suspense stories, but these movies make a particularly good lesson. Two Americans on vacation encounter a dying agent who warns them of an impending assassination in London. Alfred Hitchcock liked the story so much he made it twice; both versions are good, but the 1956 version starring Jimmy Stewart and Doris Day is brilliant.

Mr. Smith Goes to Washington (1939). The political establishment gets a shock when it picks a *naïve* and seemingly easy-to-control boy scout leader (Jimmy Stewart) to fill the office of a recently deceased senator. Mr. Smith's ideals soon have the corrupt senate in an uproar, leading to a showdown on the floor of the senate.

No Way Out (1987). A politician (Gene Hackman) accidentally kills his mistress, then enlists a navy officer (Kevin Costner) — who was also having an affair with the mistress — to hunt down the "KGB mole" who supposedly committed the crime. A paranoid Cold War thriller that sends Costner's character careening through a web of lies.

North by Northwest (1959). Another great Hitchcock thriller, this one casts Cary Grant as a hapless civilian mistaken for a spy. The action plot never lets up.

The Pelican Brief (1993). Two Supreme Court Justices have been murdered, and a law student (Julia Roberts) has just discovered why. Based on the John Grisham legal thriller.

APPENDIX III: INDEX OF D20 MATERIAL

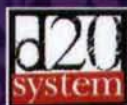Look for the next book in this series from Atlas Games:

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Dynasties and Demagogues is a toolkit for running and playing in political adventures in any D20 System™ campaign setting. Designed for both players and GMs, it provides:

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- 15 magic items like the *fly on the wall* surveillance device, and the *seeking arrow* that carries a message up to 6,000 miles through the air to land at your recipient's feet.

- 20 general feats like Commanding Voice, Inspire Frenzy, and Information Network, plus 24 new personality feats that let players gain extra experience for accomplishing roleplaying goals.

- 9 prestige classes that allow characters to become bodyguards, conspiracy leaders, information mages, religious leaders, and rise to a position of power like that of the true demagogue.

- Details on maneuvering within eight distinct political settings, from anarchy to empire, with examples of how classic elements like magic and fantasy races impact them.

- Easy-to-use rules for conducting debates, council votes, elections, and tournaments.

- Blueprints for political adventure and campaign construction, one short adventure, five developed adventure premises, and three political campaign outlines for GMs to customize.

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Requires the use of the Dungeons & Dragons® Players Handbook, Third Edition, published by Wizards of the Coast.®