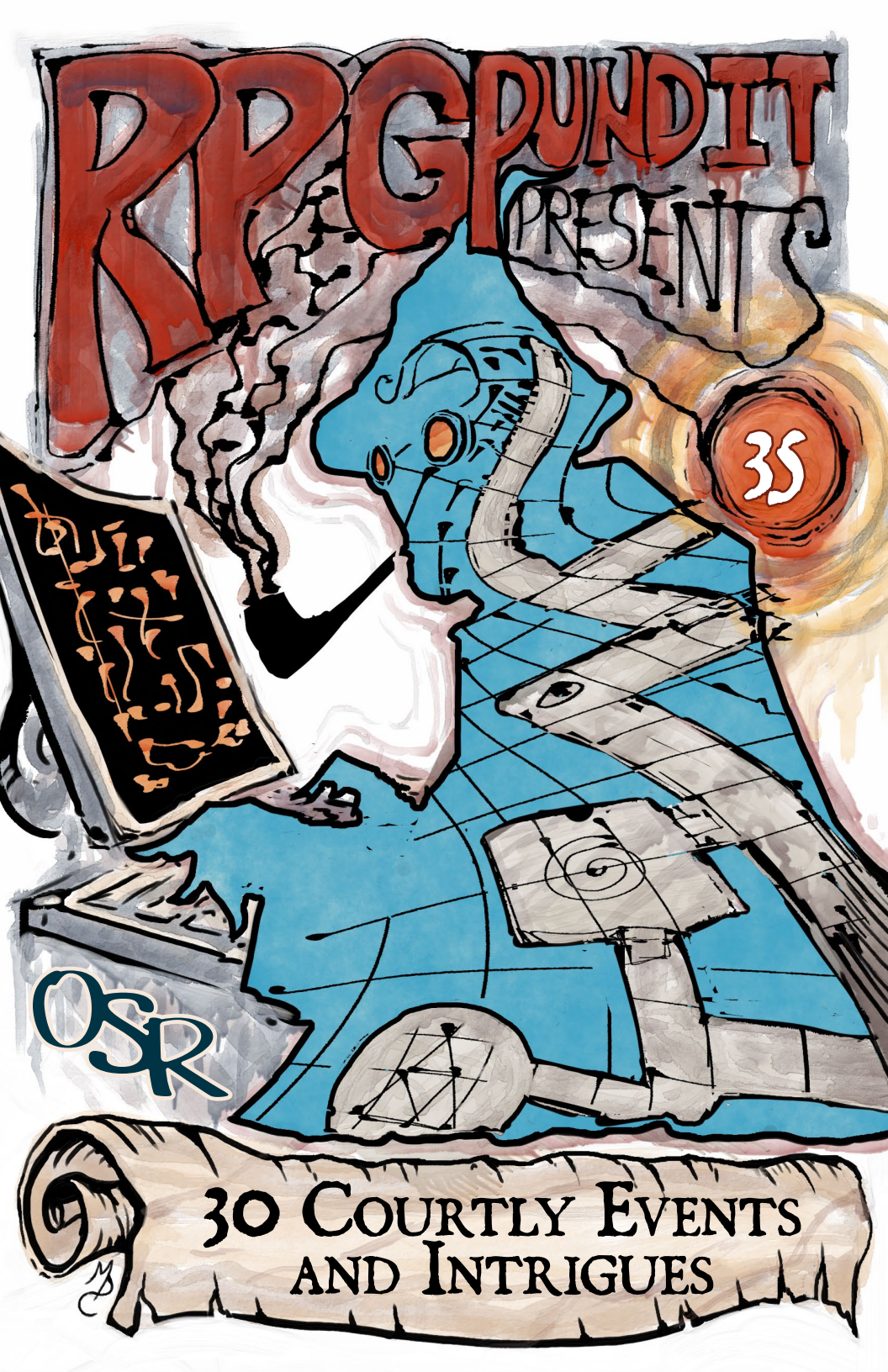




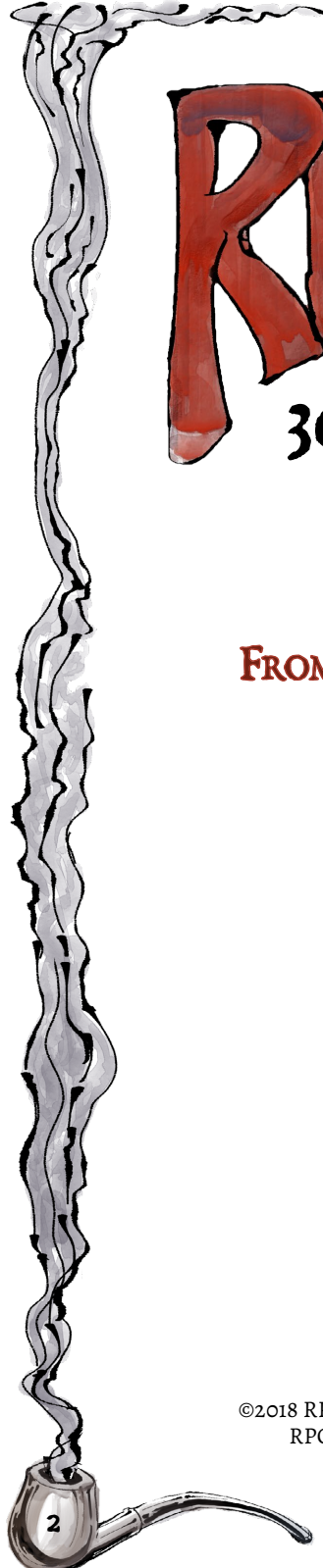
RPG PUNDIT

PRESENTS

35

OSR

30 COURTLY EVENTS
AND INTRIGUES



RPGPUNDIT PRESENTS

VOLUME 35 30 COURTLY EVENTS AND INTRIGUES

FROM THE MIND OF RPGPUNDIT

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RPG PUNDIT
PRESENTS

This collection of brief Medieval-Authentic adventure seeds is suitable for a campaign that is set (or partly set) in the intrigues of a court, be it one of a powerful lord or king. Depending on the composition of the player characters' party, some of the seeds might not be suitable, while others may require modification. Many of these are inspired by real events in medieval courts or popular stories and legends of the time.



I

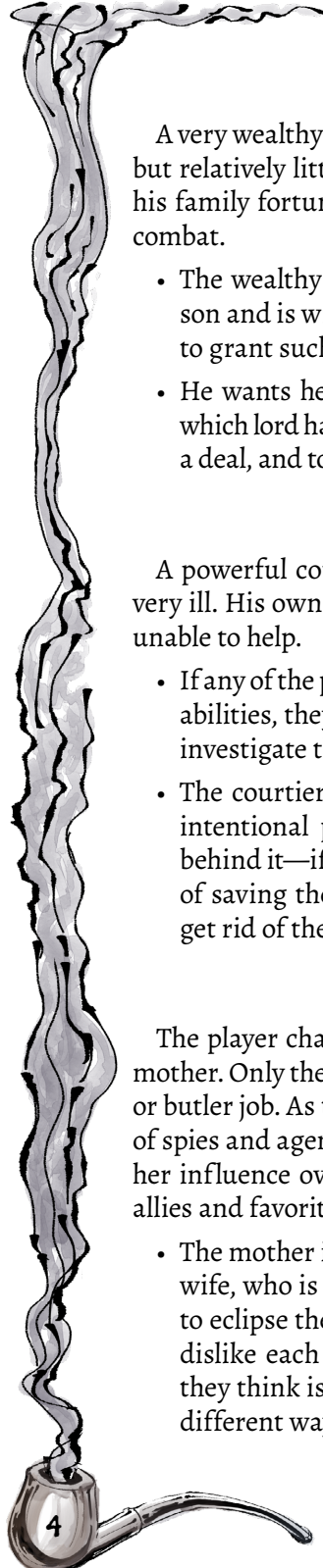
The last local baron of a frontier area has died. The Lord/King needs to send someone to administer this area in his name, either as officers or possibly as a gift of land with a knighthood to someone worthy.

- The area is either on the border with a territory whose lord is not very friendly to the player characters' lord or with that of a wilderland; it is a very poor land by the standards of the region.
- The local strongmen of the former ruler are unlikely to be happy that an outsider has been sent to rule them.
- Do the characters actually want this task? If so, they must figure out how to get those who influence the court to suggest it to the Lord/King; otherwise, they need to make sure that they are not the ones stuck with the job (and have someone else to stick with it).

2

An important courtier has entered into an affair with a lady of influence. The courtier's wife needs the affair to end without it being exposed, her husband ending up dead, and the lady of influence finding out that she knows anything about it. She will compensate any player characters who can help her with this, either with coin or some sort of favor at the court.

- If the husband of the lady of influence discovers the affair, he may contract the player characters to arrange an accident for his wife.
- If the lady of influence finds out that her affair has been exposed, she grows worried and hires thugs to kill the player characters.



3

A very wealthy commoner who has influence in an important guild, but relatively little influence at court is desperately trying to elevate his family fortunes. His son is a capable warrior who has seen some combat.

- The wealthy commoner wants to purchase a knighthood for his son and is willing to pay a small fortune to an earl or duke willing to grant such a thing.
- He wants help from one or more player characters to figure out which lord has the combination of greed and poverty to accept such a deal, and to find a way to make the offer without causing insult.

4

A powerful courtier with an important office has suddenly fallen very ill. His own doctors, as well as those of the Lord/King have been unable to help.

- If any of the player characters are clerics or magisters with healing abilities, they are asked to intercede; otherwise, they are asked to investigate the possible cause.
- The courtier and his wife both believe that his illness is due to intentional poisoning or a magical curse; a rival was actually behind it—if he thinks that the player characters have any chance of saving the courtier or discovering the truth, the rival tries to get rid of them by bribery, manipulation, or lethal force.

5

The player characters are invited into the retinue of a Lord/King's mother. Only the naive would think that this amounts to a babysitting or butler job. As the eldest member of the family, she has a whole web of spies and agents in aid of protecting her son, but also maintaining her influence over him to maintain her own power and benefit her allies and favorites.

- The mother is in a prolonged conflict with the Lord/King's young wife, who is building up her own circles of power; She is starting to eclipse the old lady in terms of influence over her son; the two dislike each other, constantly find themselves opposed in what they think is the best policy, and try to marginalize each other in different ways.

- Neither the mother nor the wife are willing to kill each other, but they might attempt to kill each other's agents or favorites.
- The Lord/King is largely clueless about all of this.

6

The Lord/King is aging (and/or infirm) to the point that he can no longer perform his normal duties. His courtiers are scheming against each other, engaging in power struggles to decide who gets to be in charge of various matters. One way or the other, two-thirds of the people vying to hold power will have to be removed.

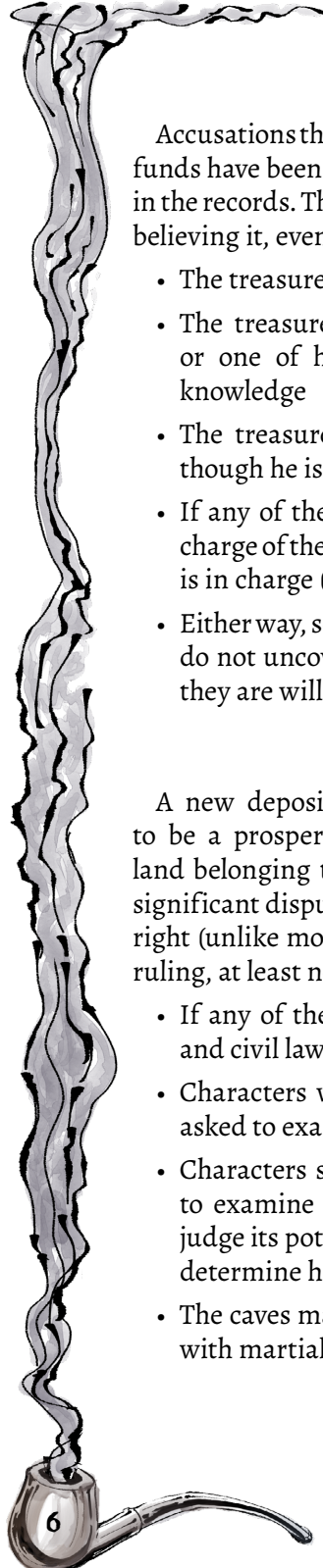
- Some have aligned with the Lady/Queen and her own courtiers, others with the youthful (though adult) heir, hoping to curry favor with the eventual ruler.
- The heir also has his own young friends and favorites with ideas of attaining the old courtiers' positions (the Lady/Queen is trying to push her own courtiers on the heir); in the opinion of the older courtiers and the Lady/Queen, some of the heir's favorites are clearly unsuitable to be given any kinds of responsibilities, but the heir is trying to push for some of them into offices (granting this could be a way to win his favor).

7

The player characters are sent as part of a diplomatic envoy to a foreign court on the continent.

- If one of the player characters is of sufficient social class, renown, experience, and influence, he may be the ambassador; otherwise, he is part of the ambassador's retinue.
- The purpose of the visit is to negotiate an alliance (possibly including a marriage proposal) to work against another foreign power; this third party has their own embassy to the foreign court, hoping to convince its king for an alliance against the player characters' homeland.
- The foreign court has its own rules (and likely its own language), so there should be a good element of culture shock involved.
- Depending on their station, the player characters might be required to advise and assist the ambassador in negotiations, engage in espionage against the court or enemy ambassador, or protect the ambassador from assassination.





8

Accusations that the treasurer of the Lord/King has misappropriated funds have been made through the discovery of a certain irregularity in the records. This is extremely serious, but the Lord/King has trouble believing it, even though he is obliged to investigate the claims.

- The treasurer has rivals that would like his position.
- The treasurer may be innocent, being framed by his enemies or one of his underlings committing the crime without his knowledge
- The treasurer may be guilty, yet trying to make it appear as though he is being framed to cover up the truth.
- If any of the player characters are nobles, they might be put in charge of the investigation or otherwise made to aid the noble who is in charge (especially those with experience in administration).
- Either way, someone wants to make sure that the player characters do not uncover to the truth, probably offering bribes or favors if they are willing to manipulate the course of the inquest.

9

A new deposit of iron has been discovered, with the potential to be a prosperous mining concern. It is on the border between land belonging to the Church and the Lord/King. This is causing a significant dispute, since the Church insists that the mine is theirs by right (unlike more normal situations, the Crown cannot just make a ruling, at least not without risking excommunication).

- If any of the player characters are experienced in ecclesiastical and civil law, they might be called to argue the case.
- Characters with experience in history or cartography might be asked to examine the claims to the territory in question.
- Characters skilled in mining or metallurgy lore might be asked to examine the cave in which the iron deposit was found and judge its potential value in order to help the Lord/King or Church determine how much fighting it is worth.
- The caves may have some sort of danger that requires characters with martial skills to deal with it.

10

The king requires a *seal loan* from his nobility in order to fund a military expedition on the continent (possibly against Frogmen).

- A group of noblemen are expressing serious opposition to this demand; some of them simply refuse to pay, while others demand a long list of special favors and control over parts of the expedition (like who commands it).
- If the player characters are in the service of the King, they may be required to involve themselves in negotiations, either as his envoys (if their stations and skills merit it) or to put some pressure on the nobles.
- If the player characters are in the service of a lord, they may be asked where he will stand on the issue, whether on the side of the King or the other dissatisfied lords.

11

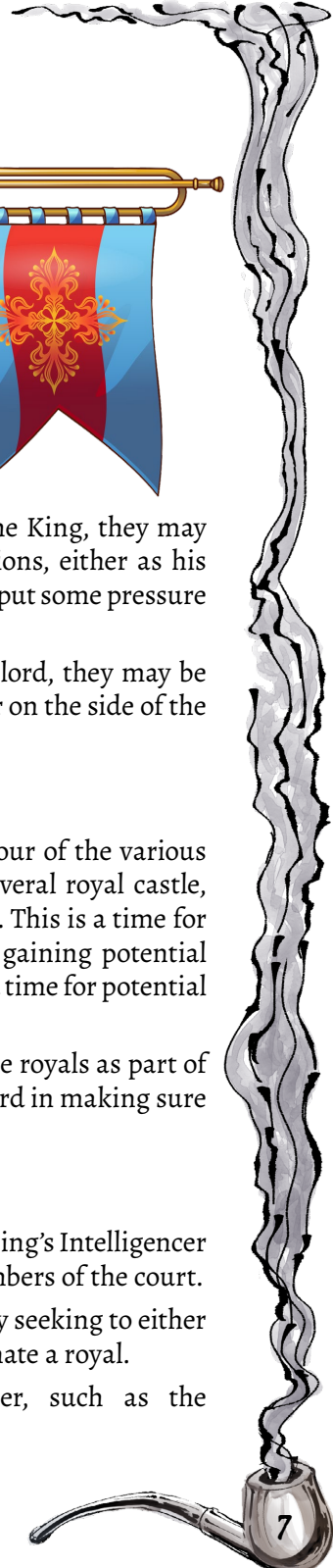
The King and Queen are going on a *progress*, a tour of the various lands in the Kingdom. This involves staying at several royal castle, as well as the properties of various earls and dukes. This is a time for showing the best possible image to the King and gaining potential favor, but many things can go wrong. It can also be a time for potential attempts at regicide, particularly if there is unrest.

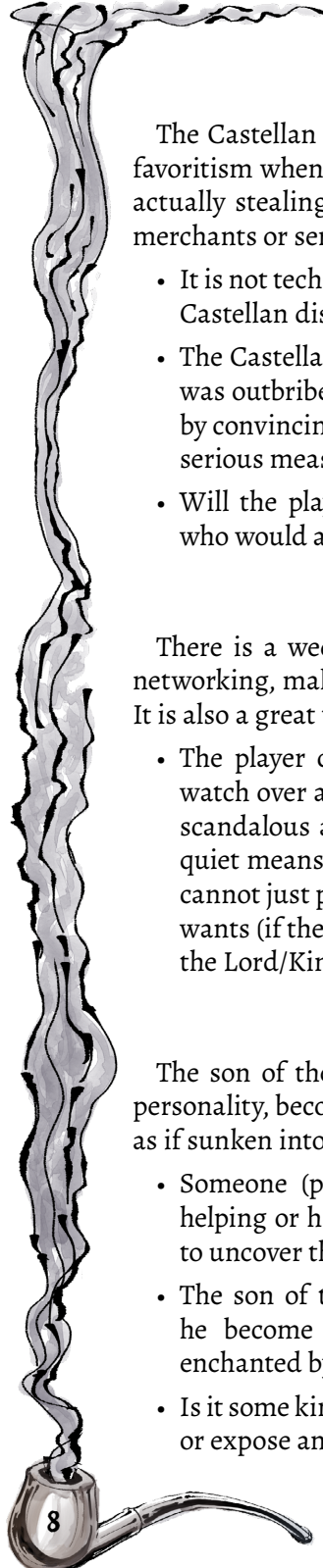
- The player characters may be accompanying the royals as part of their entourage or be required to assist their Lord in making sure that the King's stay in his keep goes well.

12

The player characters have been recruited by the King's Intelligencer to investigate a potential conspiracy involving members of the court.

- The spymaster assumes that this is a conspiracy seeking to either spy on the court for a foreign crown or assassinate a royal.
- The conspiracy may be even more sinister, such as the machinations of a Chaos cult.





13

The Castellan of the Lord/King's household has been engaging in favoritism when it comes to the expenditures of the court. He is not actually stealing from the court, but taking bribes to favor certain merchants or services for his own personal enrichment.

- It is not technically treason, but it is scandalous enough to get the Castellan dismissed.
- The Castellan is being blackmailed by one of the merchants who was outbribed by his competitor; he needs this to go away, either by convincing the blackmailer to cease his plans or through more serious measures.
- Will the player characters help him? There are other courtiers who would also love to see the Castellan ruined.

14

There is a wedding at court. It is a great opportunity for social networking, making or changing alliances, and all kinds of intrigue. It is also a great time for illicit romance.

- The player characters have been charged by the Lord/King to watch over a young cousin, who has a beau that would be utterly scandalous and very problematic if exposed. Helping to keep it quiet means being complicit in the affair, but they also probably cannot just physically prevent the young lord from doing what he wants (if they want to stop it, they would need to snitch on him to the Lord/King, likely gaining a new enemy).

15

The son of the Lord/King has suddenly had a serious change of personality, becoming sullen, withdrawn, and neglectful of his duties as if sunken into a deep melancholy.

- Someone (possibly the Lord/King, or a courtier interested in helping or harming his son) has requested the player characters to uncover the source of the problem.
- The son of the Lord/King himself is not very cooperative. Has he become ill, cursed, romantically entwined, or otherwise enchanted by magic?
- Is it some kind of an act or scheme of his own to possibly draw out or expose an enemy?

16

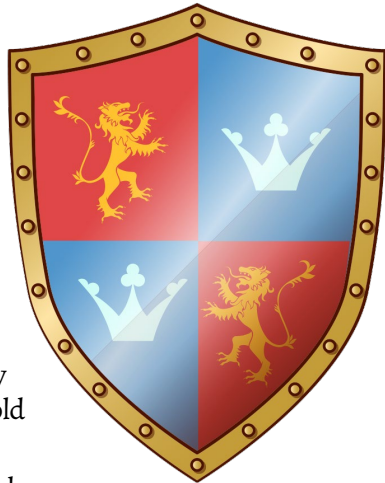
A courtier becomes publicly drunk, humiliating himself scandalously. The Lord/King is not showing him favor, so the courtier fears that he may soon be replaced from his office in the court.

- The courtier has come up with a harebrained scheme to get the heat off of him—he wants the player characters to arrange a very public scandal for another courtier to shift attention to someone else.
- The courtier is not particularly bright, but somewhat charming and very rich; he is hoping for the player characters to help him in exchange for the promise of his favor or cold hard cash.
- The courtier is open to reasonable-sounding alternative ideas that the player characters might have instead of his own scheme, provided he is convinced that it will put him back in favor and does not involve any kind of personal danger.

17

A magister of the court has gone missing.

- The magister was working as a court record-keeper/cartographer, but no one knows that he was actually working for the Lord/King's spymaster.
- Some of the magister's work in map-making was a cover for spying on smugglers and potential drop-off points for foreign spies.
- He was keeping an eye on several other courtiers on the spymaster's behalf, noting if any of them were looking at the old records of the keep.
- The magister might have been taken or killed by a criminal element, foreign agents, or rival courtier.
- The magister may have vanished due to a magical or demonic influence, rather than a human cause, or something born of his own magical research and alchemical lab.



A great tournament is being sponsored by the Lord/King. Nobles, knights, and ladies will be visiting the court, as will artists, troupes of actors, learned magisters, and members of the clergy. The tournament will also be full of commoners, surely including criminals and gypsies. There will be jousts, various feats of strength, wrestling, archery, horse-racing, contests of song, and maybe even demonstrations of alchemy. Besides the usual intrigues and networking, there will be a great feast at the court, including courtly dancing and games of the aristocracy—chess, tennis, and possibly a hunt.

- PCs of high station are tasked with helping to coordinate all the events, both in the court and the tourney itself.
- PC warriors are expected to do well in the tests of athleticism.
- PCs of at least knightly class are expected to participate in the joust.
- PCs of lower social status are expected to keep watch on the rabble and prevent problems.

19

Two young nobles (one possibly the son of a player character's lord) are dashing scoundrels who have become the centers of the younger generation's social circles. A cadre of men (both noble and commoner) gravitate around each of them. The two have become bitter rivals, probably over something stupid like a contest, woman, bad night of gambling, or mutual envy. Things have been escalating with scuffles in the street and near-fights in the court. Both have been spending time in the city, mingling with less-savory types, and interacting with gangs to which they have been funding. The whole thing is getting out of control.



- The player characters might be recruited to protect the youth with which their lord is concerned or put an end to the squabbling; they hate each other so much now that this might not be easy.
- Note that the death of either or both of the young aristocrats is not considered an acceptable end to the conflict.



20

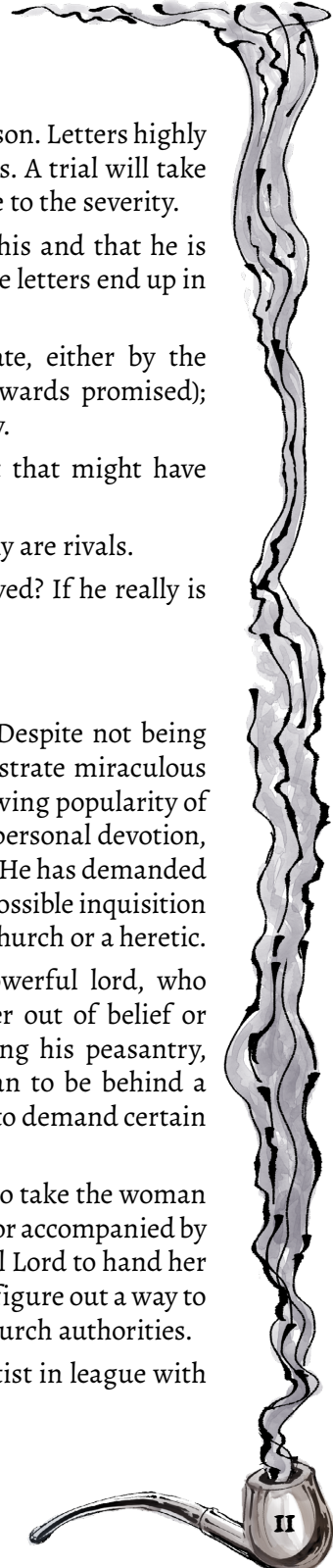
A nobleman of the court has been accused of treason. Letters highly critical of the King have been found in his quarters. A trial will take place within the court, possibly before the King due to the severity.

- The nobleman insists that the letters are not his and that he is being framed. If telling the truth, how did those letters end up in his rooms and who wrote them?
- The player characters are called to investigate, either by the Crown or the nobleman (with appropriate rewards promised); legal or forgery skills would come in very handy.
- There is more than one suspect in the court that might have wanted the noble out of the way.
- The nobleman's family and another noble family are rivals.
- Were foreign spies involved? Was magic involved? If he really is guilty, is there a reason to save him?

21

A holy woman has gained great renown lately. Despite not being a part of the Church, she has been said to demonstrate miraculous abilities. The Archbishop is concerned with the growing popularity of her movement, which calls for purity, charity, and personal devotion, but is critical of some of the excesses of the Church. He has demanded that the Lord/King bring her for examination and possible inquisition to determine if she is a saint in submission to the Church or a heretic.

- The woman is under the protection of a powerful lord, who has been sheltering and sponsoring her either out of belief or for personal benefit (to quell discontent among his peasantry, for example, or even as part of the bigger plan to be behind a religious resurgent movement that allows him to demand certain concessions from the King).
- The Lord/King either cannot or does not wish to take the woman by force, so the player characters must go alone or accompanied by a higher-status envoy to convince this powerful Lord to hand her over peacefully; if he does not do so, they must figure out a way to get her out of his land and into the hands of Church authorities.
- The woman may be real, a fraud, or even a cultist in league with demons.



Someone has somehow stolen one of the Lady/Queen's jewels during the winter court. It is of very high value, but even more valuable as the scandal that would be caused should it be revealed that the Lord/King cannot secure his jewels. The player characters (or only some of them) have been entrusted with the secret of the missing jewel, and tasked with recovering it before the matter becomes public.

- The Lord/King is extending the period of festivities, obliging everyone (due to the rules of hospitality) to remain in his keep for a few more days; sooner or later, his guests start to demand leave to go home, questions will be asked, and the truth of the theft will become public.
- The most-obvious suspects would be the ladies in waiting, servants, and Queen's guards; all of these have been thoroughly questioned to no avail.
- Other people who could have had obvious opportunity would include the Lady/Queen's priest, wives of some of the visiting nobles received in her chambers, or her own children.
- It could also have been a master thief or someone using magic.

The Lord/King is not in court, but away on tour (a military matter or other pressing concern). His wife is currently acting in his stead, but the court is half-empty and no serious matters are expected with his absence. A crisis emerges with his return still many weeks away—the sons of two vassal families with a long-standing feud have fought a duel, leaving one dead.

- The two families are on the verge of going to war with each other; the family of the deceased son is at court demanding that the Lady/Queen punish the guilty party.
- The family of the living son insists that the whole thing was self-defense and that the others are the truly guilty, as they have been raiding and engaging in confrontations for ages.
- The Lord/King's Senseschal and Castellan are on opposite sides of the conflict, both trying to pressure the Lady/Queen; some argue that she is not fit to judge in this matter; if the Lady/Queen tries to delay a resolution until the Lord/King's return, the two families will likely go to war with each other.

- The player characters may be called to advise the Lady/Queen on how to investigate the conflict between the two families, or put pressure on her husband's courtiers to reinforce her authority.

24

Representatives from the two greatest magical collegiums of the land are at court, both petitioning for donations to expand. Only one of them will get these funds. The Lord/King may confer with player characters (especially magisters) for their advice. The odds are that magisters went to one of these two schools, so another magister of the court is likely going to advocate just as strongly for the opposite school, his alma mater.

- Their cases may take the form of rhetoric, but someone might also suggest a contest of magical or alchemical wonder-working.
- The stakes being so high, there is the risk of subtle or not-so-subtle magical manipulations (including black magic) to sway the Lord/King's mind; some may even resort to blackmail against influential courtiers or undignified, old-fashioned violence.

25

A local minority group (Gypsies, Cymri, Jews, etc) are petitioning the Lord/King for protection against persecution. Some of his vassals have been recently engaging in persecutions against them, possibly expelling them from their territories or confiscating their properties. Are any of the player characters part of this minority group or do they have ties to them? Will they try to act on behalf of justice and mercy? They might be asked to advise or investigate the allegations against this group; the vassals involved might try to bribe or intimidate them into giving a report that supports their actions.

- These vassals have claimed legitimate causes for their actions, ranging from the minority abusing or cheating the locals, engaging in criminal activity, or performing sinister rituals against the faithful.
- The Lord/King must not only determine where justice lies, but also deal with the political repercussions of losing support among his vassals, or the commoners, if seen to be protecting this minority.
- Some courtiers suggest that the Lord/King should take advantage of the situation and confiscate the minority's properties for himself and his treasury.

One of the player characters happens to observe a midnight meeting between a secretary of the court (in the service of an important courtier) and one of the servants of a foreign ambassador. It looks as though he is exchanging documents for a money-purse. Is it treason?

- If the player characters capture the secretary or expose him to the authorities, he is mysteriously killed in his cell before revealing anything under torture. Is the secretary's master responsible? Was he working for someone else, perhaps a rival of his master? Could he have secretly been working for the King's Spymaster as a double agent? The player characters may need to tread carefully.
- The one person who might be able to shed light on all this is the servant of the ambassador, but he seems to have vanished; the player characters may be asked to find him.
- The player characters may pose a problem for the person behind this plot or the spymaster when it comes to the security of the kingdom; they may be at great risk.



A marriage has been arranged between a male member of the Lord/King's family and the daughter of another powerful house.

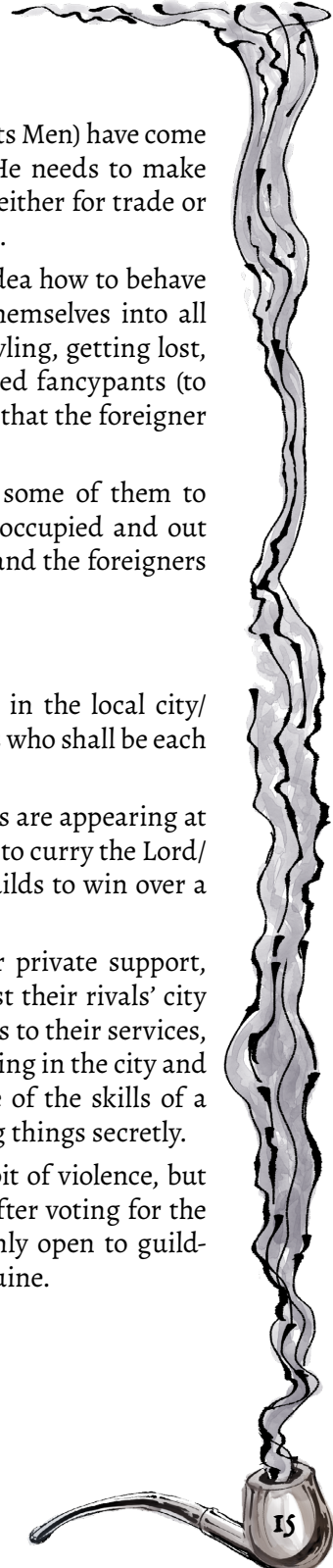
- Powerful factions in the court (one of the Lord/King's most-senior counselors or possibly the Lady/Queen) were advocating for a different union, so they will be trying to sabotage it.
- The young groom-to-be has decided that he *likes her not*; he is so unsatisfied that he may even try to flee in order to avoid the wedding, which would cause a political catastrophe.
- Depending on their makeup, the player characters might be called on to help escort the bride-to-be to the wedding (and avoid any attempts at foul play to stop it) or hunt down the groom-to-be and convince him to accept his fate.

An envoy of less-civilized foreigners (perhaps Scots Men) have come to the court on the invitation of the Lord/King. He needs to make certain alliances with some of these foreign lords, either for trade or in preparation of war against others of their people.

- Unfortunately, these uncouth brutes have no idea how to behave themselves in court; they are bound to get themselves into all kinds of trouble—drinking, womanizing, brawling, getting lost, or insulting courtiers whom they see as painted fancypants (to the point that honor would absolutely demand that the foreigner be challenged to a duel).
- The player characters might need to babysit some of them to avoid trouble. Can the characters keep them occupied and out of trouble until the negotiation can be settled and the foreigners carted off back north?

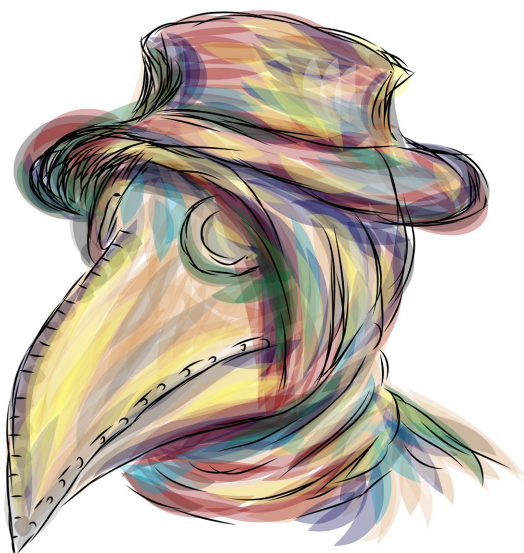
It is election time in all the tradesmen's guilds in the local city/capital. This is when they choose among themselves who shall be each guild's master for the ensuing year.

- All kinds of senior masters of a variety of guilds are appearing at the court; in the case of the most-powerful, it is to curry the Lord/King's favor; in other cases, it is for smaller guilds to win over a courtier or powerful secretary.
- The senior masters are in search of public or private support, resources, cash, or muscle to help them against their rivals' city gangs; courtiers who back them will have access to their services, which means information about what is occurring in the city and along trade routes, ability to raise a mob, use of the skills of a guild-affiliated street gang, and help in moving things secretly.
- Internal guild votes can sometimes lead to a bit of violence, but murder only happens in very extreme cases; after voting for the guild-masters comes voting for city mayor (only open to guild-members), which can sometimes be truly sanguine.



There is a plague and it has reached the court. If using the *Lion & Dragon RPG* or any other system that has rules for plague, be sure to check if the player characters have been infected.

- The court is being emptied quickly; The Lord/King's family has already retired to a safer castle under the guard of dozens of clerics and magisters; the Castellan is in charge, and it is his duty to ensure everything is shut down and sealed until the plague passes.
- The blind panic of the plague is an excellent time for bad behavior—some servants might try to steal trinkets before they flee, while some courtiers might try to steal a lot more than just trinkets.
- Enemies might try to settle old scores during this outbreak, where one more corpse on the pile of dead will not be noticed.
- Espionage or dark magic could be performed with less risk of discovery during this time.
- The player characters may have been entrusted to prevent any trouble in the time of the plague or care for important courtiers who have fallen ill (if they are clerics or magisters who have knowledge of healing). They may also try to sell their services or take advantage of the panic for themselves.



FANTASY ROLEPLAYING IN A DARK AGE

High ValorTM



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