

# Chronica Feudalis



A Game of Imagined Adventure in Medieval Europe

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A Game of Imagined Adventure in Medieval Europe

by Jeremy Keller

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Visit <http://chronicafeudalis.com> to learn about upcoming products and download character sheets and play aids.

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# Ireland and Britain

1150 A.D.



## Foreword by the Translator

I found the first fragment on a trip to England in January of 2005. I was in Oxford and this thing that could only be called a scrap stood out to me amongst all the other scraps of parchment a colleague was showing to me. It was the word “maginer” that caught my eye. It was, in actuality, not a whole word; it was a fragment too, just like the parchment it was scribed on. Immediately to its left was a large space marked in light pen marks where the initial — an imposing, capital I — would go if the intended illuminator had had ever gotten his chance to draw it.

“Imaginer.” A big French verb mixed in amongst archaic English prepositions, adjectives and nouns. To imagine. And that is just what I did. I spent the following four years imagining what this text was trying to tell me.

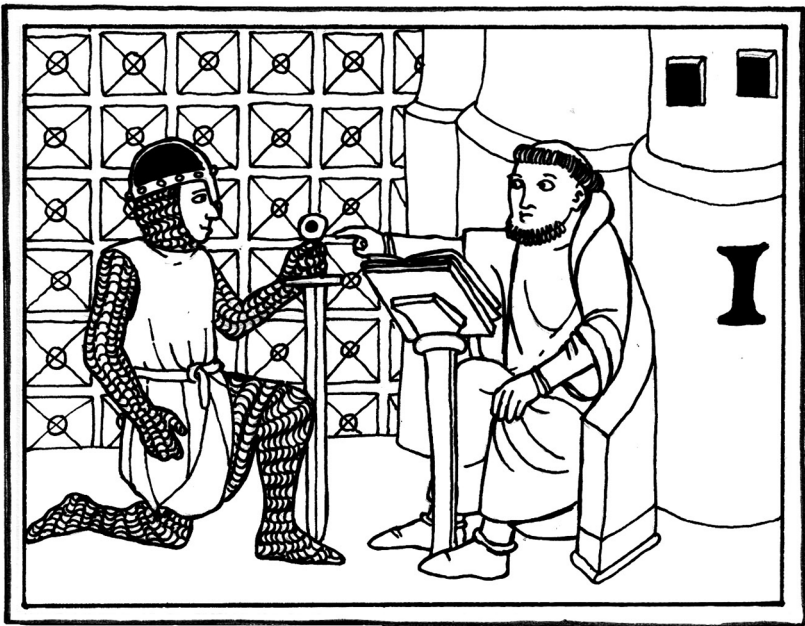
I soon found more fragments. One here, one there...always in some dusty corner of a university or college where they keep things they're unsure how to classify. I made my scans, transcribed the archaic words into my laptop, and was on my way. I was putting together a puzzle, but of course I never knew if all the pieces originally came from the same box. I didn't know what I had, I didn't know where it was all going, but the fragments were starting to tell a story.

Yet they weren't. More to the point, they were telling me the rules for how to tell a story. And not the type of story that an author crafts, but rather the kind that a chronicler experiences. A story not written by one person, but created in the moment by several people in unison. A collaborative, creative exercise. An opportunity to imagine.

The text's actual scribe, it turns out, was not a scribe at all. He was a cellarer, managing the food stores for a priory in England (of which the exact location I was never able to determine) and living sometime in the late 12th century. The cellarer did the writing, but the authorship belongs also to three monks he associated with: Brothers William, James and Adam. Like the creative exercise they describe, what they devised is also a work of collaboration: each member contributing something to the whole (though I must admit that I am somewhat disappointed that James never was able to illuminate its pages as the cellarer had promised).

All-in-all, the result of the endeavor is a game. It is not unlike modern role-playing games in which several players describe the actions of their characters in an imagined world. In fact, where the archaic descriptions or the spaces between fragments have failed to communicate the intentions of the 12th century cellarer and his fellow monks, I must admit that I have borrowed ideas from some of my favorite RPGs to fill the gaps.

I'm not sure that my work can necessarily be called a faithful translation of the original text. Wherever possible I have tried to maintain the spirit of the cellarer's words, but I have perhaps taken the game's first instruction, to imagine, a bit too literally. My efforts were targeted primarily at the game itself, decoding its idiosyncratic terms and mechanisms into something understandable and intuitive. Translation of the text notwithstanding, I think the resulting game is playable and entertaining while still something very close to what four modest monks played in the dim light of a damp cellar so many years ago. And I think they might even be proud to think this game of their invention would be played these vast centuries later. I hope you enjoy it as much as I have, and, as much as I suppose they did.



**I**magine, if you will, a sword blade swinging at you. You raise your shield just in time to deflect the lethal blow. Your opponent continues with a barrage of jabs and swipes, forcing you to scramble up the steps that spiral around the stone tower. You only barely twist your body out of reach of the blade's cold steel. Your own sword is contained by the narrow stairwell, your sword-arm constricted against the wall. Finally you see an opening. You swing out with your shield, knocking the attacker's blade to the side, finding the opportunity to raise your own sword into the air and then bring it crashing down.

Picture the fog after a long night of rain. Scattered in the gray are the shadowy shapes of tents and horses. You step ever-so-quietly, careful not to arouse the senses of the few men up and about the pilgrims' camp at this early hour. You slip through the flap of one of the larger tents. You can hear the bishop snoring and time your foot falls with each heavy snort. His pallet is a mound of expensive blankets, and there at the foot of it is the reliquary. It is a strongbox



of gold leaf inlays and dazzling gems. You find it heavy and force yourself not to grunt as you strain to lift it.

Think of fields muddy and worked over. The women and men who labor here are desolate and desperate from being overtaxed by a greedy baron. Most of what little their farms yield goes to feed and pay for soldiers in some far-off war. Everywhere you look is starvation and suffering, but in the middle of it all you see some hope. The baron is vulnerable with his men-at-arms away. The people have a chance to rise up against their lord and overthrow him. They will not do it on their own. They need your words and your courage. Only you can lead them to victory. You shout out to them and their voices raise in unison.

Envision crowded streets thick with the smell of sweat and produce rotting under the noon sun. You leap onto the back of your horse, spurring it forward. You race into a gallop but then must pull the reins to navigate the tight corners of the town's narrow alleyways. The guards are shouting, demanding you stop. Merchants and beggars reach at your horse's bridle and at your legs, but you twist out of their grasp and thunder ahead. One of the guards is on a horse now, giving chase. He is not the rider you are, but the palfrey he is on is fresh and quick, darting with ease around the carts and people littering the market square. He can almost reach out and grab you now. Trying to trap you in the square, some of the townspeople have upturned a cart in front of the passageway ahead. You snap your heels down on the horse's flanks and shout a terse command through your teeth. The horse leaps furiously, coursing in an arc over the wagon.

I must confess to you that, despite our commitment to prayer and hard work in service of our Lord, myself and a few of my fellow brothers here in our humble priory have taken to just these kinds of imaginings. We play these games, you see, in which each participant takes a different role and imagines himself to be somebody else. Not that Brother James pretends to be Brother Adam, but one might pretend to be a brave knight while the other makes believe he is a clever thief. This we started years ago, when we were all novices playing a game written by the late luminaries David, son of Arne, and Gary of Geneva; delving into dungeons, fighting vicious monsters and finding great treasures. Since then we have attempted all types of games in which different heroes and quests are available to us. We are quite fond of one in which we play spiritual enforcers who travel from town to town, solving the peasants' problems and exorcising foul demons.

But since then a few of us have wanted to play something a bit more familiar, a game in which we could play the heroes and interesting figures of our own time. In most of these games, sorcery leaves behind actual evidence of its wrath: fire shooting from a monster's eyes or some wizard floating on a cloud. But as

we have seen it, magic works in the mind's eye, not in front of the physical one. Curses that corrupt a man's heart and spells that only bend the minds of the simple a little. We wanted a game like that. No dragons or centaurs, but where the monsters are the men and women who have lost their way. Something like this may already exist, but we only have access to a limited number of written works in our poor monastery. It was Brother William who suggested that we create our own game rules. We are all educated and clever; why should we not make our own game just like Gary of Geneva or Vincent the Baker?

Since then, William has done most of the work putting together the fiddly bits and the mechanisms of the system of play, all with suggestions and gloriously witty ideas coming from Brothers James and Adam. It has been my humble duty to record each rule and create the manuscript you see before you. I personally find this horribly ironic as I am this priory's cellarer and rarely lift a pen, while William, James and Adam are noteworthy scribes and scholars. But alas, their fingers become so tired and cramped after long days of performing the Lord's work in the scriptorium that they cannot bear to scribble out one simple letter when it comes to our discussions of the game each night. I take notes by candlelight and have now started assembling this manuscript in my own time between meals and prayers. Upon completion, James has promised to illuminate the manuscript with beautiful initials and his marvelous illustrations.

This endeavor, of course, is all very antithetical to our religious and devoted work here at the priory and may be severely frowned upon by our superiors. For this purpose, I made the decision to write in my vernacular tongue, English, as you well know if you are reading this. Charles, our sacrist, who has never played a game in his life nor, dare I say, ever bent his cold lips into a smile, could not understand our purposes and would immediately report our activity to the prior and demand that we be punished. But to our fortune, Charles only reads Latin and French and so my vulgar English acts like a secret code that I hope will not arouse any suspicions. In any case, Charles is mostly deaf and we get away with much more here than God wishes, I presume.

But I digress. You want to know the rules of this game. This game of imagined adventure.

## What You Will Need

To play our game, you will first need players. You could play with as little as two and there is not necessarily any upper limit. We have four players here at the priory and we think it is a goodly number. Four is the number of season in the year and the number of Holy Gospels in the Bible. Five or seven would probably

work just as well, both being holy numbers, but we cannot recommend having six players.

One of these players, Brother William in our case, assumes the duties of the **Game Master** (who I shall henceforth refer to as the **GM**). William, being very wise, has in all his travels acquired a wealth of knowledge about our world. And the GM's main duty is to portray the world, its vast environments, and all those interesting people you meet in it. In this capacity, William seems a perfect fit. The rest of us all imagine ourselves as individual characters in the world. It is all quite delightful!

You will also need dice. Brother Adam carved many of these for us when we were playing Vincent the Baker's game. Our game uses all of the platonic solids and one that is not so platonic. We use the tetrahedron, or four-sided die (**d4**); the cube, or six-sided die (**d6**); the octahedron, or eight-sided die (**d8**); the decahedron, or ten-sided die and the non-platonic one of the bunch (**d10**); the dodecahedron, or twelve-sided die and my personal favorite (**d12**); and finally the icosahedron, or twenty-sided die (**d20**). Adam made sure we each have our own set, three of each type, because William sometimes tends to become a little angry with us when we touch his dice.

Finally, you will need a piece of parchment, a stylus, and some ink with which to make your character sheet and record information about your character. Brother James has done up a nice template that I will include at the back of this manuscript. You can copy his format for your own sheets. In addition, we have found that a few other trinkets — some small stones or beads, miniature sculptures that represent our characters, a large plastered mat with a grid of lines, and some maps — can help to facilitate the playing of our game.

## Step-Die System

Our game system uses what other games, as Brother Adam informs me, refer to as a step-die system. This means that various abilities and forces within the game are rated by the type of polyhedral die you roll to determine their effects. A d4 represents a fairly weak effect: the strength of a small child, the fire of a small candle flame. Each greater iteration of die type is another step forward in the power of the effect. A d6 is one step more powerful than a d4 and a d8 is one step greater yet. A d10 could represent the strength of a renowned athlete or a roaring bonfire. The d12 represents the very pinnacle of human ability and a d20 represents powers beyond even that.



d4



d6



d8



d10



d12



d20

## Playing Characters

As I mentioned earlier, those players who are not the GM portray particularly special characters we call **protagonists**. The narrative that is created by our game play is concerned with the decisions and actions of our characters. The GM's characters, in turn, are called **mentors** (those who train and aid our protagonists), **antagonists** (those who challenge and work against our protagonists), **agents** (those loyal servants of protagonists and antagonists), and finally **the simple** (common villagers and faceless crowds).

You can describe your character using many sorts of literary or practical methods, but William has decided on a certain set of descriptors and numbers that define each character in terms of the rules of the game. Specifically, these are **skills**, **tools**, **aspects**, and **backgrounds**. Characters also have **Ardor** points and **Vigor** points.

### SKILLS

Skills are the particular abilities that Brother William has specifically designated while crafting this game. I promise to compile a list of them in the following chapter and include a description of each at the end of that chapter. Suffice it to say for now, if you want to make a daring leap, you use a skill called Dash; if you intend to impress a pretty courtier, you may wish to use your Entice skill. Each skill is ranked, using the step-die system, from d4 up to d12. A character with a Boat skill ranked at d4 is a novice at sea and untrained, while a character with a Boat skill of d6 is competent at the task and a d8 would make her an expert. A character with a Boat skill of d10 is a veteran, an old hand if you will, and fears no storm or wave. A skill rank of d12 represents the pinnacle of mastery in that field. No woman or man ever has a skill ranked higher than d12. The d20 is reserved only for God's creatures that have been blessed with some gift beyond men, such as how a horse can always outpace a human or the great lion surpasses our strength.

### TOOLS

Tools are the equipment, arms, armor, and even animals that our characters travel with on their adventures. Like skills, each is ranked with a die type ranging from d4 all the way to d20. The tool's rank is a representation of how effective it is in aiding the tasks with which the tool was designed for.





## ASPECTS

Aspects<sup>1</sup> are abilities that you devise and describe for yourself. They handle all those things that William's meager list of skill cannot. Aspects may be talents, flaws, beliefs, disfigurements, specializations, or phobias. They may serve to define your character's occupation, social status, or religion. You will write your aspects as phrases; and these can be as simple as *Attractive* or as intricate as *Her fair beauty is the subject of many a song across the land*. The trick in all this is to write something that is both clear and inspiring.

Aspects are also ranked from d4 to d12. We will go over later how an aspect can be **invoked** to provide a bonus or **endured** when they cause a penalty. When **compelled**, aspects influence your character's behavior.

## BACKGROUNDS

Backgrounds are inspired by a marvelous idea that Brother James had. James always wants to play romantic characters, like the heroes of those French stories. But none of us, being monks, are ever comfortable hearing the descriptions of physical love that result from these romances. You should see Adam's face scrunch up if anyone mentions kissing when the target is something other than a bishop's ring. Therefore, backgrounds were invented as a solution to this problem.

A background, like an aspect, is a description of some quality of your character, usually something your character is vastly expert at. But it comes with an agreement that the subject of the background need never come up, at least in detail or mechanically, within the narrative of the game. A background is for things that happen briefly, between scenes and in the periphery of the story that deserve only a passing mention. As such, backgrounds need not have ranks.

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1 Translator's Note: I believe the mechanic that William came up with is more literally translated as "Special Gifts and Tests Handed Down to us from the Almighty." But it is a little convoluted with the chant of invocation and, well, a very long stated label for the mechanic that appears frequently throughout the text. When all is said and done, the rules for this subsystem are so similar to the aspects mechanic from the FATE 3.0 role-playing system, as I've read them in the game *Spirit of the Century*, that I've made a slight substitution here. As I've stated before, my primary goal with this translation is to provide a game as playable as the one William, et al., enjoyed over one that's a strict and accurate representation of the original manuscript. At any rate, as the mechanics and rules for FATE 3.0 are made available through the Open Game License, so are the aspect rules here. See the OGL page at the very end of this book for the full disclosure.

They are simply phrases by themselves. James usually writes something like *Romantic lover*.

## ARDOR

I believe that the best way to describe Ardor is that energy that grows in us when we encounter adversity; the energy that we spend to set things right in God's eyes. In the game, Ardor is a system of points. You earn these points when your character is hindered some way, usually by an aspect, but sometimes by a tool or some other condition. You spend Ardor points to invoke your aspects in your favor or, in some cases, to gain an extra action.

## VIGOR

Vigor is another point system. It represents just how much you are able to participate in any conflict your character gets into. Every protagonist, antagonist and mentor starts with 3 points of Vigor. Agents start with 2 points and the simple start with 1 point. Points of Vigor are lost when your enemies successfully attack you. If you run out of Vigor, you are eliminated from the conflict.



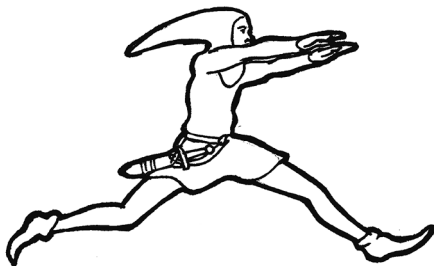
## Taking Action

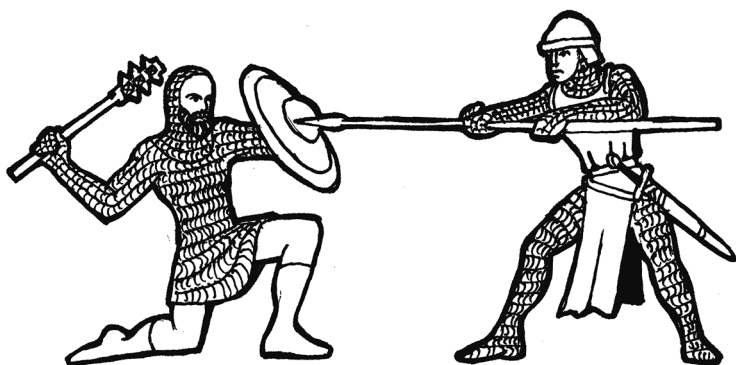
You might now wish to know what to do with all these skills, descriptors, dice, and points. Well, often you can simply let them sit. Your character can tie boot straps, eat meals, walk to town, and talk to friends with no rolling needed. But when your character does something particularly difficult, daring, or dangerous, you will need to roll dice. Furthermore, you will use dice when some other character attempts to counter your protagonist's action.

When this happens, you assemble what Brother James dubbed a **dice pool**. A dice pool is simply a few dice that you will roll at once. You start by deciding on the appropriate skill for the action you are performing, then you put that skill's die into your dice pool. Next, you decide if you have a tool listed on your character sheet that can aid you. If so, you add its die into your dice pool. Lastly, you have the opportunity to invoke one or more of your aspects. If you have an aspect phrased in such a way that it would help your chances, spend an Ardor point and add the aspect's die to your dice pool.

There are two things to note before you roll your dice. The first is that you cannot roll more dice than you currently have points of Vigor. If you do have more, remove the dice with the least number of sides from your dice pool until you fulfill this rule. Next, you must check for any penalties. If there is an aspect, a tool, or some condition at play that would hamper your success, you may have to remove another die from your dice pool. We will go over all of this in detail in the chapter on play.

Finally, you let the dice out of your hand in a gentle roll onto the table. Usually you are looking for the highest number that comes up on any of your dice to stand as your **primary result**. Sometimes the numbers that come up on the other dice are important as well. The result is compared to a **target number**, usually determined by your GM, or to the result of one of your opponent's rolls. If your primary result is greater than or equal to the target number or **opposed roll**, then your action is successfully performed.





## Fighting Enemies

An opposed roll alone is often not enough to convey the drama, tension, and excitement that ensues when two or more characters — their beliefs, their duties, their desires — come into **conflict** with each other. Just as conflict lies at the heart of a good story, conflict is the key to this game.

A conflict is, in the terms of the system that Brother William has devised, a series of opposed rolls with the intention to win **stakes**. When you win one of these rolls, you reduce your opponent's Vigor. When that foe has lost all his Vigor points, he is eliminated from the conflict. When you have eliminated all of your opponents, you win the stakes as agreed upon.

## Making Scenes

To borrow a term from the dramatists, the actions that characters take and the conflicts they involve themselves in occur within the framework of a **scene**. A scene consists of a time and place. The great hall of a castle in the morning. A dark forest two hours later. If the story jumps ahead in time, it is a new scene. If the characters move to a new location, it is a new scene.

Within each scene, characters refresh their Vigor points and then perform various actions to achieve any objectives they or the GM have within the scene. Some scenes might be the backdrop for a conflict, others might give the characters a chance to recuperate while others yet may involve investigation or a chance to develop relationships. Often, in our game, Brother William tells us that the scenes we find ourselves in are purely the result of the decisions we make while pretending to be our protagonists, and not ones that he had ever planned on including. But this is precisely when I believe playing these games of imagination to be the most fun: when it is alive and unpredictable.

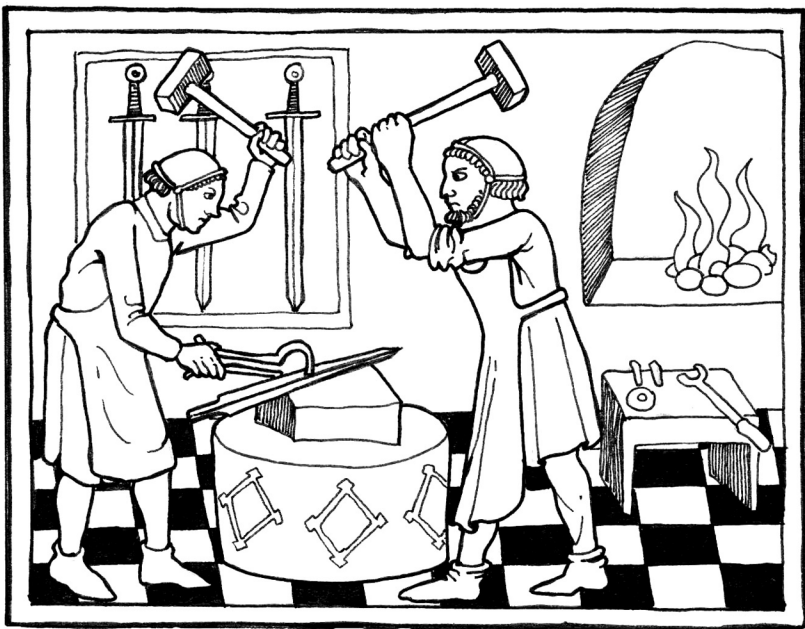


## Making History

Of course the whole reason we humble monks play this game is to access a world that is not available to us. Our days are spent in our small cells, at our little writing desks, or, in my case, in a damp cellar. And while we are proud of our modest life in our little priory, we sometimes desire an escape, and we hope you will understand it as we do, without breaking our sacred oaths. This is how we explore the kingdoms and empires of the continent or fight along side old King Henry in a great battle. In one of our adventures, Brother James' protagonist even became the King of France!

Just as the days of the Roman Empire are to us, our own time will someday be history to some future generation. This, our little sin, is our chance to be a part of that history. Even if our names are never recorded.





**C**reate in your mind the vision of a character. A great hero, a dreaded pirate, a clever outlaw, a devout nun. This is the person you would be if you were free to roam the countryside, find adventure, and discover hidden treasures. Think of the daring deeds this character has done, the witty things said, the risks taken, and the sacrifices made. This is your character and you have just completed the most difficult part of the process in creating him. All we must do now is come up with those things that will be written on your character sheet.

But let us back up for just a moment. Before we create our characters we must all agree on a focus for our game. Brother William calls this the “Hour of Suggestions, Good or Bad, in Which We Decide Collaboratively on the General Themes and Guidelines of the Upcoming Campaign”, or something to that effect. William is anything but terse. A campaign, incidentally, is in essence similar to a military campaign, though the focus need not always be military. It is just what we call a series of game sessions featuring the same characters.

The group must first decide, to some degree, what your coming game sessions are going to be about — military conquest? courtly intrigue? investigations of heresy? — since determining this as a group allows everyone to make a character that fits the premise. Perhaps you have done this with similar games, so I will leave it at that and move on to making characters.

## Protagonist Creation

First, you will need to copy the character sheet included at the end of this manuscript. You need not re-draw the little flourishes that Brother James put in, but I believe they add a nice touch. Next, summon again that vision of your character, which you will now use as the basis for the decisions you are about to make.

### CHOOSE THREE MENTORS

One of the things that I discover over and over here at the priory is that none of us are simply of a type. What I mean is that we are all monks here, but each of us is quite different. Certainly, as monks we have a similar education, but we each come from somewhere different. Brother William, by way of example, was for much of his life a soldier, and traveled across the continent — even into the lands of the infidel — before coming here. Conversely, James was found an orphan and has spent his entire life in this priory. I myself was born to a typical Anglo-Saxon family, my father a farmer and my mother a weaver. I have learned bits from both of their trades and this is one reason I was elected cellarer. So, no two monks are really alike, you see, and simply assigning a character the label of monk does no-one justice.

We devised a character creation method based on this philosophy. Instead of picking a type, each player picks three mentors who influence your character as he grows from childhood to young-adulthood. These are the parents, teachers, and other guides who provide him with whatever practical education he is lucky enough to end up with.

The following list is comprised of several mentors who are each specialists in a certain field. They will each teach your character his skills and provide him with a small selection of tools, given as gifts.

Please keep in mind what was mentioned about a common focus for your adventures. If you agree to play toiling peasants and commoners, there is no fairness in choosing the courtier or knight mentors. If the plan is to play pirates, it is a good idea for everyone to take the sailor mentor (so you know what to do on a ship). Let it also be noted that you may pick the same mentor more than once, or all three times, if you wish.

## MENTORS

<i>Mentor</i>	<i>Taught Skills</i>	<i>Gifted Tools</i>
<b>Archer</b>	Aim, Fitness, Sense	Longbow (d8), quiver of arrows (d10)
<b>Artisan</b>	Entice, Reflex, Sense	Toolkit (d6)
<b>Courtier</b>	Command, Deceive, Entice	Expensive gown or robes (d6)
<b>Doctor</b>	Command, Heal, Will	Surgeons kit (d6), bandages (d4)
<b>Guard</b>	Fitness, Parry, Sense	Spear (d8), round shield (d10), leather jerkin (d4)
<b>Hunter</b>	Aim, Hide, Hunt	Bow (d6), quiver of arrows (d10), snare trap (d4)
<b>Knight</b>	Fitness, Ride, Strike	Helm (d6), horse (d20), kite shield (d12), mail hauberk (d8), sword (d8)
<b>Merchant</b>	Deceive, Entice, Ride	Cart (d8), mule (d10)
<b>Minstrel</b>	Dash, Entice, Perform	Drum, flute, harp, or lute [pick one] (d8)
<b>Monk</b>	Fitness, Sense, Will	Habit (d6), stylus and ink (d6)
<b>Nun</b>	Empathy, Heal, Will	Habit (d6), prayer rope (d4)
<b>Outlaw</b>	Brawl, Fitness, Hide	Club (d6)
<b>Peasant</b>	Fitness, Climb, Sense	A hand tool [pick one] (d6), hard shoes (d6)
<b>Priest</b>	Command, Entice, Perform	Crucifix (d6), vestments (d6)
<b>Sailor</b>	Boat, Navigate, Swim	Map (d6), rope (d6)
<b>Soldier</b>	Fitness, Parry, Strike	Battle ax (d8), boots (d6), helm (d6), leather cuirass (d6)
<b>Thief</b>	Climb, Sneak, Steal	Dark cloak (d6), lock picks (d6), soft shoes (d6)



For the purpose of example, I will describe to you the set of characters in our latest campaign. We were to play a strange mix all traveling with each other on a pilgrimage. Now, to start with, Brother Adam had expressed a desire to play a nun. Actually, Adam always plays a nun. But we do not question his motives. Our game is our opportunity to escape the scrutiny of our vocation and if Adam wishes to portray a nun, then by God he shall. He picks a courtier as his first mentor. His character comes from a noble family but perhaps had too many older sisters to have a promising shot at marriage, though she nevertheless learned much from her mother. Her second mentor is a minstrel, a talented harper with whom she engaged in a long, secret love affair. Of course her final mentor is a nun, specifically the abbess of the convent she was sent to (probably directly after the harper incident was discovered).

James had the idea to play an outlaw looking for redemption. His first mentor is a soldier, his character's original occupation. Then, when he took to a life of crime during a period with no wars to fight, his mentor was a thief. After he was caught spying, branded as a criminal by having his eye gouged out, and exiled to live in the woods, James' character finds his third mentor, an outlaw. James admittedly tends towards some gruesome descriptions.

For myself, I wished to play a noble knight. My mentors are a monk, my character's tutor in childhood; a courtier, his mother; and a knight, his own father.

## DETERMINE SKILLS

With three mentors chosen, you are now able to calculate the rank of your skills. It should be known that every character — man, woman, or child — starts with a d4 in each available skill.

Now look at the listing for your first mentor. For each skill that mentor teaches, increase the rank of that skill on your character sheet by one step. Do this for each of your three mentors and you have your skills.

Write your skill's rank in the box under the skill's name on your character sheet. The little circle is for training. We will get to that later.



Here is the list of skills that I promised you, divided into four categories: chase, combat, parley, and subterfuge. Descriptions of each skill can be found on page 29.

### SKILLS BY CATEGORY

<i>Chase</i>	<i>Combat</i>	<i>Parley</i>	<i>Subterfuge</i>
Boat	Aim	Command	Hide
Climb	Brawl	Deceive	Hunt
Dash	Fitness	Empathy	Reflex
Navigate	Heal	Entice	Sense
Ride	Parry	Perform	Sneak
Swim	Strike	Will	Steal

So, for Adam's character, the nun, we will look at her first mentor, the courtier. The courtier teaches Command, Deceive, and Entice and so the nun's Command, Deceive, and Entice skills each increase from a d4 to a d6. The minstrel teaches the Dash, Entice, and Perform skills. Entice increases to a d8 while Dash and Perform, not yet trained, improve to a d6. Finally, the nun mentor teaches Empathy, Heal, and Will. These also increase to a d6. Now Adam's nun's skills look like this:

### The Skills of Brother Adam's Nun

Command	d6
Dash	d6
Deceive	d6
Empathy	d6
Entice	d8
Heal	d6
Perform	d6
Will	d6

Each of her other skills are ranked d4. For the record, here are the skill ranks for Brother James' character and my own.

### The Skills of Brother James' Outlaw

Brawl	d6
Climb	d6
Fitness	d8
Hide	d6
Parry	d6
Sneak	d6
Steal	d6
Strike	d6

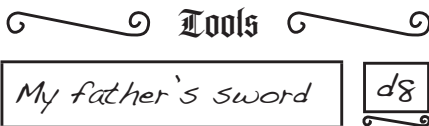
### The Skills of My Knight

Command	d6
Deceive	d6
Entice	d6
Fitness	d8
Ride	d6
Sense	d6
Strike	d6
Will	d6

## DETERMINE TOOLS

A character starts play with the equipment and items, indicated in the table on page 13, that she has received from her mentors. Write on your character sheet the tools listed with each of your three mentors. These are yours now to do with as you wish.

You have the liberty to rename your tools to make them more personal. My knight received a sword from his knight mentor, his father. So I decide that he in fact received his father's own sword, handed down to him in an inheritance. I wrote down "My father's sword" on my character sheet.



Everyone also starts with an additional tool called a purse, ranked at d4. Your purse represents the coins you have on hand; it is not necessarily indicative of your character's overall wealth, which may be tied up in land and estates.

These are the tools that Adam's nun would begin play with:

### The Tools Belonging to Brother Adam's Nun

Expensive gown	d6
Habit	d6
Harp	d8
Prayer rope	d4
Purse	d4

However, due to his nun's vows of poverty, Adam will abandon both the expensive gown and the purse (probably donating them to her convent). He determines that the harp is a modest one and acceptable to keep.

## WRITE THREE ASPECTS

Remember that vision you had of your protagonist. Bring that once again into your mind's eye. There is something special about your character, something unique separating her from anyone else, something a mere skill cannot describe. Imagine her doing the most daring, adventurous deed you desire doing. Something so amazing that a novice would break his vow of silence to stand up and cheer. Now think how she can do that, where she learned to, or why she wants to. What motivates, challenges, and drives her?

Now you need a phrase that encapsulates this quality of your protagonist. This phrase is an aspect. Repeat this process two more times. Write down all three on your character sheet, then rank each aspect at a d8.

Do not be afraid to write aspects that appear disadvantageous. These aspects can be employed to earn you Ardor points which, in turn, you will need to invoke your more advantageous aspects. Bold maladies of the body or mind, such as *Blind* or *Cowardly*, can earn you Ardor quite regularly.

The best aspects are those that can be seen as positive or negative, depending on the context. An aspect such as *Quick to anger* might work against you (earning you Ardor) in a delicate social situation, but could gain you advantage on the battlefield.

Aspects may also indicate relationships. This type of aspect helps tie your character into the world and create all sorts of interesting situations to play with. Consider making your relationship with one of your mentors an aspect and see where that leads.

Make sure you share your aspects with the group, because other players may wish to create aspects that play off of yours. This way, when you do something

wonderful, they will be able to do something wonderful too. If you have trouble thinking up an aspect or difficulty deciding how to phrase it, discuss this with your friends. Perhaps they can aid you.

Above all else, make sure that the GM knows about all of your aspects. These little phrases represent the things you most wish to see happen. If they are to happen in the game, you will need the GM's help. And a clever GM will do well to present situations in which you may use your aspects over and over again.

For my brave knight, I know that first and foremost I want an aspect that identifies him as currently being a knight. His skills alone and the fact that he took a knight as a mentor does not make that explicit, so this aspect will establish his status. But *Knight* alone is a rather boring descriptor. So, I close my eyes and imagine harder. I imagine some horrible danger, some terrible scene of violence and horrendous risk lying in his path. He does not turn back. He walks forward into the danger. He is brave, he is courageous, he is... I have my first aspect: *Fearless knight*. I can even imagine it being used to earn me some Ardor points.

Next I see my knight, his sword a flash and blur, quickly disarming a foe and pressing the point of his blade against the vile enemy's throat. This aspect will be a little more simple: *Sword master*. Certainly the Strike skill covers the use of all weapons, but I want to show that my character prefers the sword: the weapon of nobility and honor.

Finally, I want an aspect that makes me a part of the world, that connects me to someone firmly in it. Every knight has a lord. My final aspect: *Protector of Lord Hugh*. Not only does it indicate my loyalty to the lord, but the word protector makes me sound tough and rugged, does it not?

So, my knight's aspects are thus:

*Fearless knight*  
*Sword master*  
*Protector of Lord Hugh*

Of course, I am always interested in battles and bravery and action. If you were to make a knight, you could have a

completely different set of aspects. Perhaps you are a knight interested in courtly intrigue and romance. You might have the following set of aspects:

*Sanguine temperament*  
*Chaste cavalier*  
*For the love of my queen*

Therefore our two characters could have the same skills, but still be completely unique.

## BACKGROUNDS

Do you remember the story of Brother James and his romantic characters? Well, it is time to think of what you least desire to see in your game sessions. A background is expressed as something your protagonist is good at. In fact, she is such an expert that it would be a waste of time to challenge her with this particular facet of life. If I were to abhor violence — well, which I do, but I like to imagine a little bit of it in my game — I could pick *Sword master* as a background instead of an aspect. William would now know that I do not want combat and violence within the narrative of the game. Certainly, there might be a passing mention of how I vanquished some foe at the battle of something or other, or of how I defeated a rival in a duel. But all these happen, as the dramatists say, off-stage. What happens on-stage is the types of things we players enjoy, what we have written down as aspects.

Backgrounds do not have ranks. They are neither invoked nor are they compelled. They exist merely to give us a little more information about your character and indicate the types of things your character does in the background of play.

It is always a good idea, as it is with aspects, to discuss these things collaboratively even if just to make sure that there is some theme or subject left to play on-stage.

You may write up to three backgrounds. If you cannot think of any subject you wish to avoid in such a way, you need not take any background at all.

As per usual, James will write *Romantic lover* as a background for his character. The outlaw's amorous behavior is well known throughout the land, but those exploits will not be a focus of our adventures.

## EXAMPLE ASPECTS AND BACKGROUNDS

Abbot of _____	Dutiful subject	Lonely poet	Sails by the stars
Aged	Dwarf	Loving mother	Sanguine temperament
Agile	Earl of _____	Loyal cook	Scheming mind
Ambitious	Educated in the Latin	Loyal to _____	Sea legs
Arrogant	mass	Lives by the sword	Seeking redemption
Artful mason	Everyone has a price	Masterful baker	Sheriff of _____
Articulate speaker	Eye of the hawk	Mercenary	Short
Ascetic	Faithful tanner	Mild miller	Shrewd
At home in the forest	Falconer	Muslim traveler	Slender frame
Attractive	Fast runner	Natural climber	Speaks and reads Latin
Battle cry!	Fearless knight	Nervous	Speaks English [or French, German, etc.]
Big mouth	Follower of The Rule of	Noble lady	
Bishop of _____	St. Benedict	Oath sworn	Stalwart woodcutter
Blind	Follows orders	Of noble birth	Steady hands
Brave miner	For the love of _____	One-eye	Strong arm
Brash tactics	Giant	Open ears	Strong as an ox
Brooding	Gifted weaver	Ordinary-looking	Strong swimmer
Brute	Good with numbers	Persistent fisher	Student of history
Bully	Hard worker	Pious	Studious
Burly blacksmith	Her fair beauty is the	Politically savvy	Sword master
Celtic pride	subject of many a	Powerful orator	Sworn revenge
Chaste cavalier	song across the land	Pregnant	Tactical mind
Compassionate	Honorable warrior	Preserver of knowledge	Tall
Count of _____	I prescribe... leeches!	Prior of _____	Tough as nails
Cowardly	In love	Productive ethic	Tragic actor
Creative citizen	In the winter of my	Protector of _____	Ugly
Curiously observant	years	Proud father	Unrepentant heretic
Cutpurse	Innovative carpenter	Quick to anger	Vigilant
Daring	Jesting juggler	Quick witted	Vengeful
Deaf	Jewish scholar	Quiet as a mouse	Watchful shepherd
Devoted to _____	Known witch	Quiet as the dead	Weakling
Devout son	Knows the etiquette of	Reads Greek	Weakness for women
Desires the return of	the court	Rebellious nature	Well-spoken
his father's lands	Knows the land	Restless	Well-traveled, well-
Dirty fighter	Lack hand	Romantic lover	versed
Disciplined scribe	Lady knight	Rotund	Worldly musician
Dog trainer	Landed knight	Rugged farmer	Young and reckless
Doting daughter	Leads the flock	Sacred vows of the	Young at heart
Duke of _____	Leper	convent	



## BASIC ASSUMPTIONS

There are, given the time in which we live, certain assumptions we make about any character. We will outline the most gross of these. If any do not fit your protagonist, they are easy to contradict by means of an aspect or background.

### First, you are a Christian

The Holy Church has, thankfully, routed out most of the pagan traditions across these islands and the continent, establishing itself as the faith of record in each of the great kingdoms. Therefore the default character is a Christian. If you wish to play as a pagan, heretic, Muslim, or Jew, or have any other non-sanctioned affiliation, you may do so by indicating this with an aspect or background.

### Second, you are of the peasantry

Your protagonist is a common person. If instead you envision him as a member of the aristocracy or holding some office in the clergy, you must do so by expressing his status with an aspect or background. If your character knows a special trade, like masonry or blacksmithing, it should again be mentioned with an aspect or background.

### Third, you are healthy

You have two arms, two legs, two eyes, two ears, a mouth, and a nose. And they are all in working condition. If your character has any permanent ailments, disfigurements, or generally absent parts, it should be stated with an aspect or background.

### Fourth, you speak one language

Here in England, if you are a commoner, that language would be English. It would be French if you are of the aristocracy and Latin if you are brought up in the clergy. For any additional language your protagonist should know, write it as an aspect or background. I myself know English and Latin, so I could have dedicated one aspect to this regard. *Quid quid Latine dictum sit altum videtur*. Brother William knows several more languages but, of course, he is far from being a beginning character.

In our little group, there is an issue of language. Both the nun and my knight were born to noble families, so they speak French. The outlaw, however, was born a commoner and speaks only English. Adam and I take *Speaks English* as a background so that all three protagonists may communicate with each other. In addition, the nun is a member of the

clergy and therefore has some skill in Latin, so Adam writes the background *Speaks and reads Latin*.

Now, as these are backgrounds, not aspects, we are indicating that languages are not a source of enjoyment for us and should not be a focus of the game.

## ARDOR AND VIGOR

It should be known that all protagonists begin play with 3 points of Ardor and 3 points of Vigor.

## NAME YOUR CHARACTER

Your character sheet is almost ready, and to bring your protagonist to life, she now only needs a name.<sup>2</sup>

Adam has decided to name his nun Sister Emma. James' outlaw will be called Walter Lackeye. My own knight's name will be Sir Robert of Winchester.

Name

*Sir Robert of Winchester*

On the following three pages are the protagonists, in their entirety, that we have just made for our campaign.

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<sup>2</sup> Translator's Note: appropriate names would not be difficult for our cellarer to imagine, but for us, several centuries later, I thought I would provide some help.

Biblical names are common in the period. Men often have names like Adam, George, Godfrey, Henry, Hugh, John, Richard, Robert, Roger, Simon, Stephen, Thomas, Walter, and William. Popular names for women are Agnes, Alice, Beatrice, Catherine, Christina, Emma, Joan, Juliana, Margaret, Mariota, Matilda, and Sarah.

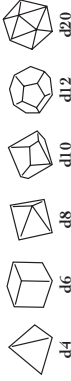
Surnames often divulge your occupation (Cartwright, Cooper, Fletcher, Smith, Tanner), the place you are from (Anjou, Bakersville, York), a feature you live near (Atwell, Hill, Wood), or your father's name (Fitz William, MacDonnell, O'Grady).

# Chronica Feudalis

A Game of Imagined Adventure

Name		Aliases	
Sister Emma		Courtier - Lady Beatrice, my mother Minstrel - Simon, my former lover Nun - Abbess Caroline	
Pique		Fiduc	
1	2	3	

Skills		Talents		Fights		Notes	
Chase	Combat	Parley	Subterfuge				
Boat	Aim	Command	Hide	Curiously observant			
				Student of history			
Climb	Brawl	Deceive	Hunt	Sacred vows of the convent			
Dash	Fitness	Empathy	Reflex				
Navigate	Heal	Entice	Sense	Backgrounds			
				Speaks and reads Latin			
Ride	Parry	Perform	Sneak	Speaks English			
Swim	Strike	Will	Steal	Injuries			



# Chronica Fruadalis

A Game of Imagined Adventure

Name *Walter Lackeye*

Player

Avatar

Attributes

Soldier - Tom the Ax  
Thief - Guillaume Cutpurse  
Outlaw - Eadric the Exiled

## Skills

## Tools

## Aspects

## Notes

Chase

Combat

Parley

Subterfuge

Boat

Aim

Command

Hide

*d4*

*d4*

*d4*

*d6*

Climb

Brawl

Deceive

Hunt

*d6*

*d6*

*d4*

*d4*

Dash

Fitness

Empathy

Reflex

*d4*

*d8*

*d4*

*d4*

Navigate

Heal

Entice

Sense

*d4*

*d4*

*d4*

*d4*

Ride

Parry

Perform

Sneak

*d4*

*d6*

*d4*

*d6*

Swim

Strike

Will

Steal

*d4*

*d6*

*d4*

*d6*



d4

d6

d8

d10

d12

d20

Battle ax

*d8*

One-eye

*d8*

Boots

*d6*

Natural climber

*d8*

Club

*d6*

Seeking redemption

*d8*

Dark cloak

*d6*

Yelm

*d6*

Leather cuirass

*d6*

Lock picks

*d6*

Soft shoes

*d6*

Backgrounds

Purse

*d4*

Romantic lover

Injuries

# A Game of Imagined Adventure

**attentions**

Monk - Brother Gerald, my tutor  
Courtier - Lady Alice, my mother  
Knight - Lord Robert, my father

Brother William suggests that Sister Emma is actually the daughter of Lord Hugh, who happens to be Sir Robert's lord and master. Emma is to be sent on a pilgrimage, and when Lord Hugh finds out, he sends Sir Robert along as her escort. William lets me know that in this way my *Protector to Lord Hugh* aspect would be useful for any action that protects Emma. Of course Emma, headstrong as she is, is convinced she can handle any ruffian she encounters single-handedly. Plus, as she is an ascetic member of a religious order in habit, any attacker would know they would go straight to hell if they laid a hand on her. As the pilgrimage begins, Emma gets to know Walter Lackeye, a poor outlaw who seeks redemption for his tortured soul, and takes kindly to him. The three protagonists become fast friends and that is when our adventures begin.

## The GM's Characters

While James, Adam, and myself have a particular structure for creating our protagonists, Brother William does not have the same restrictions for making the many antagonists, agents, mentors, and the simple of world. He assigns skills, tools, and aspects as he sees fit, representing the challenges and opportunities he wishes to put before us.

### THE SIMPLE

Let us start with the simple. Unless encountered en masse, these characters are not meant to pose a serious threat. They are the angry villagers with pitch forks and torches or the swarm of pirates taking over your ship.

The simple only get 1 point of Vigor each. William finds it bothersome to determine every skill, tool, and aspect they have if they are so easily dispatched and can only ever roll 1 die. So he just assigns one die type to them and is done with it. A villager might be a d4 or d6, a threatening pirate might rate as high as a d8. William uses this rank to stand in for any skill, tool, or aspect rank that may be required. Does the villager see us? William rolls a d6. Can he catch us? William rolls a d6.

### AGENTS

Agents are a step above the simple. They are bodyguards, captains, spies, or hangers-on. They typically do not have an agenda of their own, but are loyal to a more powerful protagonist or an antagonist.

Brother William usually does not think it worth the time to give an agent a full set of skills and aspects. Instead, he assigns a die representing each category of skills: chase, combat, parley, and subterfuge. A slow, witless thug might have a high rank in combat, but have a d6 in chase and subterfuge and only a d4 in parley. A scrawny, pampered noble might have a high parley rank and low ranks in the three more physical categories. These blanket ranks now represent any skill in their category.

Agents each have 2 points of Vigor.

## MENTORS

Mentors need to be more thought-out than agents and the simple. We need to know, at least, what skills they can teach to their apprentices. The good news is that all the standard mentors, the ones we used in creating our protagonists, have been fully assembled with their skills, tools, and aspects listed in Appendix I.

If you find that you need a mentor not present in the ones we have provided, please feel free to create your own. The formula is this: decide which three skills the mentor teaches and rank those each at a d10. Then choose the tools that the mentor would make available to a student. If you wish, write a few aspects for the mentor, to make her a bit more life-like and interesting, and rank each at a d8. There, you are done.

Of course, once play starts, any character — even a protagonist — is a potential mentor. If you have a skill of a higher rank than some other person, and you are willing to teach them, you may train and improve their rank in that skill. More on this will appear in the coming chapter.

I should remind you that mentors begin with 3 points of Vigor, just as protagonists do.

## ANTAGONISTS

Antagonists are not always the evil villain, although any evil villain your protagonists encounter will most assuredly be an antagonist. An antagonist is any character of interest who presents a challenge to the protagonists or whose agenda somehow conflicts with the protagonists' agenda. The antagonists in our own adventures have included merchants with important information, powerful nobles whose assistance we needed to win, and, yes, one or two foul and wretched evil villains that we fought.

Brother William suggests that you use whichever method you prefer for creating antagonists and remember that they come in all shapes and sizes. You might make one antagonist just as you would make a protagonist; while, for another, you might choose a standard mentor and add on a few extra skills and re-write an aspect or two. If the protagonists encounter an antagonist that you



had not prepared for, you might assign him or her a single die, as you would for the simple; or a die for each skill category, as you would an agent. When you have more time later — if the antagonist survives — you may wish to flesh him out and determine specific skills.

The GM has much liberty, but we recommend the following limitations:

- no skills may be ranked below d4
- no skills may be ranked above d12 (with an exception for some beasts)
- any important character should have at least one aspect

## ANIMALS

I almost forgot to mention God's creatures! The beasts great and small. Of course any animal you would need to roll dice for is essentially a simple character, agent or an antagonist. If you wish to determine each of the animal's skills, you should restrict yourself to the following list:

### ANIMAL SKILLS BY CATEGORY

<i>Chase</i>	<i>Combat</i>	<i>Parley</i>	<i>Subterfuge</i>
Climb Dash Swim	Brawl Fitness	Will	Hide Hunt Reflex Sense Sneak

In some cases, especially for Hunt, the skills represent only basic animal abilities such as tracking by smell and stalking prey, not complex skills such as setting traps.

### Animals as Tools

You may have noticed that some tools, such as horses and watchdogs, are actually animals. William has decided that in some cases an animal should be able to lend one of its skills as a tool to its master. So when a knight rolls his Ride skill, he adds his horse's Dash skill as a tool. When a guard is on the watch, he may add a dog's Sense skill as a tool to his own Sense roll.

### Superior Abilities

I believe we had mentioned that the d20 is reserved only for abilities that make human capabilities pale in comparison. I would assign a d20 to the horse's Dash skill or to a squirrel's Reflex skill (I can never catch the blasted things). If I encounter a bear in the woods, God help me, it will assuredly have a Brawl ranked at d20.

## Skills

The following is a list of available skills. Each listing includes a short description indicating how that skill may be used in your adventures. Also listed are any tools that may be used in conjunction with each skill.

### AIM

Aim is used for attacks made with thrown weapons or projectile weapons such as bows or slings. Note that while slings and bows can be nocked, aimed, and fired in one action, a crossbow requires a separate action to be loaded.

#### Tools

- d4 a sling, a throwing knife
- d6 a bow, a throwing ax
- d8 a longbow, a javelin
- d10 a crossbow

### BOAT

Boat is used to pilot vessels, whether sailed or rowed, that travel on water.

#### Tools

- d4 a rowboat
- d6 a longship
- d8 a roundship
- d10 a cog



## BRAWL

Brawl is used for punching, kicking, and wrestling, or for any form of combat that does not make use of weapons.

## COMMAND

Command is used to direct followers, give orders, and lead armies; it is also used to intimidate and bully.

### Tools

d6      a banner

## CLIMB

Climb is used to scale walls, cliff sides, trees, and other vertical surfaces.

### Tools

d6      a rope

d10     a ladder



## DASH

Dash is used to run and leap. It is also used to evade ranged attacks.

### Tools

d6        hard-soled shoes, boots

## DECEIVE

Deceive is used to lie, cheat, and outwit others.

### Tools

d6        a disguise

## EMPATHY

Empathy is used to sense the emotions of others and may be employed to heal injuries of the mind and social standing.

## ENTICE

Entice is used to persuade or influence others through social maneuverings and etiquette.

### Tools

d4        fine jewelry

d6        a fashionable gown or robes

d10      an entourage of well-dressed followers

## FITNESS

Fitness is used for feats of strength and to resist sickness and injury. Armor can be used as a tool to help resist damage from attacks.

### Tools

d4        a leather jerkin, a gambeson, a mail coif

d6        a hardened leather cuirass, a helm

d8        a mail hauberk

d10      a scale coat

## HEAL

Heal is used to treat sickness and injury.

### Tools

d4        a salve or bandages

d6        a surgeons kit (scalpel, needle, and thread)

## HIDE

Hide is used to conceal yourself from the perception of others.

### Tools

d6            a dark cloak

## HUNT

Hunt is used to search for clues or evidence. It is also used to set traps.

### Tools

d4            a snare trap

d8            a hunting dog, a trained falcon

## NAVIGATE

Navigate is used to find your way over vast geographies of land or water.

### Tools

d8            a map

## PARRY

Parry is used to deflect physical attacks by use of a hand weapon or a shield. Ranged attacks may only be parried with a shield. Brawl attacks may be parried without wielding a weapon or shield.

### Tools

d4            a dagger, knife

d6            a club, hand ax, short spear, short sword

d8            a battle ax, buckler, mace, spear, sword, war hammer

d10          a round shield

d12          a kite shield

## PERFORM

Perform is used for entertaining and captivating an audience.

### Tools

d4            juggling balls or pins

d6            a costume

d8            a musical instrument



## REFLEX

Reflex is used to react quickly to dangerous situations. It can be used to dodge Brawl and Strike attacks, and determines who acts first when initiative is tested.

## RIDE

Ride is used for traveling on horseback or for piloting a vehicle pulled by a beast of burden. The skill also covers the care and handling of these animals.

### Tools

- d10 a mule, a donkey
- d12 a pony
- d20 a horse

## SENSE

Sense is used to notice interesting things or spot danger.

### Tools

- d4 a candle
- d6 a torch
- d8 a lamp, a watch dog

**SNEAK**

Sneak is used to move quietly without arousing attention.

**Tools**

d6          soft-soled shoes

**STEAL**

Steal is used to pick locks, disable traps, and pick pockets.

**Tools**

d6          lock picks

**STRIKE**

Strike is used to make attacks with a hand weapon such as a sword or spear.

**Tools**

d4          a dagger, knife

d6          a club, hand ax, short spear, short sword

d8          a battle ax, mace, spear, sword, war hammer

**SWIM**

Swim is used to propel yourself in the water and to dive under its surface.

**WILL**

Will is used for bravery and conviction. It is used to stand against intimidation and steel yourself in social conflict.

**Tools**

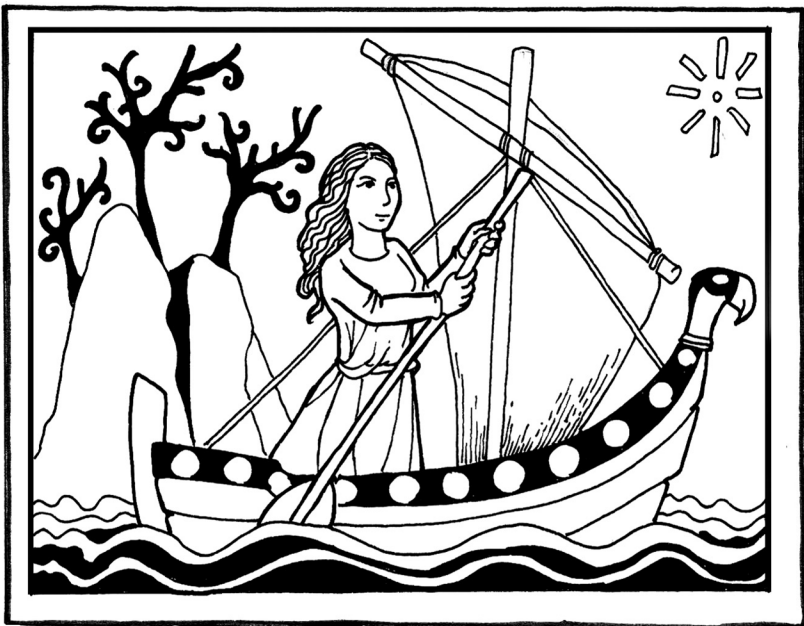
d4          a prayer rope

d6          a crucifix, the Bible, a habit

d8          a holy relic







**P**lay this like you would play a game, the skill of the strategist. Play this like you would play a part on a stage, the skill of an actor. Play this as you would in an empty field, envisioning great castles and daring heroics, the skill of a child. This is what it is to play our game. Now I will explain how.

## Beginning a Session

At the start of each session of play, Brother James, whose memory is unflappable, recalls for us what happened in the previous session of play.

We were all on our way to Canterbury, the destination for many a pilgrimage in England and the see of the Archbishop. Along the way, the weather was not kind and the rain blasted down upon us. We found fortune one night

when our pilgrimage came across a manor house. The lord of the manor, a baron named Thomas, invited us in and gave us all respite from the storm and a roof over our heads for the night.

Sister Emma, curious as she is, soon discovered that the manor had a small library and hidden in this library was a scroll, containing a certain writing of antiquity, that was meant to be delivered to Emma's own convent. But the scroll's couriers had never made it to the convent and Emma's abbess had wondered if they had been hijacked by some bandits. Emma quickly left the library before anyone might catch her there and returned to her friends, telling them all about what she had found.

Our three protagonists decide that they are within their rights to take the scroll back from Lord Thomas, even if by nefarious means. *Ex malo bonum*. They wait until their fellow pilgrims have all gone to sleep and then sneak out to the grounds of the manor. This is where our new session begins.

Now we are all ready to continue our adventure. At the start of a session, every protagonist begins with 3 points of Ardor. There is no reason to hoard these points, for when the next session begins, you lose any Ardor you have earned and start again with the standard 3 points. We use little stones to represent our Ardor points, so James, Adam, and I each stack the three stones next to our character sheet and dice. Brother William keeps a little bucket of extra stones next to him. These he hands to us when we are awarded our Ardor.

Once our memories are summoned and our little stones stacked, we three players become very quiet and let William set the scene.

## Setting Scenes

I had mentioned in the first chapter that a scene is a time and place in which our protagonists make decisions and take actions. A single session of play may be composed of one long scene or many short ones. Our little group usually plays out four to seven in a session.

The GM describes the environment that the protagonists are in and tells them what other characters are around. He gives more detail to the things that we might find interesting as well as those things that will spur us on our adventures.

### EXAMPLE SCENE ASPECTS

<i>Bright</i>	<i>Foggy</i>	<i>Quiet</i>	<i>Steep slope</i>
<i>Calm</i>	<i>Hot</i>	<i>Raining</i>	<i>Wet</i>
<i>Cold</i>	<i>Loose rocks</i>	<i>Rough ground</i>	<i>Windy</i>
<i>Crowded</i>	<i>Muddy</i>	<i>Slippery</i>	
<i>Dark</i>	<i>Noisy</i>	<i>Snowing</i>	

Anything that the GM describes about the environment of the scene could be an aspect. Yes, the scene may have aspects just as characters do. A dark cave might have aspects like *Dark* d10, *Slippery* d6 and *Loose rocks* d8. A scene's aspect might apply to the entire scene or just to part of it. While it is the GM's duty to devise these aspects and their ranks, the players can always suggest a scene's aspects based on the GM's description.

William tells us that we are in a small courtyard formed between the manor house itself, its stables, and its kitchen. The rain is falling hard. Every now and again thunder booms in the dark sky. It has been raining for so long that the muddy ground enters our shoes with every step.

William assigns the aspects *Dark* d8, *Raining* d6, and *Muddy* d6.

You may also want to know that at the start of any scene, any character in it regains any lost Vigor points.

## The Course of Play

Once the scene has been set, then the real playing begins. We tell Brother William what we wish to do, and William tells us what happens. There are no rules needed yet, this is just a conversation. The GM may wish to introduce some action that the protagonists must respond to in order to get things moving, but William often waits a while, giving of us the opportunity to instigate our own agenda.

Adam asks if Sister Emma can determine which window in the manor house belongs to the library. William tells him it is most likely on the corner of the second story. There is a small, lit candle flickering inside the window that Emma, in her haste, forgot to blow out.

James tells William that Walter Lackeye is looking around for a rope. William lets him know that he is able to easily find one in the stables. Meanwhile, my character is on watch to make sure no one sees us.

Walter comes out of the stable with a long length of rope and an iron hook. Adam says Walter will throw the rope up to catch the hook on the window's ledge. William smiles.

As long as any action we intend for our protagonists to perform is routine, mundane, or easy, we just do it and the narrative goes on. This continues until one of us suggests doing something that is not routine, not mundane, not easy. Then Brother William smiles.

## Actions

When your protagonist does something daring, dangerous, or difficult, or the action is somehow contested by another character, then we start using the rules of play; it is time to roll dice.

## ROLLS

When the ability of your protagonist is being tested, the GM will call for a roll, usually referring to one of your skills. If I wanted my knight to leap across a gorge, William would ask me to make a Dash roll. If Sister Emma wanted to impress a noble, William would have Adam make an Entice roll. Often, we do not roll just the one die associated with a skill, we roll many dice at once, and call all of these dice our dice pool.

William tells James that it will be difficult for Walter to catch the iron hook on the window ledge. To do so will require an Aim roll.

## Assemble the Dice Pool

You start with the die of the appropriate skill. This die in your hand is the beginning of your pool. Next, check to see if you have a tool that will aid you. If Sir Robert had a pole to vault with, it would help him span the gorge. If Sister Emma were wearing a nice gown, it might help her impress the noble. Add the tool's die to your pool. Finally, we have the opportunity to invoke aspects. If your character has an appropriate aspect, spend a point of Ardor and add its die to your pool. You may invoke multiple aspects if each is appropriate and you have the Ardor to spend.

James looks on Walter's character sheet for his Aim skill. It is ranked at d4, so James picks up a four-sided die. He also gets a die for the iron hook, a tool. It is ranked at d6, so he adds a six-sided die to his hand. James decides that none of his aspects are any help, so that's his pool. He rolls the dice. They come up 4 and 3. William says that will do, the hook has caught on the ledge.

Now, Walter wants to scale the wall. William tells James that the rope will add a d6 to his pool, so James combines that die and a d6 from his Climb skill. He now decides to invoke his *Natural climber* aspect, so he slides an Ardor stone over to William and adds a d8 to his dice pool.

### Check the Vigor Limit

The number of Vigor points that you currently have is also the maximum number of dice you may add to your dice pool. If you have too many dice, remove dice from your dice pool until the number of dice in your pool and your number of Vigor points are equal. Always remove dice in ascending order, beginning with the smallest dice (the ones with the least number of sides).

James' dice pool is made up of three dice and he has 3 Vigor points, so he need not remove any dice due to Vigor.

### Apply a Penalty

Now we must check to see if any penalties apply to your action. If a tool you are carrying or an aspect belonging to you or the scene causes a hindrance to your action, then it causes a penalty. If multiple hindrances occur at once, only the highest-ranking of these is considered as a penalty.

A penalty removes the highest-ranked die from your pool that is equal to or less than the penalty's rank. If you only have 1 die in your pool and its rank is equal to or less than the penalty's rank, the penalty decreases that die type to a d4.

Whenever you make a roll that suffers a penalty, you earn a point of Ardor. If each die in your pool is greater than the penalty's rank, then the penalty has no effect, and you earn no Ardor.

Penalties are always applied after the Vigor check.

William explains that because it has been raining all this time, the stone walls are quite slippery, and this will hinder climbing. James' roll will suffer a d6 penalty from enduring

the scene's *Raining* aspect. James must remove the highest die that is a d6 or less from his dice pool. He removes one d6 and is left with the d8 and the remaining d6. James earns 1 point of Ardor for enduring the penalty, so William slides him a stone.

## TARGET NUMBERS

In your adventures you will find that there are three types of target numbers: a **standard target number**, a **dynamic target number**, and an **opposed roll**.

### Standard Target Number

The standard target number is 4. This represents a stable challenge. If the GM determines that leaping over a bit of fence requires a Dash roll against a standard target number, then a 4 or higher will always be required for leaping over that fence.

During James' last roll, when Walter threw the iron hook to secure the rope to the window ledge, William used the standard target number. James' highest result was a 4, which was equal to the target number and resulted in success.

### Dynamic Target Number

For a dynamic target number, the GM rolls a die, from d4 to d20, that represents the difficulty of the task. Use this for unstable challenges such as swimming in roaring rapids or dodging falling rafters in a burning building. The result of this roll becomes the target number for the action.

For this roll, William has decided this task is potentially more difficult. He chooses a dynamic target number of d8.

### Opposed Roll

If someone is trying to prevent your character from performing an action, then the target number for your character's action is determined by a roll your opponent makes. A Sneak roll, for example, might be opposed with a Sense roll. The reacting opponent has a dice pool including skill, tool, and aspect dice, subject to any penalties, just as the acting character does. Whoever rolls the highest single die result wins.

If a tie occurs, victory goes to whoever is attempting the *proactive* action instead of the *reactive* action.



## DANGERS

Sometimes when you fail you might just move on, while other times a failed roll may result in severe consequences. Trying to leap over a ravine? You may fall and break your leg. Attempting to change the bishop's mind? You might be branded a heretic.

The GM should always let you know of the consequences of an action before you make its roll. If you are successful, you complete your action unscathed. If you fail, you suffer the consequences.

Consequences take the form of one of two types of special aspects called **conditions** and **injuries**. Conditions are ranked from d6 to d10 and injuries are ranked from d8 to d12. Conditions will be further discussed momentarily when we speak about performing maneuvers. Injuries are usually a result of conflict, so they will be discussed in more depth in the following chapter.

Before James rolls his dice, William warns that his action is potentially dangerous. If he fails climbing to the window, he will fall a considerable distance, land badly, and gain a *Sprained ankle* d8 injury. After consideration, James says it is worth the risk.

## RESULTS

Once your pool has been properly assembled, any penalty has been accounted for, a target number or opposition roll has been assigned, and you are aware of any potential consequences, it is time to roll your dice. Roll them, do not throw them. If we apply too much force, the little objects go right off the table's edge and we are all soon on our hands and knees looking for the tiny things amongst the crates and caskets in this cellar where we play.



Once settled nicely on the table, the highest number that appears on any of the dice you rolled is your primary result. If this result is equal or higher than the target number, you earn a **success** and your action happens as planned.

James rolls his dice pool: a d8 and a d6. William rolls the dynamic target die, a d8. James' dice show a 5 and a 3. The target die shows a 2. James' 5 beats the target number of 2 and so he wins the roll and Walter's action is successful!

Let me remind you that, in the case of a tied result, success goes to the character performing the proactive action. *Audentes fortuna iuvat.*

### Check for Double and Triple Successes

Sometimes, two or more dice in your dice pool will roll high enough to succeed against the target number or the primary result of your opponent's roll. When two dice meet or exceed the target number, this is referred to as a **double success**. When three dice meet or exceed the target number, it is a **triple success**. In these cases, not only do you perform your intended action, but you also do it faster or better than expected. For standard actions, it is up to the GM to decide what this means, but when performing a maneuver or when you are involved in a conflict, double and triple successes have very particular effects.

Because both of James' dice beat the target number, he achieves a double success. William narrates how Walter scampers up the side of the wall in a flash.

## Maneuvers

When your character performs an action which would manipulate another character or the scene in some substantive way, this is a maneuver. A maneuver is just like any other action, but the action's success creates a temporary aspect called a condition.

If you knock over a lit candle into a bale of hay, you give the scene the condition *On fire*. If you shake your fists at somebody and shout at him, you might give him the condition *Frightened*.

Some maneuvers are automatic. It takes no skill to knock over a candle, so no roll would be required. For other maneuvers, your GM might have you roll against a target number. When a character is attempting to resist your action or prevent your maneuver, then the maneuver is resolved with an opposed roll.

If you are successful, you create a condition with a rank of d6. A maneuver with a double success creates a d8 condition and a triple success results in a d10 condition.

Brother William tells me that Sir Robert, keeping watch, sees a guard patrolling his way. Sir Robert tells Emma to hide in the stable and then he crouches behind some shrubbery at the corner of the building. I tell William that when the guard comes around the corner, Robert will jump out, grab him, and hold a hand over his mouth so he cannot shout for help. William says that this will be a maneuver using a Brawl roll. I tell William that I wish to attach the condition *Held and muffled* to the guard if Robert is successful.

My dice pool is a d4 for Sir Robert's Brawl skill plus a d8 because I invoke my *Protector of Lord Hugh* aspect for preventing his daughter from being found out. I pay my Ardor point and roll my dice. William rolls the guard's die, a d6, as a Reflex skill opposed roll. I get a 6 and a 1 and William rolls a 3. Success! The guard now has the condition *Held and muffled* ranked at d6.

## CONDITIONS

As stated above, a condition is a special aspect that represents a temporary effect and is often the result of a maneuver. Once, for free, a new condition may be invoked by the character who created it. Additionally, the condition's creator can pass this free invocation off to an ally if the situation seems appropriate. The free invocation must be used as quickly as possible after the condition's creation: once you have been granted a free invocation, you must use it the next time you act or the opportunity ceases. Otherwise, invoking it costs 1 ardor.

### EXAMPLE CONDITIONS

<i>Behind cover</i>	<i>Encouraged</i>	<i>Laughing</i>	<i>Prone</i>
<i>Bound and</i>	<i>Frightened</i>	<i>Off balance</i>	<i>Saddened</i>
<i>gagged</i>	<i>Happy</i>	<i>On fire</i>	<i>Surrounded</i>
<i>Confused</i>	<i>Held and</i>	<i>Out of control</i>	<i>Unnoticed</i>
<i>Disarmed</i>	<i>muffled</i>	<i>Outnumbered</i>	
<i>Disguised</i>	<i>Hidden</i>	<i>Pinned on the</i>	
<i>Distracted</i>	<i>In my sights</i>	<i>ground</i>	

Conditions last until someone makes a maneuver that negates them, or until the circumstances that allowed for the condition end. If someone pushed you over and you received the condition *On the ground*, the condition would last until you stood up; a roll is not really required. If, instead, your opponent wrestles you to the ground and keeps you *Pinned on the ground*, you will need to perform a maneuver with a Brawl roll in order to escape the hold. Generally, these rolls are made against a roll of the condition's die or opposed by the opponent. Or, if your opponent suddenly gives up and walks away, the condition would also end.

This is arbitrary and it is usually up to the players, including the GM, to agree what makes sense when ending a condition. If there is contention in the group...roll the dice.

Walter Lackeye climbs down from the window, scroll in hand, while Sir Robert keeps hold of the captured guard. As Walter descends, William allows the guard a chance to escape. The guard, being a simple character, rolls a d6 for everything, in this case representing his Brawl skill, to try and wrestle his way out of my hold. I am going to use Sir Robert's Brawl skill, a d4, and this time I will invoke the *Held and muffled* condition to add an additional d6 to my dice pool. I do not need to pay an Ardor because, as the condition's creator, I get one free invocation of the condition. The guard rolls a 3 again and I roll a 4 and a 5! The guard is unable to negate the condition and escape.

Walter Lackeye retrieves the rope and uses it to bind the guard. This is a new maneuver and gives the guard a condition called *Bound and gagged*. At this point Sir Robert releases his hold, giving up the *Held and muffled* condition. After we hide the guard in the stable, the three of us take our horses and ride away. Our mission was fruitful but we dare not wait around to be found out.



## Aspects

Aspects are quite versatile. Not only can their phrasing represent a plethora of unique qualities, but you may utilize them in several ways within the game. Let us detail the many ways to use an aspect. You will find that these rules apply to conditions and injuries as well.

### INVOKE

When you invoke an aspect, you call on the aspect's ability to aid you in your action. When doing this, you must be able to explain how the aspect works to serve you. You may invoke aspects that belong to you, the scene, or — when they allow you an advantage — even those that belong to other characters.

The GM should let you know of any obvious aspects belonging to any characters or scenes that you encounter. You may have to guess at less obvious aspects, or use your Sense skill to detect them.

When you invoke an aspect, you spend 1 point of Ardor and add the aspect's die to your dice pool. Note that if you invoke another character's aspect and use it against them, you will give your spent Ardor point directly to your opponent.

While Sister Emma and her compatriots ride from the manor house, our adventurous nun is worried that they might be followed, so she keeps looking over her shoulder to check. William asks Adam to make a Sense roll. Adam decides to invoke his *Curiously observant* aspect in order to add the aspect's d8 to his dice pool and spends a point of Ardor.

### ENDURE

Enduring an aspect describes an aspect hindering your action and causing you a penalty. You are essentially acknowledging the limitations of the aspect. You may endure aspects that belong to you, the scene, or sometimes — though rarely — aspects that belong to other characters.

It is each player's responsibility to monitor any aspects that should be endured, especially those on their own character sheet. It is the GM's duty to enforce this and remind players of any scene aspects in effect.

If a penalty affects your dice pool, you earn one point of Ardor. You also have the option to ignore the penalty by paying 1 point of Ardor to the GM.

James has Walter also check the road to see if someone is following them. James endures *One-eye* as a hindrance to this action. He takes the aspect's d8 rank as a penalty, reducing his d6 Sense skill to a d4 and earning a point of Ardor.

Both James and Adam fail their Sense rolls. The protagonists know nothing of any pursuers who might be following them.

## COMPEL

An aspect is compelled when it influences your behavior in such a way that it adds some complication to the narrative of the game. This is generally done by the GM in order to build up the circumstances that lead toward adventurous events. Players can even compel the aspects of other characters to influence their actions.

The GM or any other player may offer you 1 point of Ardor to behave in a manor according to your aspect. If you comply, you earn an Ardor point. If you wish to reject the behavior, you must either pay the GM one of your own Ardor points or illustrate how another aspect might contradict the compelled aspect.

Being the best rider of the group, my knight, Sir Robert, leads the party down the steep hill away from the manor. I consider, aloud, taking some obscure path through the woods so that we are more difficult to track.

William holds out an Ardor stone to me and tells me he compels my *Fearless knight* aspect, suggesting I bravely stick to the main road and not anguish over any pursuit. I know that this might be tactically foolish and that by accepting I am probably leading my friends and myself into an ambush. Nevertheless, I trust that William is setting up a challenge for us, and my philosophy — at least when playing these games — is always to err on the side of adventure! I accept the Ardor point and courageously continue down the road.

## DECLARATION

You may spend a point of Ardor and make a declaration related to one of your aspects in order to add some element into the fiction of the game. An *Artful mason* might declare that there is a weak point in a stone wall or that there is a local chapter of his guild in town. In order for the effects of a declaration to occur in the game, the GM must approve of it, and the GM is encouraged to

practice leniency whenever a player spends a point of Ardor. The result should grant a narrative advantage, but not an immediate mechanical one.

By spending 1 Ardor point you are able to author the existence of something you have expertise of.

Adam declares by Emma's *Sacred vows of the convent* aspect that there is a small priory of monks in a nearby town that belong to the same order that Emma is sworn to. The monks will assuredly return the confiscated scroll to her convent so that she may continue on her pilgrimage. William allows this, and Adam pays 1 Ardor for this declaration.

## SUBSTITUTE

An aspect, in some situations, can substitute for a skill. The short list of skills that William has devised focuses on situations that might come up while on some sort of adventure. The list is quite lacking in other areas of expertise, especially those regarding one's vocation or profession. If you were to fish a stream, copy a book, or build a castle, there is no existing skill to apply to these actions. However, if you have a clearly worded occupational aspect such as *Persistent fisher*, *Disciplined scribe*, or *Artful mason*, you may use this aspect in place of a skill. Using this aspect's die to start your dice pool is free, and you may even invoke additional aspects if they are applicable.

As we journey, Sister Emma decides to open the scroll and examine it, perhaps to discover why Lord Thomas wished to steal it. There is no skill that is particular to studying scrolls, so William has Adam roll Emma's *Student of history* aspect. In addition, Adam invokes *Curiously observant* to help his case.

After a successful result, William tells us the scroll is written in Greek. Emma cannot read this language, but what is so striking about the scroll is not its content, but its author, an ancient philosopher. Since the first crusade into the Holy Land, texts of this type have frequently been reintroduced into our culture. The philosophies have enjoyed popular acceptance because they form the foundation upon which we build our civilization. An author named Aesara wrote this particular text. Yes, a woman! The scroll is a fragment of her work, *On Human Nature*.

Lord Thomas, it seems, might have a political motivation to keep this scroll from being copied and distributed, which was the intent of Emma's convent. Lord Thomas is aligned with King Stephen's fight against the Empress Maude, who is trying to claim the English throne. Most of the barons have backed King Stephen, possibly out of fear of being ruled by a woman. If it were common knowledge that people respected ancient women for their writing and philosophy, King Stephen's position might weaken.

Now that we know what is at stake all of us doubt that Lord Thomas will sit idly by while we run off with the scroll.

## Tools

Tools are, in a certain way, aspects of their own. They can help you, hinder you, and influence your decisions. The specific rules for using tools are these:

### WIELD

When you wield a tool, you are using it for its designed purpose. You use a bow to fire an arrow or a hammer to pound a nail. When this is the case, you simply add the tool's die to your dice pool. No Ardor cost is required.

Our heroes have been journeying for a while and decide to take a short rest. Sir Robert has just taken the horses to a stream when suddenly he is ambushed! An arrow strikes him from out of nowhere. William has me make a Fitness roll to resist the damage.

Because Sir Robert always wears his mail hauberk, I add the tool's rank to the dice pool for my roll.

If you have more than one tool for a particular job and you can use both in unison for the same task, use the higher of the two ranks. You then have the option to invoke each lesser tool as described below.

Of course, Sir Robert also wears an iron helm ranked at a d6. The hauberk has the higher rank, a d8, so I consider it the wielded tool when resisting damage. If I wish to utilize the helm, I shall have to invoke it.

## INVOKE

When you have a secondary tool, or you are using a tool for a purpose which the tool was not designed (such as attacking someone with a shield), you may invoke the tool as if it were an aspect. For each tool you invoke, spend an Ardor point and add the tool's rank to your dice pool.

I decide to invoke my helm, sliding an Ardor stone to William and adding its d6 rank to my dice pool. I can now roll my Fitness (d6), the mail hauberk (d8), and my helm (d6) against the attack.

I roll the dice and I am able to beat William's attack roll. William explains that the arrow is stuck in my shoulder, but will only leave a scratch. It has not done the sort of damage that would hinder my abilities.

## ENDURE

When a tool hinders your ability to perform an action, the tool's rank serves as a penalty to your roll. When this happens you earn an Ardor point, just as when you endure an aspect.

I tell William that Sir Robert dives into deep water for cover and swims until I can find a safe position. William says that diving into the water will not be a problem, but swimming in my armor will be an arduous task. I do so anyhow and take my mail hauberk's rank as a penalty to my Swim roll. The helm proves a hindrance as well, but since you only ever take a penalty for the highest rank you endure, I ignore its penalty. At least I earn an Ardor point for my trouble.

## AMMUNITION

Some tools, and I am particularly referring to bows and slings, require some type of ammunition for proper use. Standard bows fire arrows, crossbows fire bolts and slings fire bullets. If a mentor has provided you with such a tool, they have most likely provided you with the munitions that it requires.

Instead of keeping track of each individual arrow or bullet, we assign a rank to a supply of ammunition, just as we do with tools. However, this rank's die does not add to a dice pool for testing an action; you instead roll it by itself to see how much supply you have left.

After each time you use ammunition in an action, roll the ammunition's rank. If you meet or exceed the standard target number of 4, your supply remains at



the same level. If the result of your roll is less than 4, your supply has dwindled and its rank is reduced by one step. If you were to check your d8 ranked supply and roll a 3, the supply's rank would be reduced to d6. If your supply of ammunition is ranked at d4 and you roll less than a 4, you have completely run out of ammunition and may not use the tool that requires it until you are able to replenish your supply.

If you are able to find a new supply of ammunition while you still have some ammunition of your own, the rank of your supply is now equal to the rank of whichever supply is higher. If the two supplies are of equal rank, they combine for a total supply ranked one step higher than either's current rank.

## YOUR PURSE AND PURCHASING TOOLS

As solemn monks of a small religious community, we admittedly have very little familiarity with the economics of the marketplace. We, at one point, attempted to come up with a list of prices for each tool and compile them into a master listing for inclusion in this small tome. We soon realized that we do not know how much a cart sells for, and, even if we did, on Monday it might have a completely different price than on Thursday. Likewise, if we were going to state the price of a horse, we would have to distinguish between a palfrey, a charger, and a draught horse. This seemed futile to us; certainly it was more work than it was worth.

Therefore, we devised a simpler solution. Everyone has a tool called a purse. If you wish to buy something, you roll your purse's die and the GM rolls the desired tool's rank. If your roll wins, you can afford to buy the item. If your roll loses, you may purchase the item by reducing your purse's rank by one step.

Boats and ships are always too expensive to buy outright with your purse. But you may hire the vessel for a single voyage with a successful purse roll.

It is simple, we know, but our adventures do not often center on shopping. Most of our tools are acquired as rewards for completing quests, confiscated from the villains we defeat, or procured perhaps through more nefarious means (such as the scroll we have lately come into the possession of).

If your GM knows the prices of goods, arms and other equipment, you are certainly free to track every penny and pound your character earns. You could always use the price lists printed in other games.

Another note on purses: they do not add together as you might expect. A d4 purse plus a d4 purse does not equal a d8 purse. If you have a purse and acquire a purse of equal rank in your adventures, your total purse's rank increases by one rank. A d4 purse plus a d4 purse is a d6 purse. If the new purse is of a different rank, your total purse's rank is equal to the higher of the two purses. In other words, a d4 purse plus a d8 purse is a d8 purse.

## Ardor

As this chapter has progressed, we have mentioned several times instances in which you can earn Ardor and spend it. We thought it helpful to compile, in one place, all the ways that you may use Ardor. Note that one of the powers of Ardor is to allow you extra actions and this has not yet been covered. We will deal with the use of actions and reactions in the chapter on conflict to soon follow. Also note that when we mention aspects, we mean to include injuries and conditions as well.

### YOU EARN ARDOR WHEN...

- You suffer a penalty from enduring an aspect or tool
- One of your aspects is compelled
- An opponent invokes one of your aspects and uses it against you (in which case you receive the Ardor point directly from your opponent)

### YOU SPEND ARDOR TO...

- Invoke an aspect
- Invoke a tool for a secondary purpose or invoke a secondary tool
- Declare by an aspect
- Ignore having to endure an aspect or tool
- Defy the compelling of an aspect
- Perform an additional, simultaneous action on your turn in conflict
- Perform an additional, simultaneous reaction between conflict turns
- Rewrite the description of an injury you have just received

### THE GM AND ARDOR

Unlike players, who have small, limited pools of Ardor that fluctuate in size throughout game play, the GM has an unlimited supply of Ardor. Because Ardor costs have no meaning when working with limitless supply, most Ardor that a GM spends ends up going to the players. If the GM, while playing an opponent, wishes to invoke an aspect or tool, he pays the Ardor point to the player of the protagonist that the action is most likely to harm. The same goes for when a character takes multiple actions. The GM pays the Ardor point to the player of the protagonist against whom the character is taking action. If the action is not obviously adversarial, the GM will simply pick a player at random to pay the Ardor point to.

Conversely, the players may pay an Ardor point to the GM to ensure that one of the GM's characters endures a particular aspect or tool.

## Sorcery and Witchcraft

*Exodus* tells us of magicians who could throw their staves onto the floor and turn them into snakes. Legends tell of monsters that can turn you to stone by looking at you, and of great dragons that fly in the air and hoard their treasures. These days, works of black magic and dark sorcery are never as objective and tactile. Perhaps this results from the spreading of the Word to quell these evil arts.

Nevertheless, there are still those who live in small villages or who hide away in the woods and profess to be witches. They claim to cure impotency or devise curses that will leave victims wretched and lonely. And though I have never heard within my lifetime any report of a man turned to stone, the witch's power is not to be underestimated. No matter the source of their professed abilities — spirits or demons — the sword they wield is knowledge. It is not difficult for learned and knowledgeable people to seem like magicians and workers of miracles to the simple-minded.

The herbalist of our own priory knows of many obscure plants that, when properly prepared, can act as remedies for the various maladies and ugly rashes that we poor monks are often subject to. If one knew nothing of his science, his ability to cure might seem completely supernatural.

In addition, sometimes putting the notion into the mass's minds that something magical will happen will give it the means to actually occur. People are largely superstitious. Curse someone in front of them and they will believe that person to be cursed. It may be believed so fervently that the person will be treated as though cursed, such that he might as well have been cursed.

### CURSES

To represent this phenomenon within the mechanisms of the game, Brother Adam suggested we use the existing terminology of aspects. Aspects that are the result of curses represent a lasting effect on the victim's social standing and perhaps the state of one's mind.

The process works like this: the witch must announce their curse in the presence of their victim and a large audience of onlookers. The more witnesses there are, the faster the news will spread of the curse's effects. The witch makes a Command roll and may supplement this with a d6 tool die if they sacrifice a cockerel or a black cat as they announce the curse. The witch may also invoke any aspect that already identifies his character as a witch or displays knowledge of the dark arts.

The victim of the curse makes a Will roll to resist. This roll does not determine if the victim believes the curse or not, it shows how she handles herself in



the eyes of the crowd. If the Command roll matches or exceeds the victim's Will roll, the victim gains a d8 aspect phrased to describe the major points of the stated curse. If the witch gains a double success, the received aspect is ranked at d10. A triple success causes a d12 aspect. These aspects may be reduced in rank, as per the alteration rules to come, but you may not completely remove them until the specifics of the curse have been fulfilled.

### Consequences for the Victim

Victims can use the aspect of a curse just like any other aspect. There will be times that it can even be invoked to that character's advantage (especially in the case of intimidating with the Command skill).

It is up to the GM to compel this new aspect, causing complications in the narrative that enforce the curse's affectations. These compels should happen more frequently when the character is among people who know of the curse. The farther the character travels from the curse's source, the less the GM should compel the aspect.

### Consequences for the Witch

Cursing is never something that a protagonist should plan to do. If they find some dire reason to do so, it should only be a last resort. The process of cursing brands the character a witch. If they did not already have an aspect identifying them as such, they immediately receive such an aspect ranked at d8.

It is not easy to make a life as a known witch in good, Christian company. If you are lucky, you may only be outcast and excommunicated. Parishes with more zealous flocks and shepherds may of course find cause to burn the witch at the stake or hang him.

## Disease and Sickness

Disease is never very fun and therefore not a central point of our game. If the GM and players so wish, diseases and other maladies can easily be simulated by way of conditions (for very temporary bouts of sickness), injuries (for ailments with more lingering effects), or standard aspects (for those diseases which never go away).

The general mechanic for gaining a disease is failing a roll in which the disease is a stated danger (described on page 41), or if an injury resulting from a physical conflict (described in the following chapter) is phrased in such a way that it mentions disease. Examples might include *Festering gut wound* or *Septic gash*. Diseased injuries heal like any other.

Otherwise, use the maladies of men and women only as a narrative tool. A concerned friar might be motivated to travel to a far off town to find a cure for an epidemic. A brave knight might reveal his cowardice by refusing to enter a leper colony. Use these themes of sickness and pestilence as you wish.

## Advancement

As you play you have the opportunity to improve your skills and develop your aspects.

### IMPROVING SKILLS

To advance the rank of a skill, three elements are required: **training**, **experience**, and **learning**.

#### Training

Training means you spend some time figuring out how to get better at a chosen skill. This is where mentors come into play. Mentors have high skill ranks in particular areas and are well-suited towards providing training. That said, anyone could serve as a mentor if they have a rank in a skill that is higher than yours and are willing to take the time to teach you.

A protagonist may only have one skill in-training at any time, so it is important to choose which skill you wish to train. After finding a mentor with that skill, you simply spend four hours (those are hours within the fiction of the game, not real world hours) being instructed and practicing. After this period, you mark your chosen skill as being in-training by writing your mentor's skill rank in the skill's circle on your character sheet.

When our protagonists first set off on their pilgrimage, Emma spent some time with Walter Lackeye building his confidence in his ability to lead a righteous life. Emma, acting as Walter's mentor, has a Will of d6 and so is certainly qualified to train Walter's d4 Will. Walter spends four hours under Emma's instruction and then James marks "d6" in the small circle in the corner of his Will skill's box.



### Training on Your Own

If you can find no mentor to train you in a desired skill, you can spend four fictional hours by yourself practicing without instruction. In this case, you mark an "S" (for self-trained) in the skill's circle.

Growing up, Sister Emma was always a fast runner. On this pilgrimage, she has often found herself needing to sprint ahead of the group to help make decisions on which road to take or run behind to help encourage those that straggle. As she often finds herself out of breath, she has created a fitness routine in order to improve her running ability. William agrees that Emma is able to spend four hours during her travels to observe this routine and Adam writes an "S" in the corner circle of his Dash skill box.



### Experience

Once you have a skill chosen and marked in-training, you should now attempt to use it. *Experientia docet*. Swinging a sword against a tree trunk or shooting a wine jug with a sling does not count as experience (those types of actions would be considered part of your training). You gain experience by using the skill on the battlefield or at court: when something is at stake.

While Sir Robert brought the horses to water, Walter scrounged through some bushes for some berries to have as a light snack. He had just returned to their small clearing — where Emma is sitting and playing her harp — carrying a generous handful of elderberries to share with his traveling companions.

Suddenly the thunderous roar of hoof beats sound as a horse comes charging directly at him. It is on a path to trample Walter down.

William tells James that before Walter can do anything, he must first make a Will roll to keep himself from panicking. James picks up a d4 for Walter's Will and rolls a 3. Not enough to succeed against a standard target number of 4. Walter panics and freezes in place.

Adam announces that Emma is going to dash over to Walter and pull him out of the way of the wild horse's path. William says it will require a Dash roll and lets us know that it will be dangerous. If Emma fails, both she and Walter will receive d10 *Broken ribs* injuries.

Adam picks up his dice: a d6 for Emma's Dash skill and a d6 for her boots. William rolls a d8 for a dynamic target number to represent the high level of danger. James rolls a 6 and a 4! William rolls a 5. Emma's action is a success. She is able to pull Walter out of the way just before the horse tramples them both.

That was one of their horses, Emma realizes. If the horse is running scared, what has happened to Sir Robert?

Our scene ends.

## Learning

You make a learning roll at the end of any scene during which you have used your in-training marked skill. It does not matter how many times you used the skill or whether you were successful or failed. When you make a learning roll, you roll the in-training skill's die and, if you had training from a mentor, you roll the rank of your mentor's skill. Your target number is equal to the number of sides on the die of your skill's current rank. If you are trying to advance a skill now ranked at d6, you need to roll a 6 or higher.

If you are successful, your skill increases in rank by one step. Erase your in-training mark; you are now free to train a new skill!

Adam and James both used their in-training skills in the previous scene and are now able to check to see if they have learned from their experiences and can advance their skills.

Adam, working on advancing Emma's Dash, rolls a d6 for Emma's skill. His target number is 6 because her Dash skill is currently ranked at d6, but he rolls a 3. Well, not this time. However, Adam can roll again after the next scene in which Emma makes use of her Dash skill.

James is trying to improve Walter's Will. He is able to roll a d4 for his skill and a d6 for the skill of his mentor. He will need to roll at least a 4 in order to succeed. He gets a 5 and a 2. That is a success! Walter's Will increases to a d6. James marks this in the Will skill's box and erases the in-training mark. He now considers which skill Walter will work on improving next.

## DEVELOPING ASPECTS AND BACKGROUNDS

Your character's aspects and backgrounds can change over time in one of two ways: with distinct alterations made at the end of a session or with awards handed out when your protagonist meets a goal.

### Alterations

At the end of a session, players may make one alteration to their character. An alteration can be any one of the following:

- Increase an aspect's rank by one step, up to d12
- Decrease an aspect's rank by one step, down to d4
- Remove an aspect ranked at d4
- Gain a new aspect ranked at d6
- Gain a new background
- Convert a background to an aspect ranked at d8
- Convert an aspect to a background

Any alteration should meet with the GM's approval and reflect the narrative progress of the character over the course of the game so far. It is important to make sure that any change to aspects or backgrounds does not compromise the integrity of the character. If the character has a missing limb, it is never going to grow back. The aspect may be reduced in rank or converted to a background as



the character grows used to it, but it should never be completely removed from the character sheet.

The hour is late, it is nearly time for Matins, and so we decide to end our session. We will have to wait for the following session to learn Sir Robert's fate. Each of us is now able to make one alteration to our character.

Adam decides to add a new aspect to Emma called *Preserver of knowledge* to help represent her current quest and give her bonuses when she works towards that goal. The new aspect is ranked at d6.

James decides that Walter is getting more and more used to adventuring with only one eye and uses his alteration to decrease the *One-eye* aspect from d8 to d6.

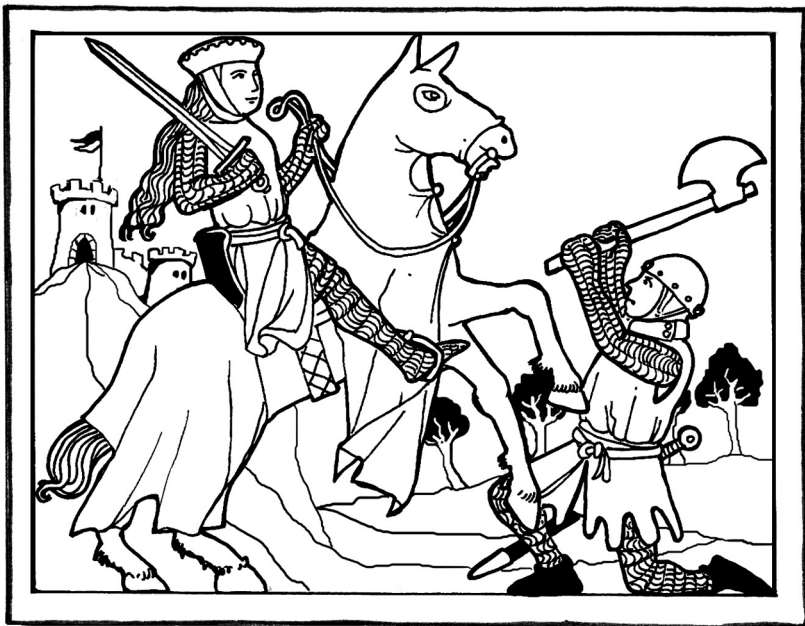
For myself, I am sure there are many dangers we will need to face on the road ahead. I decide to improve Sir Robert's *Fearless knight* aspect. It is now ranked at d10.

In addition, if someone has an aspect that is not doing any work for him — not being invoked nor earning Ardor — he should feel at liberty to re-write its description until it becomes a good, reliable, working aspect.

## Awards

After finishing some quest or achieving a goal, the GM may wish to award the protagonists with a new aspect that reflects their accomplishment. In other situations, when a character has a personal issue based on one of their aspects, such as a phobia or a plan for vengeance, that aspect may be removed as reward for confronting and overcoming the issue.





**C**onflict is the clash of swords, the raising of voices, the thwarting of foes. Conflict is at the heart of story. And when your protagonists come to a point of contention with their antagonists (or even each other), these conflict rules allow the characters to resolve the adversity with their skills, tools, and aspects.

## The Core Rules of Conflict

Brother William wanted a method for conflict that, at its core, was the same for a sword fight as it was for a heated debate as it was for a chase through the crowded streets of London. Each type of conflict uses the same system at its base and then diverges slightly to emulate the variances of its particular arena. I will outline for you first these core conflict rules and then we will later discuss how they play out for combat, parley, subterfuge, and chase.

## SETTING THE STAGE

The first question to be answered when entering into a conflict is: who is actually involved? A conflict usually has two or more sides. Who belongs to which side? Should everybody on a side be represented or should one character represent each side?

In a combat, of course, anybody can get hurt and anyone can try to hurt someone else. Numbers matter a great deal when fighting, so every character present should be directly involved in the conflict. A parley is something else. While numbers still matter, their influence is not as proportionate as in combat. Each side should have their case argued by one representative. Only allow two representatives to a side if both characters can present their own unique argument from a different perspective (perhaps by playing good bailiff, bad bailiff). In a subterfuge or chase conflict, it is okay to roll for everyone's actions, but sometimes it is easier just to test if the fastest or most observant guard can catch the slowest or most obvious thief.

Once you know who is on which side, it is time to set stakes. We are simply clarifying the intentions of each side. What results do they want to come of their actions? Knowing what is at stake helps to create suspense and makes sure that no one is unduly surprised or feels cheated by the results.

## VIGOR

Each character starts the conflict with their full allotment of Vigor points. 3 Vigor each for protagonists, antagonists and mentors, 2 Vigor for agents, and 1 Vigor each for the simple.

Vigor represents how involved in a conflict a character is. As characters lose Vigor as the result of attacks, they become less and less able to influence the narrative. When someone's Vigor is reduced to zero, they are defeated and no longer able to participate in the conflict.

We recommend marking Vigor points off from right to left on your character sheet to easily indicate how many points you have left.



## THE ORDER OF ACTION

When we play out our conflicts, William always makes sure that all the characters involved get a turn. When possible, he attempts to let the conflict follow a natural, narrative flow. Somebody on one side does something, and then someone on the other side retaliates.

He has two specific guidelines that he expects Brothers Adam, James, and I to follow. First, once you have taken an action, make sure that everyone else involved has the chance to act before you take your next action. Second, if someone who is technically involved in a conflict is not regularly taking an action, she should probably be dropped from the contest.

Sometimes we just find it easiest to go around the table clockwise.

### Initiative

If there is ever contention over who acts first between two or more characters, then William has us roll for initiative. To do this, each of the contending characters makes a Reflex roll, invoking any appropriate aspects. It might be a good idea to keep the die with your Reflex result in front of you as a handy reminder of when your character can act.

Characters who rolled initiative act in the descending order of the results of their Reflex rolls. Characters who did not roll act in narrative order afterward. Once everyone has acted, start a new round of conflict and repeat the initiative order.

At any time, those who did not make a Reflex roll may do so and join the initiative order when their number next comes up.

## ACTION

On your turn, your character has the chance to proactively perform an action. This is your chance to attack foes or maneuver for tactical advantage. You declare what your character is doing and then roll to see if the action is successfully executed.

### Attack

When you attack, you are directly using your abilities to harm an opponent. In combat, you swing a sword at your foe by making a Strike roll, while in a parley you threaten your adversary with words by making an Intimidate roll. If your desired action specifically hurts the other side's standing in the conflict, then it is an attack.

To perform an attack you roll the appropriate skill, tool, and any applicable aspects you wish to invoke. The target of your attack will roll some dice in defense.

If your attack is successful, your enemy loses 1 point of Vigor. If you score a double success, your enemy loses 2 points of Vigor. If you score a triple success, you reduce your enemy's Vigor by 3 points, likely removing them from the conflict in a single blow. The victim of the attack has the opportunity to mitigate Vigor loss by immediately taking an injury (the injury process is described on page 64).

### Attacking Multiple Targets

If it makes sense considering your method of attack, it is possible to attack more than one opponent at once: you are swinging your ax in a wide arc or you are addressing your argument towards the whole lot of your rivals.

You will want to roll as many dice as you can, so make sure you are using an appropriate tool and/or invoking an aspect or two to go along with your skill die. After you roll, assign each individual die result to one of your targets. You can direct each die at someone different or use two dice against one character and one die against another, and so on. The targets then each make their defensive rolls against the dice results you have directed at them.

### Maneuver

If the action you wish to take is not a direct affront to your enemies — perhaps a little more subtle — then it is probably a maneuver. As I have described previously, a maneuver is an action that attempts to create a condition on you, another character, or the scene. For example, you could take aim at your target, giving them a condition called *In my sights* that you invoke in a future action when you fire an arrow at them. Follow the rules in the previous chapter and remember that the first invocation of the condition is free as long as it occurs as soon as possible. James is fond of using this tactic to get an aspect die when he has run out of Ardor. Adam prefers to hand off his free invoke to an ally to promote the teamwork facet of maneuvers.

Maneuvers may have multiple targets. Simply split up your dice roll results and direct them towards your various targets, just as you do when you are attacking multiple foes.

### Multiple Actions

It is possible, if you desire, to perform more than one action per turn. You must spend an Ardor point for each additional action, but you cannot perform more additional actions on your turn than you have Vigor points.

Additional actions all occur simultaneous to your original action. Therefore, the actions must be activities that do not contradict any of your other actions. For example, you may not make two separate attacks with one weapon on your

turn, but you could make an attack with the weapon in one hand and make a separate attack with the weapon in your other hand.

## RESPONSE

When it is not your turn, you may only act in direct response to the actions of the person whose turn it is. If they attack you, you may defend yourself; if they perform a maneuver that you could possibly prevent, you may oppose their roll.

### Reaction

Between your turns, you may roll a single reaction against an incoming attack. A reaction is essentially an action that attempts to evade or deflect an attack. In combat, you dodge or parry. In a parley, you interrupt your opponent or defy their argument with deception.

For the price of one Ardor point you may perform an additional reaction. Like multiple actions, multiple reactions must be able to occur simultaneously. You cannot use your shield to parry two attacks between your turns, but you could use your shield against one attack and use your sword to parry the next attack.

For any reaction, roll the appropriate skill, tool, and invoked aspects in opposition to the attack. If your primary result beats the attacker's primary result, you successfully thwart the attack and avoid any damage. If your primary result is equal or less than the attacker's, then your reaction fails and the attacker's full set of results is now posed against your passive defense.

### Passive Defense

For any attack that you are unable to avoid with a reaction, roll your passive defense. Usually this passive defense is a Fitness roll for combat, a Will roll for parley, and a Hide or Sense roll in subterfuge. Add a tool (often your armor in this case) and invoked aspects as usual.

If the primary result of your roll is equal or less than your attacker's, you will take damage as described under the attack rules above. If your primary result beats your attacker's, you shrug off the attack. Perhaps you suffer a bruise or small cut, but nothing that significantly hampers your ability to fight on.

### Regaining Vigor in Conflict

If, with a reaction or passive defense, you score a double success against an attack, you are able to regain lost ground and earn back 1 point of Vigor. If you score a triple success, you regain 2 points of Vigor. Under no circumstances may you exceed your original 3 points of Vigor.

## Opposing a Maneuver

Whenever a maneuver directly targets you, make an appropriate roll to oppose it. This does not cost anything and essentially works like a passive defense. If your primary result beats the maneuvering character's primary result, you stop the intended condition from being created.

If the acting character's maneuver targets himself, the scene or another nearby character and you are in position to prevent it, you must make a reaction if you choose to oppose the maneuver. If you have already used your free reaction this round, you will need to spend an Ardor point for an additional reaction.

## VIGOR RUSH

As an option, when your Vigor points are low and you need to do something particularly daring, you might consider using a Vigor Rush. A Vigor Rush allows you to wager one point of Vigor on your next action, reaction, or passive defense in exchange for being able to ignore your Vigor limitations and any aspects or tools you might need to endure. In other words, you are able to roll your full dice pool, not needing to cull any dice for Vigor or penalties, but *caveat utilitor*: if you fail your roll, you automatically and immediately lose a point of Vigor.

This is particularly useful if you are down to 1 Vigor point. To regain Vigor on a defense roll, you need to score a double success. However, this will never happen with a straight roll, as your 1 point of Vigor will only allow you to roll 1 die. Using a Vigor Rush allows you to roll as many dice as you need, giving you that chance. However, if you fail, you will lose your last Vigor and be eliminated from the conflict.

## INJURIES

When your character is the victim of an attack, you have the opportunity to reduce some of the Vigor lost by having your character suffer an injury as a result of the attack. If the attacker scored a double success, you may take 1 point of Vigor loss instead of 2 points in exchange for receiving a d8 ranked injury. If the attacker scored a triple success, you may reduce the damage by 1 point of Vigor for a d8 injury or reduce it by 2 points for a d12 injury. You must take at least 1 point of Vigor loss any time an attack successfully bypasses your passive defense.

If you lose more Vigor points than you have remaining, the extra loss automatically translates into an injury: a d8 injury for 1 extra point; a d12 injury for 2.

When an injury is inflicted, it is the attacker's prerogative to provide the description of the injury. Of course, the injury's descriptor should coincide with the method of attack. Axes and swords make cuts and gashes while blunt

### EXAMPLE INJURIES

<i>Battered face</i>	<i>Depressed</i>	<i>Septic gash</i>
<i>Black eye</i>	<i>Disfigured visage*</i>	<i>Severed arm*</i>
<i>Broken arm</i>	<i>Dishonored</i>	<i>Severed leg*</i>
<i>Broken leg</i>	<i>Festering gut wound</i>	<i>Severely embarrassed</i>
<i>Broken heart</i>	<i>Gashed chest</i>	<i>Slashed face</i>
<i>Broken nose</i>	<i>Gouged eye*</i>	<i>Split ear</i>
<i>Broken ribs</i>	<i>Guilty conscious</i>	<i>Sprained ankle</i>
<i>Broken toe</i>	<i>Immortal shame*</i>	<i>Twisted knee</i>
<i>Bruised pride</i>	<i>Maimed arm*</i>	
<i>Bruised shoulder</i>	<i>Maimed leg*</i>	* permanent injuries

weapons crush bones and leave bruises. A harsh argument might leave feelings of guilt or embarrassment or take its toll on someone's honor. Injuries ranked at d8 should never include permanent loss; they should always describe curable maladies from which you may recover. For d12 injuries, that restriction is lifted and the attacker may describe anything from severed limbs to *Immortal shame*.

For the price of an Ardor point, the victim of the injury can take authorial power away from the attacker and instead create the injury's description himself. In this way, you may avoid severely limiting injuries and permanent loss.

Note that while injuries are commonplace in combat, parley, and chase scenes, they are not as appropriate for subterfuge. Unless you find yourself in a situation where an injury becomes pertinent (such as trying to sneak while scaling a wall), this option should generally be ignored during subterfuge conflicts.

### Enduring Injuries

If you suffer an injury it essentially works like any other aspect. It can be invoked, perhaps to play on someone's sympathies, or compelled. Most frequently, injuries must be endured. If the injury, by its description, would hinder an action you chose to take, then you should take a penalty equal to the injury's rank. If the penalty removes a die from your dice pool, you earn a point of Ardor.

### Healing Injuries

Injuries to the body are mended with the Heal skill. Use the Empathy skill to ameliorate injuries to the mind or to social standing. You may attempt to heal each injury only once per day. To succeed, you must roll greater than or equal to a dynamic target number equal to the injury's rank. If you are attempting to



heal your own injury, you always receive your injury's rank as a penalty to the roll.

If the roll is successful, reduce your injury's rank by one step. If you score a double success, the rank is reduced by two steps. A triple success results in a three step reduction.

If the roll fails, the injury gets worse and increases by one step.

Once reduced below d4, a regular injury is completely healed and should be erased from your character sheet. Injuries that describe permanent loss may only be reduced to a d8. At this point, re-write the injury as a permanent aspect. You may then only alter this injury using the aspect development rules discussed in the preceding chapter.

## RESOLVING CONFLICT

A conflict ends when there is only one side left standing and all their enemies have been eliminated. The victors win the stakes agreed upon when the stage for the conflict was set, and those defeated must now deal with any agreed-upon consequences. *Pacta sunt servanda*.

Of course the conflict can also be resolved if the parties involved choose to compromise, negotiating the stakes as they see fit.

If the defeated are not happy with the results of the conflict, they have one recourse: they may initiate a new conflict in some other arena. When parley ends poorly, it may provoke a combat. Thieves discovered in subterfuge may still escape by means of a chase.



## Combat

Combat is the epitome of human conflict: two or more people using violence against each other and employing bodily might and clever tactics to achieve victory. It is also the most straight forward of the conflict types, so we will delve into the specifics of the combat conflict first.

As we begin our next session, Sister Emma and Walter Lackeye spot Sir Robert in a defensive position against an onslaught of arrows along the nearby bank of a stream. Across the stream are some of Lord Thomas's soldiers: a knight, two men-at-arms, and two archers. The knight and men-at-arms draw their weapons as they step into the river. The archers pull back on their bowstrings. Combat has begun.

### THE STAGE

In combat, anyone can be hurt or hurt someone else and we encourage you to involve any and every present character. Stakes for combat may involve gaining something that the other side was protecting or ceasing your enemy's agenda. Loss of all three Vigor points in combat means that the character falls unconscious or is otherwise disabled for the remainder of the conflict. It should be stated up front what each side intends to do with their defeated foes: take them prisoner, leave them to their fate, or perform a *coupe de grâce* and finish them off. Keep in mind that in combat, physical injury is always a real possibility.

William tells us that the main goal of Lord Thomas' soldiers is to capture us and bring us back to the manor. Therefore, if we are defeated, the soldiers will arrest us, not kill us. Adam, James, and I decide that our intention is simply to keep the soldiers from carrying out their intention. If we defeat them, we will leave them to their fate and depart.

Sister Emma, Walter Lackeye, and Sir Robert will all be involved in this conflict. Lord Thomas' knight is a full antagonist. The two men-at-arms are agents and the archers are simple characters.

### MOVEMENT

In combat, there is much positioning and arranging that one must account for. Generally, Brother William allows us to approach an enemy in order to engage

in melee combat, back away from something or someone, or stand up if we had fallen as a **free action**. This generally does not use up our one action on our turn, nor does it incur a multiple-action cost. That is, up to a point. If we need to cover quite a distance, William sometimes requires us to make a Dash roll as a regular action. If we are successful with our Dash roll, he allows us to perform our intended action at our destination as a simultaneous action at the cost of an Ardor point. Otherwise, we will not be able to reach our destination until the following round, when we will be close enough to move and take an action without needing to spend an Ardor point.

The knight and the men-at-arms wade into the water, approaching Sir Robert's position. William tells us that they will need to make a successful Swim roll to reach Sir Robert and attack him in the same round. If Emma and Walter want to get to where Sir Robert is, they can simply walk as a free action.

If you are using miniature representations of your character to indicate positioning and movement in combat, use the following guidelines. Assuming each inch on the table represents one yard in the fictional landscape, your character can move up to 5 inches as a free action. If she wishes to move more, she may move an extra number of inches equal to the result of the Dash roll as a regular action.

## WEAPON USE

Also as a free action, you may draw a single, one-handed weapon. A weapon that requires two hands or drawing two weapons in one turn uses a regular action.

Nocking a bow with an arrow or loading a sling with a bullet is considered part of attacking with those weapons. Loading a bolt into a crossbow requires its own, separate action.

If a weapon's rank is higher than your Fitness skill and higher than your Strike skill, you must use two hands in order to wield it properly. If the weapon's rank is equal to or less than either your Fitness skill or your Strike skill, you may wield it in your preferred hand. If the weapon's rank is less than or equal to your Fitness skill as well as your Strike skill, then you may wield it in your off-hand.

Bows and crossbows always require two hands. You may always wield a shield in your off-hand.

The right-handed knight draws his sword as a free action. His Strike skill of d8 allows him to wield the d8 tool in his right hand. His Fitness is only a d6, so he could not wield it effectively in his left hand. If Emma were to attempt to heft the sword, with her Fitness and Strike of d4, she would need to use two hands.

## ATTACKS

Make a Brawl roll for punching or kicking. For a melee attack with a weapon in hand, make a Strike roll. Aim rolls cover ranged attacks including those made with slings and bows as well as thrown weapons.

The knight, sword drawn, succeeds in his Swim roll and is now standing face-to-face with Sir Robert. Because it took an action for the knight to move, William pays me an Ardor point for a simultaneous action to attack. William rolls the knight's d8 Strike, and a d8 for the sword. The roll comes up 8 and 5.

When the target of a ranged attack is far away, the attacker may incur a penalty. If the target is further than 10 yards away from the attacker, the attack suffers a d4 penalty. For every extra increment of 10 yards, the penalty's rank increases by one step.

## RESPONSES

As a reaction, you may attempt to dodge a melee attack with a Reflex roll or evade a ranged attack with a Dash roll. If you are using miniatures or tokens, each dodge should be accompanied by moving your character 1 inch (remember that each inch on your table represents a yard in the fictional landscape). If you are surrounded on all sides and cannot move 1 inch, you may not dodge.

Use a Parry roll to block attacks. To parry a Strike, you must wield a weapon or shield. Parrying a ranged attack requires a shield. Parrying a Brawl attack does not require any tool.

Passive defense for all combat attacks uses a Fitness roll and, as a tool, the highest ranked armor you are wearing. You may invoke additional pieces of armor, such as a helm, by spending an Ardor point.

With a particularly nasty attack aimed at him, Sir Robert attempts to deflect with a shield. This is my one reaction and

will not cost an Ardor point. I roll my d4 Parry and my d12 kite shield. I get a 5 and a 1. Not nearly enough to stop the knight's sword.

The attack connects, so I make a Fitness roll. Robert's Fitness rank is d8 and I add another d8 for his mail hauberk. He will need all the help he can get, so I invoke his helm for another d6. I roll the pool. I get a 5, a 3 and a 3. The sword hacks through Sir Robert's armor and into his flesh.

The knight's results of 8 and 5 score a double success against my defense's primary result of 5. Normally, Sir Robert would lose 2 points of Vigor in this situation, but I choose to take a d8 injury so that his Vigor is only reduced by 1 point. William describes the injury as *A gashed left shoulder*.

## MANEUVERS

Maneuvers in combat might look very much like attacks. A character may use a Strike maneuver to knock an opponent's sword from their hands, giving them the condition *Disarmed*. A sweeping kick with a Brawl roll might knock an enemy's feet out from under him, leaving him *Prone*.

Maneuvers may also make use of parley skills in order to gain an emotional advantage in combat. Use a Command roll in an intimidating fashion to make an enemy *Frightened* or to boost any ally's morale so that she is *Encouraged*. Use a Deceive roll for a feint to make an opponent *Confused*.

Maneuvers using Subterfuge skills like Sneak and Hide allow you to be *Unnoticed* or *Hidden* on the battlefield. Use the Sense and Hunt skills in maneuvers to negate these conditions.

Emma is afraid that the knight might do serious damage to Sir Robert, so she shouts and waves her arms to draw the knight's attention. William has Adam make an Entice roll for Emma's maneuver. Adam rolls a d8 and William rolls the knight's d4 Will skill to prevent the maneuver and stay focused. Adam's roll wins with a 4 against a 1 and the knight gains the condition *Distracted* d6.

Adam hands the free invoke off to me, and Sir Robert strikes back at the assaulting knight while Emma has his attention. My pool is a d6 for Sir Robert's Strike skill, a d8 for his

father's sword, and a d6 to invoke, freely, the knight's new condition. However, I have to drop one of the d6's because my Vigor is only 2. I roll a 7 and a 4. The knight, seeing my attack in the corner of his eye, tries to dodge, but only rolls a 4. His passive defense, a d6 for Fitness and a d8 for armor, results in two 1's! This gives me a double-success, reducing the knight's Vigor by 2.

The two men-at-arms fail their Swim rolls and are only halfway through the stream. James asks if Walter can get to them and attack, and William says it will require a Swim action against a standard target number. James rolls Walter's Swim skill, a d4, and miraculously makes it, rolling a 4. Then James pays an Ardor point so that Walter may have an additional action to attack the men-at-arms. Walter swipes at both opponents as his ax cuts in a wide arc. He rolls a d6 for his Strike and a d8 for his ax. He gets a 4 and a 3, and splits the two results, directing one at each target. The first is able to dodge the attack, but the second soldier takes the hit and loses a point of Vigor.

The two men-at-arms retaliate, jabbing their spears at Walter. He successfully parries the first with his ax. Having already used his ax in one reaction, when the second spear comes, he must try to dodge it. He makes a Reflex roll, but comes up short. He then rolls his Fitness and armor, but still loses a point of Vigor.

The battle wages on, but to our dismay, we are soon defeated. Sir Robert and Walter both fall under the constant barrage of spears and arrows and Emma calculates that it is best to surrender. We are all taken prisoner.

While being held, Emma takes the opportunity to try to mend the injury made to Sir Robert's shoulder. She has no bandages or herbs at her disposal so Adam rolls only Emma's d6 Heal skill and William rolls the d8 ranked injury's rank. Adam's 4 wins against William's 2 and Sir Robert's injury is reduced to a d6. Heaven be praised!

But we are still prisoners. Combat did not work out for us. *Diem perdidit*. If we are going to get out of this now, we must try a different approach.

## Parley

A parley is a social altercation. The opponents match their wits and words to determine the victor. A parley may represent a quick argument or a slow seduction.

Captured, and with our weapons confiscated, we are returned to the manor and brought before Lord Thomas. But, God is surely smiling on us: the scroll is in the saddle bag of one of the horses that scampered away during the ambush. We have the opportunity to deny that we are involved with the missing scroll and demand that we be let free.

### THE STAGE

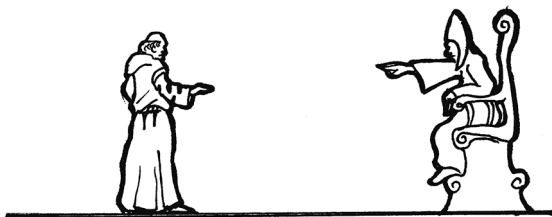
Brother William recommends that the GM cull the list of the characters involved in parley down to those who really have something to say. Each side should elect a representative to champion their side. If three protagonists have come to appeal to the king, they would pick their best speaker to address him. Moreover, the king might designate one of his advisers to oppose the elected protagonist. The GM should allow a side to have multiple representatives only if they can present two or more lines of attack.

When a distinct advantage is lost in a parley by not having the numbers on each side represented, the GM may deign to give the representative of the smaller side an *Outnumbered* condition.

William announces that we will have a parley and that we should elect one of the protagonists to argue our side. Lord Thomas' knight, whose name we have learned is Sir Stephen, will be presenting his side's case against us.

Emma is certainly our best strategic choice, with a d8 in Entice and a d8 in Will. But, being a woman of the cloth, she is uncomfortable with outright deceit. We decide that my character, Sir Robert, will make the best choice in this case. As this is the start of a new conflict, I restore my Vigor to 3 points.

If I win, Lord Thomas will be convinced we are innocent and let us go. If Sir Stephen wins, we will be made prisoners.



## ATTACKS

Parley attacks make use of Command rolls to intimidate opponents with authority or might. Entice attacks are more subtly persuasive and are used to gently lure your enemies to your way of thinking. Use Deceive attacks to convince your foes by outwitting them or by lying outright.

Sir Stephen begins by demonstrating his authority and questioning why we left the manor in the middle of the knight. Stephen's Command is a d8. He rolls and gets a 3. *Sic infit.*

## RESPONSES

One might use their Empathy skill as a reaction to evade a parley attack, detecting an argument's purpose before it can do damage. Deceive rolls can be used as a reaction to deny true arguments while masking your true reaction.

Passive defense in parley is always made by means of a Will roll.

As my reaction, I roll my d4 Empathy skill to try to guess the intention of Stephen's attack. I roll a 4 and deflect the attack.

On my turn, I make a Deceive roll, claiming Sir Robert has a sick aunt in a nearby town. I explain that we jaunted ahead of the pilgrimage in order to spend some time with her. A bad lie. I only roll a 2. Stephen rolls his Empathy as a reaction, trying to detect the lie, but ends up with a 2 as well. My attack, matching the target number, gets through.

Sir Stephen now rolls his passive defense, his Will skill of d8. He rolls a 4. He might not have detected evidence of a lie, but he will not let my argument slow him down.

## WEAPONS AND ARMOR

While wielding a weapon or wearing armor is almost always a boon in combat, walking around with an ax or wearing a bloodstained hauberk can often be a hindrance in parley. Undoubtedly, a battle-worn weapon is great for intimidating an enemy (and may be invoked when making a Command roll), but



when using a subtler or gentler approach, it might send a mixed message (and, depending on the situation, should be endured when making an Entice or Deceive roll).

The exception to this is the sword. As the sword is the weapon of a knight and a symbol of status, it has a more romantic connotation and does not garner the social disgrace that other weapons might carry.

Sir Stephen once again uses his authority and questions why, when his men approached our party, we retaliated with force. As he says this, he pointedly rests his hand on the pommel of his sword, the symbol of the oath of loyalty he made to Lord Thomas. He rolls his Command skill again, this time invoking his sword. Because Stephen is a GM's character, the Ardor point is paid to his opponent, me.

William rolls Stephen's dice pool of two d8's and gets an 8 and an 8. What luck that old monk has! I roll my defenses, but cannot stop Stephen from double-success. This reduces my Vigor by 2 points. I could trade one of those points for an injury, but Sir Robert is already suffering *A gashed left shoulder*. Another injury might be too much to bear.

Sir Robert fortunately was able to change out of his bloody armor and into his expensive robe before the trial began. When he answers the question, explaining that the group was only defending themselves and that Sir Stephen and their men had attacked first, he gains his expensive robe's d6 as a tool die to add to his Entice skill of d6. Because he only has 1 Vigor, I should drop one of the d6's from the pool. Instead, I decide to announce that Sir Robert is using a Vigor Rush. He will ignore the dice pool limit, and I even decide to invoke *Fearless knight* to stand up against Sir Stephen's allegations. My pool is now a d10 and two d6's. If I fail with this roll, I will lose my last Vigor point and be eliminated.

I roll the attack and Sir Stephen is unable to completely deflect it. He loses a Vigor point. However, with one more accusation, and the testimony of the guard we bound, gagged, and left in the stables, Sir Stephen is able to eliminate my last point of Vigor. He convinces Lord Thomas and locks us in the manor house's tower.

## Subterfuge

Now we will discuss subterfuge. By subterfuge, we mean to say that one side in the conflict is sneaking around, perhaps to infiltrate an encampment or a castle or to stealthily make their way out of some dungeon. The other side is attempting to detect the interlopers. For simplicity's sake, we will call these two sides the thieves and the guards. Keep in mind these will not always be accurate labels for all the situations when you might use this system.

Unlike combat or parley, in which parties have access to the same arsenal of abilities to use against each other, the methods of attack and defense in subterfuge almost exclusively rely on which side of the conflict you find yourself. Are you a thief or are you a guard?

We spend the rest of the day in the tower, silent and depressed at the turn of events. When night finally falls, Walter Lackeye goes to work. While most of our belongings were taken from us before being locked in the tower, Walter happily hid his lock picks in his shoes and managed to smuggle them into the tower. One Steal roll later, the lock on our cell clicks open. We are free; that is, if we are able to sneak past Lord Thomas' guards.

### THE STAGE

Which players are involved in subterfuge depends on the circumstances of the stakes set at the beginning of a subterfuge conflict. If we are interested in the fate of each individual pawn on the board, all characters present may be involved. If the agenda of the thieves will fail when any one of their members is caught, then we really only need to determine if the most observant of the guards can detect the least sneaky of the thieves.

If the protagonists are the thieves, then the GM may wish to set the conflict up in a progression of stages. Rather than rolling against all the guards at once, the protagonists have to deal with only two or three guards at a time; first bypassing one outpost and then, if they are successful, bypassing the next outpost. The GM will be honest with the players about how many stages the protagonists must survive before they are able to achieve their agenda.

If a thief loses all her Vigor, she is found out. If a guard loses all his Vigor, the thieves have sent his patrol so far off course that he is no longer a danger to detecting them for the rest of the conflict.



To escape the tower, William lets us know that we must first bypass the two guards stationed in the tower itself, then two more guards at the tower's entrance, and finally four guards at the manor's gate. Each guard is a simple character, ranked with a d6 and one point of Vigor. If we win, we will gain our freedom. If not, the guards will catch us and throw us back into our cell.

This is a new conflict so we restore all of our Vigor points.

## ATTACKS

Thieves use Sneak rolls as attacks to slip past guards. Guards use Hunt rolls as attacks to actively seek out any sign of intrusion.

Walter steps through the cell's doorway and begins quietly descending the spiraling stairs. He sees two guards in the tower's next room and attempts to slip past the its open door. James rolls Walter's d6 Sneak with his d6 soft shoes as a tool. He gets a 4 and a 2 and splits his result for a multiple-target attack against both guards.

## RESPONSES

Either side may use Reflex rolls as reactions to deflect the attacks of their foes. For passive defense, the thieves make Hide rolls and the guards make Sense rolls.

Both guards may now make a Reflex roll as a reaction. The first rolls a 5 and the second rolls a 6. The attack fails and the two guards suddenly turn around, thinking that they heard something. Walter flattens his back against the wall outside the doorway.

Now it is the guards' turn to attack. They both make Hunt rolls. The first guard rolls a 6! James would use a reaction, but his d4 Reflex will never beat a 6 (because, even if James rolls his maximum 6, they tie and ties go to the aggressor) and neither will his passive defense's Hide roll. He loses one point of Vigor. The second guard rolls a 5 for his Hunt roll. Again, there is no chance to deflect with Reflex, but he might stop the attack with his Hide roll. James rolls a 6. He remains undetected.

## MANEUVERS

In subterfuge, characters generally make maneuvers intending to confuse the guards. Throwing an object with an Aim roll could result in a loud crashing noise, making a guard *Distracted*. Using a Deceive roll with the proper tools, you could make yourself *Disguised* and hide yourself even in plain sight of the guards.

If the guards check on our cell, we will be found out. I decide that Sir Robert will attempt to distract them. He takes the tin dish that the guards served them dinner on and throws it out the cell's window. If it hits a hard surface, it should make enough noise to bring the guards to the window and give our protagonists a chance to sneak by. My Aim skill is a d4 and William will let them oppose the roll with a Will roll because they will gain the condition *Distracted* if I am successful. I am also invoking *Fearless knight* for my risky move to get an extra d10. I will need two dice in order to direct my maneuver at both guards. I get a 5 and a 4. They roll a 2 and a 1. My maneuver is successful and both guards are now *Distracted* d6.

It is now Emma's turn. She is going to try to make it past the guards. Her Sneak skill is only d4, but she is going to invoke *Sacred vows of the convent* for a d8. All of those years

observing a vow of silence should aid her in this task. I also give her the free invoke for the *Distracted* condition on one of the guards. That gives her another d6. Adam rolls the three dice. He gets a 4, a 3, and a 1. He directs the 4 and a 1 against the first guard and the 3 against the second one.

The guards roll their defenses, but are not able to beat Emma's attack. As they only have 1 Vigor point each, both guards are eliminated! All three of us are able to sneak past the guards' room in the tower.

We have yet two more guard posts to bypass. Because they are only stages in a larger conflict, Walter does not regain his lost Vigor point and we must attempt to progress along our course despite this setback. Nevertheless, we are able to overcome the following stages, eliminating 6 more guards! We have escaped the manor house, but our flight is not yet over.



## Chase

Chase is a conflict of speed. On foot, on horseback, or by sea, you attempt to outpace your opponent. One side tries to escape the clutches of the foes who desperately want to catch them.

Like subterfuge, a chase has two distinct sides. I will reuse the terms guards and thieves. In this case, the thieves are the party attempting to escape and the guards are those who are trying to catch them.

The chase conflict is the arena that diverges most from the conflict system's base model. Instead of pitting their abilities directly against each other, each runner makes their roll against the terrain that they are traversing: gaining or losing ground in the process.

Without drawing the attention of the guards at the nearby gate, our three protagonists have climbed up the manor's wall and have begun to descend the other side. Our freedom is in sight. Suddenly shouts come from the tower! The guards have discovered that we are missing. One guard raises his hand and points it directly at Walter Lackeye, whose silhouette crests just above the wall. Walter leaps down, but we have been spotted. The chase is on.

### THE STAGE

Because everyone rolls against the terrain and not each other, there is not much reason not to include every character present in the conflict. For quicker resolution, you might just run the conflict between the slowest thief and the fastest guard.

Stakes should outline the specific intentions of the conflict. If the thieves win, do they make it to a particular destination, or do they simply outrun the guards? Are the guards trying to arrest the whole lot of thieves, or just seize one of them?

The three protagonists — Emma, Walter Lackeye, and Sir Robert — run. The four guards posted by the gate chase after them. If we win, the protagonists outrun the guards and we gain our freedom. If any of us run out of Vigor, it is back to the tower.

We restore our Vigor to 3 points, as it is the start of a new conflict.

## THE TERRAIN

For each round of chase conflict, the GM describes what terrain lies in front of the characters. It is ideal to provide two or three choices, each one presenting a slightly different obstacle to overcome and each ranked with a different dynamic target number.

The thieves, being in front, will choose which course of action to take. They pick one of the terrains in front of them to traverse, and then each participant rolls against that terrain. The guards must follow along the thieves' chosen terrain or give up the chase.

The GM has a large amount of control over the pacing of a chase. By picking lower dynamic target numbers (d4's and d6's), the chase will go on longer and longer. If the GM wants to draw the conflict to a close, she will use larger target numbers like d10's and d12's.

Running from the manor, we find ourselves on a narrow strip of land between a the slope of a steep hill and a stream. William tells us we could climb the cliff against a d10, swim the stream against a d8, or keep running straight ahead against a d6. James suggests that we climb. One lousy roll for the guards, as simple characters, could quickly eliminate them. We take after James' lead as our characters follow Walter Lackeye. The guards give chase.

## ATTACKS

Use Dash rolls when on foot, traveling over land or leaping gaps. Use Swim rolls when traversing through water or diving under its surface. Climb rolls are used to scale ladders, walls, cliffs and the like. If you are on horseback or riding in a horse-drawn cart or wagon, make a Ride roll using the horse's Dash skill as a tool. While sailing or rowing on a boat, the vessel's captain makes a Boat roll and the boat itself serves as a tool.

Scrambling up the hill is a Climb roll. That means a d4 for Emma and Sir Robert while Walter Lackeye rolls a d6 and a d8 for invoking *Natural climber*. Adam announces that Emma's whole purpose for escaping is to save the scroll, so he is going to invoke her new *Preservation of knowledge* aspect for an extra d8. He and James slide their Ardor stones to William. Adam rolls a 7 and a 2. James rolls a 4 and a 2. I roll a mere 1.

William decides that the guards endure their armor to climb the hill after us. Their d6's are thusly reduced to d4's. They roll a 4, a 4, a 2, and a 1.

## RESULTS

If you fail your attack roll against the terrain's dynamic target number, you lose a point of Vigor. On a standard success, you keep pace with the chase. If you score a double success, you gain back a point of Vigor. A triple success allows you to gain back 2 points of Vigor.

When a thief has run out of Vigor, one of the guards catches him. The guard must choose whether to drop out of the chase to secure the thief's arrest. When a guard runs out of Vigor, she runs out of breath and cannot continue the chase.

If anyone's attack roll results in all 1's, they automatically receive a d8 injury: usually a *Sprained ankle* or something similar at the GM's discretion. If riding a horse, the horse suffers the injury and if boating, the vessel receives the injury.

William rolls a d10 for the difficulty of scaling the hill. He gets a 3. That means Emma and Walter Lackeye, with their standard successes, are able to make it up the hill. Sir Robert, on the other hand, falls back a bit — taking a point of Vigor loss — and receives a d8 *Broken toe* injury after smashing his foot against a rock. Two of the guards succeed while two others fail and each loses his Vigor point, which eliminates them from the chase.

## MANEUVERS

A fast-paced pursuit does not allow participants to stop in their tracks and make a maneuver. Each participant must make an attack every round in order to keep pace. Therefore, a character may only make a maneuver using the multiple actions rules. While the actions technically happen simultaneously, maneuvers should be resolved before making any attack rolls.

When sailing on a longship, the rowers may collectively make a rowing maneuver (d10 for a full crew, d6 for a half crew) to give the ship a *Full speed ahead!* condition for the captain to invoke.

Participants may make combat attacks against their enemies as maneuvers. They will not do Vigor damage as they would in combat, but instead create conditions designed to slow an opponent down.



On our next round, James decides that Walter is going to perform a maneuver to dislodge a boulder and roll it down at one of their pursuers. James pays the point of Ardor for multiple actions. He makes a Fitness roll to dislodge and direct the boulder. The guard has a chance to make a Reflex roll to oppose Walter's maneuver. William rolls a 6, but so does James. Since Walter is performing the proactive action, he succeeds in the tie. The guard gains the *Off balance* condition.

Everyone makes their Climb roll as an attack, this time against the hill's tapering slope of a d8. The guard with the *Off balance* condition must endure it for a d6 penalty. My roll fails and Sir Robert loses another point of Vigor, but both guards fail as well and are eliminated from the chase. We have outrun them. We are finally free from our captors.

Now, without our equipment and certainly ostracized from our fellow pilgrims, we must find a horse wandering somewhere with a scroll in its saddlebag.

## A Final Note

Now, having discussed the four arenas of conflict, you know every rule needed to play our game of imagined adventure. Perhaps the preceding rules do not cover every situation that may arise in a game, but that was never really our intention. It is for players sitting at the table, including the GM (for she is playing the game as well), to decide the full extent of what characters can and cannot do. The game exists in the communication that takes place between the players. The system here is a method for structuring that communication consistently and evenly throughout the course of your campaign.





**E**xplore the dark reaches of forests as shadows between trees draw you in further. Tread the steep jut of craggy hills to see what lies beyond each broken crest. Follow the line of the coast — from chalk-white cliffs to tree-lined fords to stone-laden beaches — as it lures you from one mysterious kingdom to the next. This is more than just a map. This is the world with you in it. What do you see? What do you do? Where do you go from here?

Perhaps you know much about our world. Maybe you do not. People like William have traveled through much of it. A person like me has only heard tell of cities like Damascus or read in a book about the warm breezes of the Mediterranean. Likewise, some people might learn of this game and know exactly what they wish to do with it: what themes they wish to address, where the campaign should start, and what kind of adventures the protagonists should face. But for others this might not be so clear. This chapter is for them.

# Europe

in the 12th Century A.D.

ATLANTIC OCEAN





## The Context of History

William is very learned. As a chronicler and historian, he knows the name of every king and queen for thousands of miles and several generations. He knows of wars that happened long ago and of the generals and princes who led those armies. In more kingdoms than I have fingers, he knows how people live, how they work, how they eat, and how they pray. And he knows how they did this one-hundred or even two-hundred years ago. William brings these details to our game sessions to create an atmosphere of history: to help us feel as though we are really there.

But our games are not about history. We do not play this game to reenact events that have already happened. Our choices as players would matter very little if this were the case, which to us does not seem to have as much use as a game.

Our game is about the protagonists.

We imagine that they exist in history but that is only a common starting point for our collective minds to picture our stage. Enter the actors and none of us knows where their actions and decisions will take them. *Faber est suae quisque fortunae.*

For this reason, you should not feel the need to get history right. This game can only be played in what you believe history to be. No one, not even William, can know for sure what happened on any given day. The chronicler cannot be everywhere at once and his pen cannot record everything he sees. We each know only fragments of what happened. It is in the space between those fragments, that blank page left for us to fill in, where our protagonists can truly live.

## Political Backdrops

One way to reconcile what we know — the recorded events of history — and what we do not know — the possible adventures of our protagonists — is to use historical information as a backdrop for the narrative. The political events, the clashes of kings and princes, the wars and debates and changing borders, can all serve to inform the motivations of the protagonists and antagonists without drawing the focus of your sessions away from your characters.

The following four sections present major, world-shaping exploits that can serve to encourage the players to pick sides and draw lines. As each of them chronologically overlap to a generous degree, any or all four could exact their influence on a campaign set in certain years.

## EMPIRE AND PAPACY

Since the fall of Rome, it has long been left to monarchs and emperors to invest bishops and archbishops. Even each successive pope was to be named by the successors of Charlemagne. These are not merely powerful positions within the church; each holds land, governs the manor and the peasants who owe them rents, commands soldiers, and advises in the affairs of state. A bishop is like a baron; an archbishop, a duke; the pope, a king. And so, when these positions are appointed, the monarch or emperor often considers political loyalty and wealth more important than issues of faith and religion. This is the sin of simony.

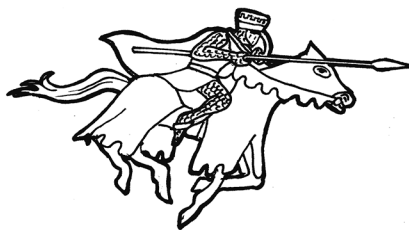
But there were those who sought to end this practice. With the death of Emperor Henry III in 1056, Germany was left in the young hands of Henry III's six-year-old son, Henry IV. With the empire in a weak and fractured state, reformers in the church found opportunity to exert independence. They created the College of Cardinals, a council consisting of religious officials, whose primary purpose is the election of new popes.

### The Investiture Controversy

Soon after, by this very process, did one of these key reformers named Hildebrand of Sovana become Pope Gregory VII. From the Holy See, he furthered the independence of the church by issuing the bull, *Dictatus Papae*. This document decreed that the power of the pontiff was universal, beyond that of kings, and that only the pope may appoint, move, or remove officials of the church. This defied the conventional belief — held at least among monarchs — that emperors and kings, who held their power through God's grace, were the pinnacle of divine authority on earth.

And so Henry IV, now much older, retaliated against Gregory's decree and openly called the pope a "false monk." Gregory became furious. He excommunicated Henry and called for his deposition as King of Germany. This might have been an empty threat in years past, but Gregory soon found that he had allies. Many nobles in Italy and Germany stood much to gain if Henry fell from power. What followed was nearly 50 years of civil war.

We should mention one of these nobles in particular: the countess Matilda of Canossa. She acted as an intermediary for Gregory's communications throughout northern Europe and played a pivotal role in the war. It was at Matilda's very castle that Henry went to prostrate himself, walking barefoot and wearing a hair shirt to seek peace and penance before the visiting pope. But Henry's sublimation was short lived. The war soon began again. Matilda quickly deployed forces to control key passages through the Alps and limit Henry's access to Rome. When Gregory died in 1085, it was she who led the unsuccessful expedition



to install a new pope. Henry ultimately deposed her from her title, but she managed to lead several successful campaigns to regain some of her holdings.

An end finally came to the civil war in 1122. A compromise called the Concordat of Worms reconciled the empire, now ruled by Henry V, with Pope Calixtus II. Based on a similar agreement in England, the Concordat of London, the church retained the right to appoint their officials: monks elected their abbots and priors while canons elected their bishops. But it was also agreed that the king should preside over any disputes between candidates. This gave the king some power to install the official he wanted and allowed the king to retain the ability to invest bishops with land and secular lordship.

### Aftermath

Sadly, the concordat was not the end of it. The struggle continued, and has continued since. The church was no longer an imperial arm. And with its bishops holding land and influence in every Christian kingdom, the church was strengthened even though the empire could never quite return to its former glory.

The Holy Roman Emperor, Henry V, died without an heir. The two potential successors vying for the crown, Lothair II and Conrad III, needed papal support. But the church's power was not perfect, and it found itself caught in a tumultuous schism. After the death of Pope Honorius II, Gregory Papareschi was quickly elected by a small commission of cardinals as Pope Innocent II. The election was disputed and the remaining cardinals elected anti-Pope Anacletus II. Both lobbied for Emperor Lothair's support, which eventually went to Innocent. The Holy Roman Emperor then went to war against Anacletus' biggest supporter, Roger II of Sicily.

The dispute over the imperial throne ended when Lothair died in 1137. Conrad III became King of Germany, but was never able to secure Italy and become Emperor. His reign was plagued with noble revolt after noble revolt. Anacletus died in 1138, leaving the papacy squarely in the hands of Innocent. The struggle continued, but neither the empire nor the papacy would ever return to the old ways.

## RECONQUISTA

I believe, as William tells it, it was in the 8th century when the Moors flooded into the Iberian Peninsula<sup>3</sup>. This conquered territory they called Al-Andalus. Here the Arabs and Berbers of northern Africa ruled over what once was the land of the Visigoths.

And as the next centuries progressed, the princes of Christendom would try to reclaim this land from the Muslims, creating new kingdoms with constantly shifting borders and alliances as the peninsula was perpetually at war. The first strikes of retaliation were from within Al-Andalus itself. Visigoth nobles staged rebellions while the Moorish army was otherwise occupied. In this way the Kingdom of Asturias formed.

Then Charlemagne and his Franks attacked the Moors. He created what was called the Spanish March, a series of Christian lordships that would act as a buffer between Al-Andalus and France. The Christian presence in the peninsula was growing, but still splintered. Occasionally some great king would unite the various kingdoms and counties together only to divide them again amongst his sons.

### Caliphate of Córdoba

The Muslim state was itself fractured. William says that Berber soldiers resented their Arab commanders. Governors were recalled and replaced due to politicking in Damascus. The generals largely had to act independently. This led to in-fighting and disloyalty.

But this stabilized in 929 when the Emir of Córdoba, Abd-ar-Rahman III, named himself Caliph, made Al-Andalus independent from the Abbasids dynasty in Baghdad, and united the governors under his rule. In the following century, the caliphate would flourish as a center for cultural learning and advancement, even for the Christians and Jews living under Muslim thumbs. The caliphate collapsed due to civil war and in 1031 Al-Andalus was divided into many small petty kingdoms called taifas.

### The Almoravids and the Almohads

This left Al-Andalus vulnerable. In 1085, King Alfonso VI of León, Castile, and Galicia was able to gradually and diplomatically take the taifa of Toledo. This left the remaining taifa emirs worried, so they turned to Africa for help.

When reinforcements came, they came as the Almoravids, a military force of Berbers, who annexed Al-Andalus and halted the southern expansion of the Christian kingdoms. Their attack was so decisive, the only defeat that

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3 what is now Spain and Portugal



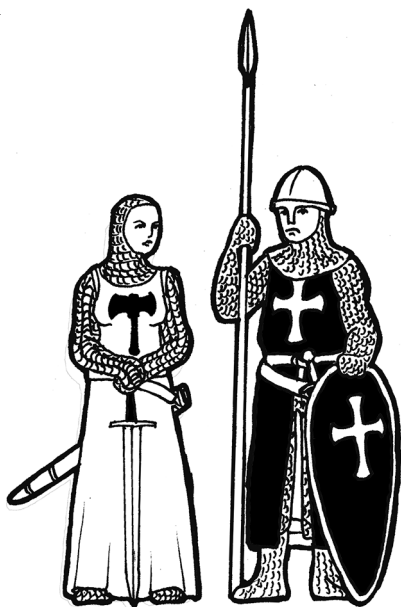
the Almoravids suffered was at the hands of El Cid in Valencia in 1094. The Almoravids ruled for a few decades until their empire declined and Al-Andalus once again segmented into taifas.

During this period, taifa emirs would often hire Christian mercenaries to help them fight not only against their Muslim neighbors but also against their Christian aggressors. The emirs also competed culturally, attempting to prove to other taifas that they had the best poets and artisans.

When the King of Portugal and his crusader knights took Lisbon in 1147, the taifas once again turned to Africa for support and once more they received more than they had bargained for. Abd al-Mu'min had supplanted the Almoravids in northern Africa with his own Almohad dynasty. Abd al-Mu'min took the Almohads into the Iberian Peninsula, once again making Al-Andalus part of a larger Muslim empire. Their hold has been contentious, suffering counter attacks from the Christian kingdoms of Portugal, León, Castile, Navarre, and Aragón that push them ever more southward.

### The Order of the Hatchet

It should be noted that in 1149, Count Raymond Berenger of Barcelona created the Order of the Hatchet. This was an order of military knighthood bestowed upon women of Tortosa in Aragón in honor of their defense of the town against an attack by Moors. Let it not be said that women cannot become knights, for they certainly can



## THE CRUSADES

Left with an abundance of fighting men raised to defend against the Viking raids of the previous era, Europe was plagued with strife and tyranny after the decline of the Carolingian Empire. Mercenaries, knights, and barons fought against each other and bullied the local populace. We have all seen how warriors act when they lack a war. Pope Urban II found one for them.

The power and holdings of the Byzantine Empire were diminishing under attack from the Turks. The emperor and head of the Greek Church, Alexius I, appealed to the pope to send aid. Rather than send the few hundred knights that Alexius requested, Urban rallied the western continent.

### The First Crusade

In 1095, Pope Urban II preached at Claremont, calling Christians to go on a great pilgrimage to Jerusalem. But this would be no ordinary pilgrimage. They would have to fight their way to the Holy City. In turn, Urban promised indulgences, the keys into the kingdom of heaven, to those who take up the cross in this plight.

The response was overwhelming. Small expeditions went out first, led by poor but charismatic leaders like Peter the Hermit. But it would be the armies of great counts and dukes of northern Europe who would comprise the main force of the campaign. Bohemond of Otranto, Count Robert II of Flanders, Duke Robert of Normandy, and Godfrey of Bouillon, the duke of Lorraine, led almost 7000 knights — plus soldiers, their families, and households — east into Asia Minor. It was an expensive undertaking, and nobles often sold their lands to finance their expeditions.

These armies gathered at Constantinople, where they were made to swear allegiance to Alexius I. From there they marched into the Holy Lands, fending off attacks from the Turks along the way. The armies quickly took control of Edessa and then laid siege to Antioch. This siege lasted for months, until Bohemond bribed one of the tower commanders to open his gates. The Christians flooded into the city, bringing massacre within its walls.

The army now split, some staying behind with Bohemond where he took command of Antioch, breaking his oath to Alexius, while Raymond of Toulouse, Godfrey of Bouillon, Robert of Flanders, and Robert of Normandy continued south with their armies to Jerusalem. There they surrounded Jerusalem, employing great siege engines against its walls. On the 13th of July, 1099, the north wall was breached and Jerusalem fell to the French knights. In triumph, they completed their pilgrimage at the church of the Holy Sepulcher.

The city was left under the command of Godfrey. On his death, his brother Baldwin became the first King of Jerusalem. Many of the knights and nobles returned to Europe, leaving those who remained with the task of repopulating

the cities they had taken where they formed a series of Christian states: the county of Edessa, the principality of Antioch, the county of Tripoli, and the kingdom of Jerusalem. Two military orders emerged in this time: one was the Poor Knighthood of Christ and the Temple of Solomon, who are also called the Templars; and the other was the Order of the Hospital of St. John of Jerusalem, who are known as the Hospitallers. They built castles and fortresses throughout the Holy Land to control and protect the new states.

In light of the invasion of the Latin Christians, various Islamic factions began to band together to expel their common enemy. Imad ad-Din Zengi was able to mend divisions in Aleppo and led his army in 1144 in a *jihad* that was successful at taking Edessa and many of the fortresses in the county.

## The Second Crusade

In response to the loss of Edessa, Pope Eugenius III called for a new fighting pilgrimage. His appeal was made directly to King Louis VII of France and his wife Eleanor of Aquitaine, and the monarchs immediately took up the cross. But the barons of France were reluctant, so Louis employed the services of Bernard of Clairvaux, a well-known and well-liked abbot, to preach the crusade. The scheme worked, but perhaps too well. A monk named Radulf was inspired to lead acts of violence against Jews in northern France (similar atrocities had been committed during the call for the first crusade) until Bernard intervened on behalf of the Jews. Bernard was successful in convincing Conrad III, King of Germany, to make the pilgrimage as well. The first call to Jerusalem was answered by dukes and counts; this endeavor would be led by monarchs.

In 1147, they set out. Eleanor of Aquitaine traveled alongside her husband Louis and acted as lord to her own knightly vassals. We have heard rumors that claim that she and her ladies-in-waiting traveled arrayed in full battle regalia. Conrad arrived in Constantinople well before Louis and Eleanor. Moving into Asia Minor, Conrad's forces were decimated by the Turks as he followed the path of the pilgrims who came before him. Louis and Eleanor took a more protected rout via the western coast. Still, many of their own infantry were lost to famine.

When they arrived in Antioch in March of 1148, Prince Raymond, uncle to Eleanor, tried to convince Louis to attack Aleppo, which was now ruled by Imad ad-Din Zengi's son, Nur ad-Din. Louis refused and continued on to Jerusalem where he combined forces with the remnants of Conrad III's army and those of the King of Jerusalem, Baldwin III. Together they decided to make a move on Damascus. They laid siege to the Muslim city, but under the hot summer sun and facing the threat of a force led by Nur ad-Din on its way, the Christians retreated. Louis, Eleanor, and Conrad would return to Europe empty handed.

## THE ANARCHY

With the sinking of the White Ship in 1120, King Henry I of England was robbed of his son and heir to the throne. Henry, with no other legitimate male heir, went to his barons and made them promise that on his death they would support his daughter, Empress Maude (the widow of Emperor Henry V), as his successor. Henry died in 1135 and the barons betrayed their promise, instead backing Stephen of Blois, Maude's cousin, allowing him to usurp the throne.

### The Nineteen Year Winter

King Stephen would not have any easy time keeping his grip on the crown. Throughout his reign he was under attack from all sides. First King David I of Scotland attacked him from the north. Stephen was finally able to subdue David with a treaty that gave him land in Northumbria. Next came Robert of Gloucester, Maude's bastard half-brother, who rallied forces in England loyal to the Empress. With Stephen so distracted, the princes of Brycheiniog, Deheubarth, and Gwynedd took the opportunity to rebel against Norman occupations in south Wales. Then Geoffrey of Anjou, Maude's husband, swept his army through Normandy and wrested it from Stephen's control. Maude herself finally joined with Robert of Gloucester's forces in 1139.

To combat his enemies, Stephen needed the constant support of his barons. They provided him with his military might: the knights and men-at-arms needed to fight his battles. Because of this dependence, the barons themselves could get away with anything they wanted. They abused their people, raised rents, taxed churches, and even raided monasteries. They feared no authority, normally administered by the sheriffs in each shire, because the king could not afford to lose their backing.

The entire reign of King Stephen was dark and gruesome. One chronicler has called it "the time when Christ and all his saints slept."

### The Lady of the English

In February of 1141, in a battle at Lincoln with Robert of Gloucester and Ranulf of Chester, Stephen's forces lost and the king was taken as a prisoner to Bristol. By April, Maude took the throne and was named Lady of the English. Barons who were once called traitors were now loyal, and those who were loyal were now called traitors. But Maude's reign was short lived.

Stephen's wife, Queen Matilda, raised an army and managed to capture Robert of Gloucester. A deal was struck and Maude agreed to release Stephen in exchange for the return of her brother.

Stephen quickly regained his strength and chased Maude to Oxford Castle where he laid siege, trapping her for three months. One night, Maude finally

escaped. She was lowered over the wall and, wearing a white cloak, disappeared in the snow and ran off.

## Henry of Anjou

King Stephen re-established himself as the monarch of England, but he was still wary of his enemies. In 1151, Geoffrey of Anjou died, leaving Empress Maude's son, Henry, as the Count of Anjou and Duke of Normandy. Henry went to England with hopes of restoring the royal line.<sup>4</sup>

# Settings

While the above political situations may happen in the background, the actual setting of your campaign is directly more pertinent to the game. The following items outline various settings of Europe in a general way: from rural to urban. The place you choose as a setting for the first session of your campaign should have some influence on the types of characters the players have available to play and the mentors available to train them. A short, focused game might take place completely in just one of these while a long, epic campaign might start in one and move to another and then another.

## VILLAGES AND COUNTRYSIDE

At the center of a system of agricultural fields is a village: the place where the people who work the farms live. Here, clustered together, are their homes and likely a parish church. By name, it is the predecessor of the Roman *villa*. Among the peasants who dwell here, some are free tenants, others are villeins or serfs who owe service and work on borrowed lands, and some are outright slaves. Among the villagers are a small handful of officers, craftsmen, and clergy.

## Common Mentors

Archer, guard, outlaw, peasant, and priest.

## MANOR HOUSES AND CASTLES

Every village has a lord. When he is in residence, you will find him at his manor house. Along with the lord and his family, the manor house contains the lord's staff. Stewards, chaplains, chamberlains, butlers, cooks, and marshals care for

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4 Translator's Note: while Henry was never able to defeat Stephen, there was an agreement making Henry the successor to the crown. When King Stephen died in 1154, Henry became King Henry II marking the beginning of the Plantagenet dynasty in England. Henry married Eleanor of Aquitaine (now divorced from Louis VII) and their sons Richard and John would both become English kings.

the house itself. Officers such as the reeve and bailiff tend to the lord's lands and collect rents from the tenants and villeins in the form of products from their farms and their services on the lord's demesne, his own estates.

As the Normans expanded into England and Italy, they brought with them castles. More defensive and strategic than the typical manor house, they were made first from timber on mottes with baileys and then eventually from stone. Along with the typical household, castellan lords housed their loyal knights and soldiers.

### **Common Mentors**

Courtier, guard, hunter, knight, minstrel, priest, and soldier.

## **CITIES AND TOWNS**

Cities and towns are hubs of human activity. Here burghers and artisans dwell around market squares and powerful nobles, bishops and monarchs build magnificent palaces. Many of these, like Paris and London, started as important Roman outposts that grew — thanks to improved ingenuity and popular trade markets — into thriving centers for commerce, diplomatic destinations, and seats of power.

### **Common Mentors**

Artisan, courtier, doctor, merchant, minstrel, priest, sailor, and thief.

## **MONASTERIES AND CONVENTS**

Where monks live together in community, you have a monastery; with nuns, a convent. These communities, made popular with the Clunaic reforms of the Benedictine order, are places of prayer, hard work in service to the Lord, and scholarly activities. Larger monasteries are called priories and are headed by a prior. Smaller communities, called abbeys, are under the charge of an abbot, and convents are led by prioresses and abbesses.

These religious houses are essentially manor houses, with demesnes and tenants of their own. The prior or abbot, prioress or abbess acts as lord of these religious communities and administers the lands through his or her staff. They collect rents, hold court, and give alms to the poor. Monks keep the house's gardens, manage its cellars, and keep their numbers healthy and fed.

Many monasteries have scriptoriums where there is study of religious and ancient texts. Houses such as ours here make grand copies of these works, illuminating them with fine illustrations and some even produce works of their own: glorious histories and chronicles such as the one that William works on.

### **Common Mentors**

Artisan, monk, nun, peasant, and priest.

## Situations

Knowing where your adventures will take place is important, but what takes place is even more so. The following situations are all occurrences you may wish to include in your campaign. Usually the GM introduces these, but many may arise out of the actions of the protagonists.

### QUEST

Your lord tasks you to fulfill some duty. Perhaps you are to retrieve some item, a holy relic or a celebrated weapon. You may be charged with protecting a member of your lord's household or attacking a vile enemy. Whatever the request, you have the skills to complete it.

### PILGRIMAGE

To atone for your sins or to prove your charity, you must travel to some holy place: a newly constructed cathedral perhaps or the death place of a martyred Saint. You set forth with all manner of companions, crossing the countryside as you journey to your hallowed destination.

### CRUSADE

More than a simple pilgrimage, this journey takes you with a marching army. Traveling far from home, you will fight infidels in order to find reconciliation for your immortal soul. Crusades are expensive endeavors and you may need to sell everything you have in order to equip yourself for this dangerous adventure.

### BATTLE

Take part in one of the great battles that have shaped the borders of kingdoms and empires. Pick sides and add your spear or bow to the chorus of violence, fighting for honor, glory, and the spoils of war.

### SIEGE

Take battle to the gates of some walled city or sturdy castle. Play the waiting game and see whether those inside or outside the walls will starve first. Rain volleys of arrows down on the invading army, or use massive siege engines to breach the walls of the defenders.

### REBELLION

Oppressed by overtaking and cruel laws, peasants rise up against their lords and barons or nobles against their monarchs. Rally your wretched peers against

the tyrants and turn peasant farmers into warriors. If you truly want what you deserve, you will have to claim it for yourselves.

## **INTRIGUE**

For some, what is usually gained through violence and war is more easily attained through the subtle methods of scheming and dealing. Propose alliances, arrange marriages, and whisper secrets to maneuver your way into positions of power and prestige.

## **MYSTERY**

Crimes and other mysteries need to be solved. Perhaps you are a juror of a hall-mote, tasked with deliberating a village controversy, or perhaps you have your own interest in a case. Use your detective skills and clever mind to find clues, interrogate those suspected, and route out the culprit.

# **The Banquet of Warwick Castle**

To bring the above concepts together, let us create a campaign concept. This is not necessarily a job for one person. This could be an activity for the entire group, ensuring everyone is able to have input and collaborate on creating a world to explore.

## **SITUATION: INTRIGUE**

To start with, we will pick a situation. This adventure will be an intrigue. The characters will scheme and maneuver for power.

## **SETTING: CASTLE**

We will set this adventure in Warwick castle, the seat of power for the Earl of Warwick. The Earl, Roger of Beaumont, will be hosting a banquet. This will be a grand celebration of knights, neighboring lords, and bishops. A perfect setting for courtly intrigue.

## **POLITICAL BACKDROP: THE ANARCHY**

To flavor the adventure, we will set it during the Anarchy in England. The year is 1140. Armies are moving into position. The earls and lords of the land are picking sides: aligning with either King Stephen or the Empress Maude. Roger of Beaumont has sworn his loyalty to the Empress but his rivals, the Sheriff of Warwickshire and Bishop of Coventry, ardent supporters of the king, will be attending the banquet. His allegiance must be kept secret.



## THE PROTAGONISTS

There is room for many types of protagonists in this scenario. Players could portray knights who are vassals to one of the lords in attendance, while others may wish to play monks or clerics in attendance with the bishop. If one wishes to play a lower-class character, they could be hired as a servant. Such a character would have an excellent opportunity to spy on dignitaries or carry out more nefarious schemes.

Each player should come up with an agenda: a particular goal that they want out of the adventure. They might try to secure land or power from the earl, align knights and soldiers to their side of the strife, further the standing of the church in the region, take vengeance against a lord who wronged their family, or win the heart of a dashing courtier.

## THE ANTAGONISTS

The antagonists are those who stand in the way of the protagonists' goals. The earl himself, Roger of Beaumont, is certainly one; and so is his politically savvy wife, Gundred. You might also wish to provide stats for two of the earl's primary rivals: the cousins Roger de Clinton, the Bishop of Coventry, and Geoffrey de Clinton, Sheriff of Warwickshire. The earl's nephew, Hugh de Neubourg, a knight and bully to the local villeins, would also make a good antagonist. In this case, William has bothered to do the work for you. You will actually find full stats for each of these antagonists in Appendix II.

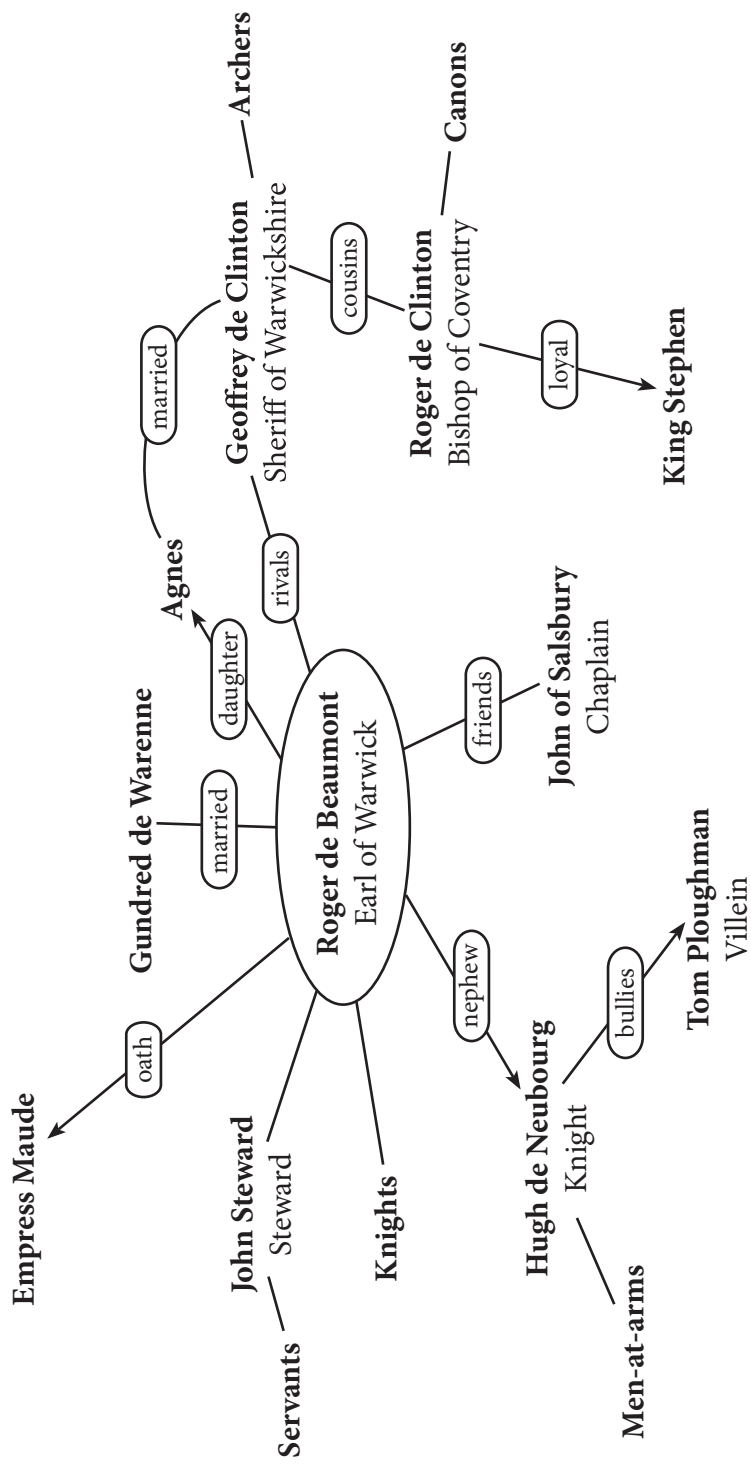
Each antagonist may also have an entourage of agents and the simple: men-at-arms, spies, and servants that provide an extra level of challenge for the protagonists. Rank these with d4's, d6's, and maybe a few d8's, as appropriate.

## RELATIONSHIP MAP

Since we are playing an intrigue, it is not a bad idea to chart out the various characters involved. In this case, Roger de Beaumont, as the host of the banquet, makes for a good center point. From him, draw lines to the other major antagonists and detail their various relationships. From each antagonist, draw lines to their agents. As the protagonists explore this map, the players can see how to play the various antagonists against each other and progress their own agendas.

## CONFLICT

With all the pieces in place, the GM should look for opportunities to move the narrative towards conflict. Parley conflicts and subterfuge are well suited for intrigue. As the protagonists pursue their agendas and the antagonists counter,



raise the level of contention to the point where actions become desperate and dramatic.

At the banquet of Warwick castle, there is another opportunity for a thrilling conflict: the melee, a grand tournament in which the lords, knights, and soldiers will face each other in a harrowing mock battle. Each combatant will attempt to capture opponents, and then ransom the captives back to their respective families. It also provides an opportunity to exact violent revenge against enemies and prove one's valor to those who may be watching.

## Farewell

Now you know the rules of the game and have learned how to create adventures and campaign concepts. There is nothing left to do but play! I hope you will find your sessions as enjoyable as those shared by Brothers William, James, Adam, and myself.

Fare thee well and Godspeed on your journeys. *Pax vobiscum.*



# Appendix I: Mentors

Here you will find descriptions and a full set of stats for each of the mentors listed in the Mentors table in the Create chapter. Each character listed here is a perfectly legal, if specialized, starting character. You are at liberty to simply pick one of these characters as a protagonist and start playing. The characters here also make great starting points for antagonists.

## ARCHER

An archer is an expert marksman, a master of the bow. They may be a regular soldier in an army or, like the commoners of England, a simple peasant who, by law, is pressed to practice their longbow every day. The archers of France prefer the crossbow as it requires less training and is horribly deadly. However, the crossbow takes a much longer time to reload.

### Skills

Aim	d10
Fitness	d10
Sense	d10

### Aspects

<i>Eye of the hawk</i>	d8
<i>Follows orders</i>	d8
<i>Strong arm</i>	d8

### Tools

Longbow	d8
Quiver of arrows	d10

## ARTISAN

The artisan is a skilled craftsman. They are usually specialized in a particular trade: armorer, baker, blacksmith, carpenter, cook, fletcher, mason, tailor, tanner, or weaver. They take the raw materials, harvested by the peasants, and turn them into the goods — clothing, tools, meals, weapons — needed throughout society.

### Skills

Entice	d10
Reflex	d10
Sense	d10

### Aspects

<i>Blacksmith *</i>	d8
<i>Creative citizen</i>	d8
<i>Productive ethic</i>	d8

### Tools

A toolkit	d6
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\* or *Baker, Carpenter, Cook, Mason, Tailor, or Weaver*

## COURTIER

A courtier is someone who attends the court of a monarch or noble. They are experts of etiquette and discourse. They may act as a servant, an advisor, a companion, or perhaps all three. They may have specific responsibilities, such as a steward or seneschal of the estate, a groom, a lady-in-waiting, or a butler. Alternatively, they could be at court to represent their own interests as nobles or clergy.

### Skills

Command	d10
Deceive	d10
Entice	d10

### Aspects

<i>Knows the etiquette of the court</i>	d8
<i>Of noble birth</i>	d8
<i>Speaks French</i>	d8

### Tools

Expensive gown or robes	d6
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## DOCTOR

A doctor is someone who has studied, perhaps at a University, the Greek masters and other texts that discuss anatomy, physiology, and medicine as it is understood. They are secular healers and may be physicians, dentists, nurses, midwives, or apothecaries.

### Skills

Command	d10
Heal	d10
Will	d10

### Aspects

<i>I prescribe... leeches!</i>	d8
<i>Reads Latin</i>	d8
<i>Steady hands</i>	d8

### Tools

Surgeon's kit	d6
Bandages	d4

## GUARD

A guard may be a member of the watch in a small village or a professional sentry at a royal palace. Their duty is to remain vigilant, watch for trespassers, and protect their charges with their lives.

### Skills

Parry	d10
Fitness	d10
Sense	d10

### Aspects

<i>Dutiful subject</i>	d8
<i>Nervous</i>	d8
<i>Vigilant</i>	d8

### Tools

Spear	d8
Round shield	d10
Leather jerkin	d4

## HUNTER

The hunter is a respected position in a royal or noble household. Hunting, now a sport more than a means of sustenance, is a favorite pastime amongst the elite and it is the hunter, or sometimes falconer, who leads these expeditions. It is the hunter's duty to know his lord's woods, the various prey within, and how to best track them down.

### Skills

Aim	d10
Hide	d10
Hunt	d10

### Aspects

<i>Dog trainer *</i>	d8
<i>At home in the forest</i>	d8
<i>Quiet as the dead of night</i>	d8

### Tools

Bow	d6
Quiver of arrows	d10
Snare trap	d4

\* or *Falconer*

## KNIGHT

The knight is a professional, mounted warrior. The position is bestowed by another knight or higher-ranking lord, a privilege usually only granted to members of noble or royal families. A knight is often the only class of warrior allowed to wield swords and fight on horseback (most knights own a few horses).

Knights often travel with squires charged to take care of the horses and keep the knight's armor and weapons in good condition. These squires are often in training to become knights themselves.

### Skills

Ride	d10
Fitness	d10
Strike	d10

### Aspects

<i>Lives by the sword</i>	d8
<i>Loyal to my lord</i>	d8
<i>Of noble birth</i>	d8

### Tools

Helm	d6
Horse	d20
Kite shield	d12
Mail hauberk	d8
Sword	d8



## MERCHANT

The merchant is growing in prominence in the bustling cities. They buy goods from their home region, travel to various market fairs across the continent trading, buying, and selling goods, and then bring their spoils back home. Of course, they attempt to make a profit at every step. Merchants are at the forefront of emerging capitalism, and are the commoners' link to the outside world.

### Skills

Deceive	d10
Entice	d10
Ride	d10

### Aspects

<i>Everyone has a price</i>	d8
<i>Good with numbers</i>	d8
<i>Shrewd</i>	d8

### Tools

Cart	d8
Mule	d10

## MINSTREL

Minstrels, bards, players, and fools provide the primary source of entertainment in the medieval world. Some may be a regular feature in the household of a baron or king. Others may travel from village to village, spreading their tales and news across the countryside.

### Skills

Dash	d10
Entice	d10
Perform	d10

### Aspects

<i>Anything for a laugh</i>	d8
<i>Musician *</i>	d8
<i>Well-traveled, well-versed</i>	d8

### Tools

Drum, flute, harp, or lute	d8
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\* or Actor, Juggler, or Poet

## MONK

A monk is a member of a cloistered religious order. As part of a community, they devote their lives to prayer and study. Monasteries are often industrious, especially in the proliferation of literature. Many monks work as scribes and illuminators to copy and produce books.

### Skills

Fitness	d10
Sense	d10
Will	d10

### Aspects

<i>Devoted</i>	d8
<i>Scribe *</i>	d8
<i>Follower of The Rule</i>	d8

### Tools

Habit	d6
Stylus and ink	d6

\* or *Brewer, Bookbinder, Chronicler, Illuminator, or Scholar*

## NUN

Similar to monks, nuns are women joined in a religious community, in this case, a convent. Convents are one of the few places where a common woman can receive an education. Life in a convent centers on prayer, reading, and work. Nuns provide charity to the poor and healing for the sick. They sometimes work as copyists and illuminators.

### Skills

Empathy	d10
Heal	d10
Will	d10

### Aspects

<i>Ascetic</i>	d8
<i>Compassionate</i>	d8
<i>Sacred vows</i>	d8

### Tools

Habit	d6
Prayer rope	d4

## OUTLAW

Outlaws have been banished from their village or town for some offense they have committed. Often times they have been disfigured in some way, both as a punishment for their crime as well as to identify them as a criminal.

### Skills

Brawl	d10
Fitness	d10
Hide	d10

### Aspects

<i>Brute</i>	d8
<i>Severed hand</i>	d8
<i>Vengeful</i>	d8

### Tools

Club	d6
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## PEASANT

Peasants spend their days toiling in the field, whether tending to their own land or that of their lord. They make up the vast majority of most village populations, producing food as well as cash crops.

### Skills

Climb	d10
Fitness	d10
Sense	d10

### Aspects

<i>Farmer *</i>	d8
<i>Hard worker</i>	d8
<i>Knows the land</i>	d8

### Tools

A hand tool	d6
Hard shoes	d6

\* or *Fisher, Miller, Miner, Shepherd, or Woodcutter*

## PRIEST

The priest is a member of the clergy who brings the message of the church to the people. This may be the local vicar who holds mass in a small village, or a prominent bishop who presides over a whole region.

### Skills

Command	d10
Entice	d10
Perform	d10

### Aspects

<i>Educated in the Latin mass</i>	d8
<i>Leads the flock</i>	d8
<i>Powerful orator</i>	d8

### Tools

Crucifix	d6
Vestments	d6

## SAILOR

Sailors man the ships that sail seas, generally along trade routs, transporting goods between the kingdoms of Europe. Their ships are their homes, where they enjoy freedom from the laws that rule the lands, though they are subject to the discipline of their captain.

### Skills

Boat	d10
Navigate	d10
Swim	d10

### Aspects

<i>Restless</i>	d8
<i>Sails by the stars</i>	d8
<i>Sea legs</i>	d8

### Tools

A map	d6
Rope (50')	d6

## SOLDIER

Soldiers seek to earn their living through their martial skill. They may be part of a conscripted army or hired out as a fighting mercenary. They do not have the status to be knights, but they are brave and honorable nonetheless.

### Skills

Fitness	d10
Parry	d10
Strike	d10

### Aspects

<i>Battle cry!</i>	d8
<i>Mercenary</i>	d8
<i>Tough as nails</i>	d8

### Tools

Battle ax	d8
Boots	d6
Helm	d6
Leather cuirass	d6

## THIEF

Thieves are the unwanted, unscrupulous members of society. They wait in the shadows, or even under your own nose, ready to snatch your purse when the moment strikes. No lock is too thick, no door too heavy for their clever skills.

### Skills

Climb	d10
Sneak	d10
Steal	d10

### Aspects

<i>Cutpurse</i>	d8
<i>Ordinary looking</i>	d8
<i>Quiet as a mouse</i>	d8

### Tools

Dark cloak	d6
Lock picks	d6
Soft shoes	d6

## Appendix II: Antagonists

These antagonists were created for the example adventure scenario, “The Banquet of Warwick Castle” found on page 97. Certainly, the same antagonists could be used for other adventures and their stats may be used as templates for other characters that come into opposition with your protagonists.

### ROGER DE BEAUMONT, 2ND EARL OF WARWICK

Roger inherited the earldom of Warwick from his father Henry de Beaumont and is lord of Warwick castle. The de Beaumont family is a powerful Norman house, controlling not only Warwick but also Leicester, and they are descended from great lords in Normandy and heroes of the Battle of Hastings. Roger himself is considered to be quite pious and devout, having built abbeys and founded hospitals. He was one of the barons who swore the oath to Henry I to support Empress Maude’s succession to the crown, but it is now unclear which side he supports.

#### Skills

Aim	d6
Command	d8
Deceive	d6
Entice	d8
Fitness	d8
Hide	d6
Hunt	d6
Perform	d6
Ride	d8
Strike	d8
Will	d8

#### Aspects

<i>Earl of Warwick</i>	d8
<i>Pious and gentle appearance</i>	d10
<i>Quick to anger</i>	d8

#### Tools

Banner	d6
Helm	d6
Horse	d20
Kite shield	d12
Mail hauberk	d8
Spear	d8
Sword	d8

#### KNIGHTS

Agents (2 Vigor each)

#### Skills

Chase	d6
Combat	d8
Parley	d4
Subterfuge	d4

#### Aspects

<i>Oathsworn</i>	d8
------------------	----

#### Tools

Helm	d6
Horse	d20
Kite shield	d12
Mail hauberk	d8
Spear	d8
Sword	d8

GUNDRED DE WARENNE, LADY OF WARWICK

Gundred is the daughter of the Earl of Surrey, another of the lords who swore the oath to Henry I to support Maude. She married Roger de Beaumont in 1130. Young and shrewd, Gundred is the daughter of a very political family and is perhaps the cunning brains behind de Beaumont’s maneuverings. There are rumors that it was her scheme to marry her oldest daughter, Agnes, to Geoffrey de Clinton in order to pacify the rival’s attacks. She has two other daughters with Roger and is currently pregnant with their fourth child.

Skills

Command	d6
Dash	d6
Deceive	d6
Empathy	d6
Entice	d8
Heal	d6
Perform	d6
Will	d6

Aspects

<i>Ambitious</i>	d8
<i>Politically savvy</i>	d8
<i>Pregnant</i>	d8

Tools

Fine jewelry	d4
Fashionable gown	d6
Harp	d8

LADIES-IN-WAITING

Agents (2 Vigor each)

Skills

Chase	d6
Combat	d4
Parley	d8
Subterfuge	d8

Aspects

<i>Open ears</i>	d8
------------------	----

Tools

Fashionable gown	d6
------------------	----

## HUGH DE NEUBOURG

Hugh is Roger de Beaumont's nephew and knight. He is a bully and frequently causes grief for de Beaumont's villeins and tenants. Unless Gundred bears a son, Hugh is legally heir to the earldom. While he has no impetus to revolt against his family, he might be easily convinced.

### Skills

Dash	d6
Entice	d6
Fitness	d8
Parry	d6
Perform	d6
Ride	d6
Strike	d8

### Aspects

<i>Arrogant</i>	d8
<i>Brash tactics</i>	d8
<i>Landed knight</i>	d8

### Tools

Helm	d6
Horse	d20
Kite shield	d12
Mail hauberk	d8
Spear	d8
Sword	d8

## MEN-AT-ARMS

Agents (2 Vigor each)

### Skills

Chase	d4
Combat	d6
Parley	d4
Subterfuge	d4

### Aspects

<i>Brute</i>	d8
--------------	----

### Tools

Battle ax	d8
Boots	d6
Helm	d6
Leather cuirass	d6



GEOFFREY DE CLINTON, SHERIFF OF WARWICKSHIRE

Geoffrey’s father, also called Geoffrey, was installed as the Sheriff of Warwickshire under King Henry I to keep Henry de Beaumont, the 1st Earl of Warwick, in check. The king forced Henry de Beaumont to give up some of his lands to de Clinton. When the elder Geoffrey died, that land reverted to the de Beaumont family. The younger Geoffrey attacked Roger de Beaumont, attempting to gain back the lands by force. The feud was mollified with a marriage between Geoffrey and Roger de Beaumont’s daughter, Agnes, but Geoffrey has never completely resolved to give up his father’s lands. As a loyal official to King Stephen, he is seeking a way to use the civil war between Stephen and Maude to his own ends.

Skills

Fitness	d10
Ride	d6
Parry	d6
Sense	d8
Strike	d6
Will	d6

Aspects

<i>Desires the return of his</i>	
<i>father’s lands</i>	d8
<i>Sheriff of Warwickshire</i>	d8
<i>Sword master</i>	d8

Tools

Helm	d6
Horse	d20
Kite shield	d12
Mail hauberk	d8
Spear	d8
Sword	d8

ARCHERS

Agents (2 Vigor each)

Skills

Chase	d4
Combat	d6
Parley	d4
Subterfuge	d6

Aspects

<i>Vigilant</i>	d8
-----------------	----

Tools

Bow	d6
Leather jerkin	d4
Short sword	d6

## ROGER DE CLINTON, BISHOP OF COVENTRY

Roger is a cousin to Geoffrey de Clinton and was installed in his clerical office by Geoffrey's father. Roger is loyal to King Stephen and advises him on military matters in the continuing campaign against Empress Maude and Robert of Gloucester.

### Skills

Command	d10
Deceive	d8
Entice	d10
Fitness	d6
Perform	d6
Sense	d6
Will	d6

### Aspects

<i>Bishop of Coventry</i>	d8
<i>A weakness for women</i>	d8
<i>Well-spoken</i>	d10

### Tools

Crucifix	d6
Vestments	d6

### CANONS

Agents (2 Vigor each)

#### Skills

Chase	d4
Combat	d4
Parley	d6
Subterfuge	d6

#### Aspects

<i>Studious</i>	d8
-----------------	----

#### Tools

Vestments	d6
-----------	----

## Appendix III: Animals

Here you will find the necessary skills and aspects for beasts, wild and domesticated.

### ALPHA WOLF

Antagonist (3 Vigor)

#### Skills

Brawl	d8
Climb	d4
Dash	d8
Fitness	d8
Hide	d6
Hunt	d10
Reflex	d8
Sense	d10
Sneak	d8
Swim	d8
Will	d6

#### Aspects

<i>Claws and teeth</i>	d8
------------------------	----

### BEAR

Antagonist (3 Vigor)

#### Skills

Brawl	d20
Climb	d10
Dash	d12
Fitness	d20
Hide	d6
Hunt	d10
Reflex	d6
Sense	d10
Sneak	d8
Swim	d10
Will	d8

#### Aspects

<i>Large</i>	d8
<i>Claws and teeth</i>	d12

### CAT

Simple (1 Vigor) d4

#### Aspects

<i>Claws and teeth</i>	d6
<i>Small</i>	d8
<i>Sly</i>	d10

### DOG

Agent (2 Vigor)

#### Skills

Chase	d6
Combat	d6
Parley	d4
Subterfuge	d8

#### Aspects

<i>Hound dog *</i>	d8
<i>Loyal</i>	d8
<i>Teeth</i>	d6

\* or *Guard dog*, or *Shepherd dog*

### FALCON

Agent (2 Vigor)

#### Skills

Chase	d10
Combat	d6
Parley	d4
Subterfuge	d8

#### Aspects

<i>Soaring</i>	d8
<i>Talons</i>	d8

**FOX**

Simple (1 Vigor) d4

**Aspects***Crafty* d6*Quick* d8*Small* d6**HORSE**

Agent (2 Vigor)

**Skills**

Chase d6

(Dash d20)

Combat d8

Parley d4

Subterfuge d4

**Aspects***Charger \** d10*Full gallop* d10*Large* d8\* or *Palfrey*, *Rouncey*, or *Draught horse***PACK WOLF**

Agent (2 Vigor)

**Skills**

Chase d6

Combat d8

Parley d4

Subterfuge d8

**Aspects***Claws and teeth* d8**SQUIRREL**

Simple (1 Vigor) d4

**Aspects***Quick* d10*Small* d8**WILD BOAR**

Antagonist (3 Vigor)

**Skills**

Brawl d10

Dash d8

Fitness d12

Hide d8

Sense d6

Sneak d6

Swim d6

Will d10

**Aspects***Tusks* d8

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# Inspiration and Sources

*Chronica Feudalis* owes much of its design to the following inspirations:

I first became familiar with step-die systems through *Earthdawn* and then when I flipped through a copy of *Savage Worlds* at my favorite local game store. I wouldn't play (and grow to love) *Savage Worlds* until much later, so my first actual play experience using various sized dice to represent character abilities was with Vincent Baker's *Dogs in the Vineyard* and, soon afterwards, John Harper's *Agon*. These games provided much of the inspiration for the *Chronica* system.

Aspects are taken, via the Open Game License (see right), from the FATE role-playing system by Robert Donoghue and Fred Hicks. These few, simple rules provide a versatile and elegant skeleton upon which the game is built.

Backgrounds were very much inspired by a post made by Benjamin Baugh on RPGnet. Benjamin (Bailywolf) calls these "Gimmes" (<http://forum.rpg.net/showthread.php?t=427169>).

I first played with the idea of mentors as facets of the character creation system and character advancement in a previous and un-finished game design called *Thegn*. The mentor system stems from career- or life-path systems such as Luke Crane's *Burning Wheel*, *Traveller*, or *Warhammer Fantasy Roleplay*.

Historical information, especially that of the "political backdrops," was primarily gleaned from the following sources:

"The Anglo-Saxon Chronicle, Part 7: A.D. 1102-1154." *The Online Medieval and Classical Library*. Translated by Rev. James Ingram. <http://omacl.org/Anglo/part7.html>.

Cantor, Norman F. *Civilization of the Middle Ages: A Completely Revised and Expanded Edition of Medieval History*. New York: Harper Perennial, 1994.

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Henry of Huntingdon. "Henry of Huntingdon: on King Stephen's Reign." *Medieval Sourcebook*. translated by Thomas Forester. 1996. <http://www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/henry-hunt1.html>.

Madden, Thomas F., ed. *Crusades: The Illustrated History*. Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 2005.

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