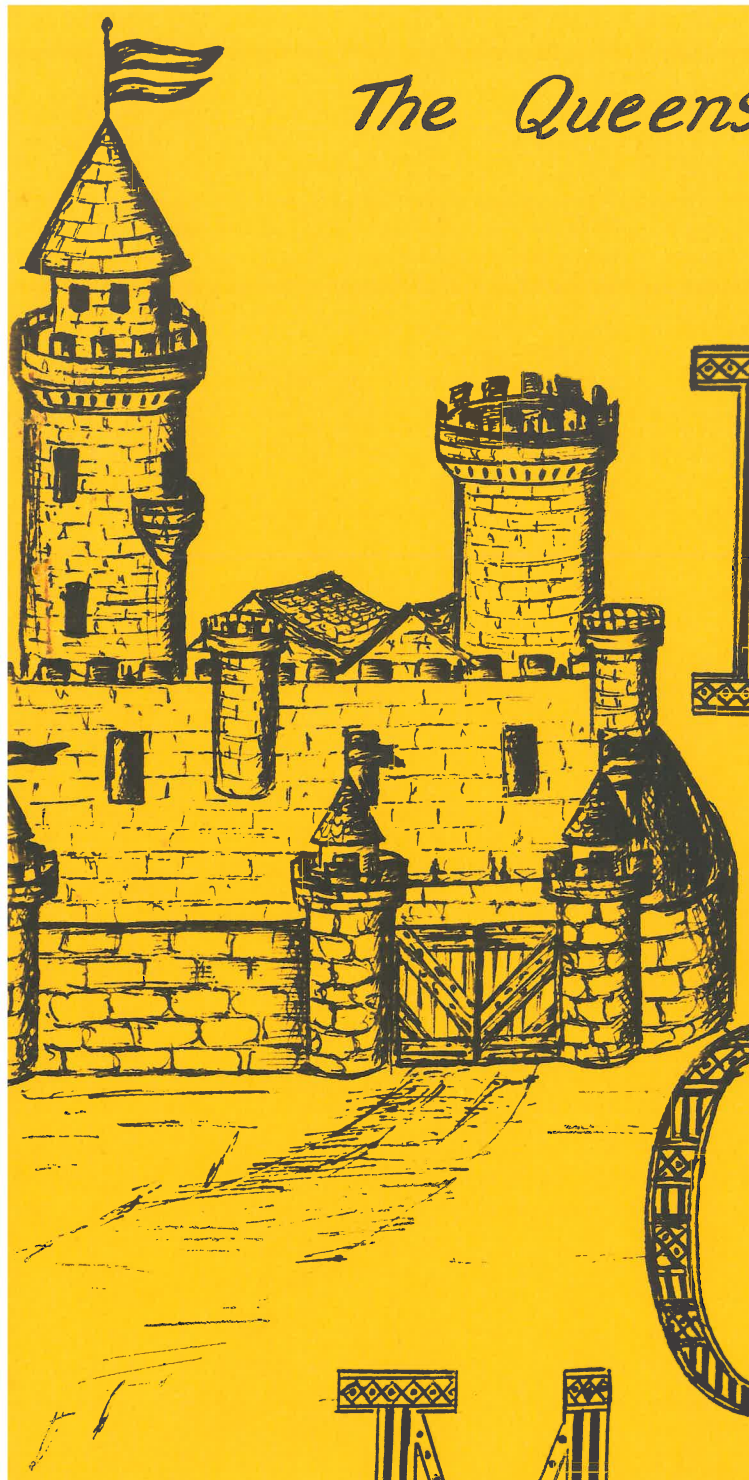
The Queensland Wargamer

presents ...



Intrigue at Castle Morien

~ or ~

Who gets the job?

The University of Queensland Games Society presents:

"Intrigue at Castle Morien"

or

"Who gets the Job?"

designed by Taina and Timo Nieminen

cover by Marlies Friese

This is a special issue of the Queensland Wargamer. The Queensland Wargamer is the journal of the University of Queensland Games Society, published irregularly during the year.

Editor: Nick Lawrence
262 Hawken Drive
St Lucia 4067
phone (h) 3715973

What is a Freeform?

A freeform is a game. It is meant to be entertaining and enjoyable for all concerned. It can be described in several ways:

You may have heard of the dinner party game, "How to Host a Murder." A freeform is like that, although the plot does not have to be a murder mystery, and freeforms have a multitude of settings: science fiction, fantasy, history, modern, and so on.

Or you can look at a freeform game as an unfinished drama. There are characters, but there is no plot or script. The play as it unfolds is written by the characters (or the actors) themselves. Each player is a character who has certain aims to fulfil, if possible, during the freeform. There is a referee (or perhaps more than one) who directs the action. They determine the limits of what is possible ("No, you cannot buy a super-deadly skin contact poison to assassinate the king,") and also take the part of minor non-player characters (such as servants or messengers who appear only a few times). Most of the action takes place through player interactions, that is, talk and action by the characters amongst themselves.

For the role player, a freeform is a role playing game in which you walk around, often in costume, from room to room playing the part of your character, instead of sitting around a table. Instead of the player saying to the GM, "I look for Elena and tell her that ...", you get up and find Elena and tell her yourself. Game time conforms more closely to real time; the stage setting approximates the game setting. And obviously, combat takes a far smaller role in a freeform game than it does in most role playing games.

The basic requirements to run a freeform game are players and referee(s), space and time. You will need several rooms for most freeforms, to represent the different rooms of the setting, whatever it be. The corners of one room will not suffice, because characters need to have sufficient privacy (secrecy?) to scheme. You will also need some time. A freeform game will usually take at least three to four hours, quite possibly more. The scenario presented here took eight hours to run.

And although there is no necessity to wear costumes, you will find that fancy dress adds to the atmosphere. The costuming need not be exact. All you need to do is dress up enough to not have reality intruding too much.

We have presented a freeform scenario here: "Intrigue at Castle Morien, or, Who Gets the Job?" You will find referee's instructions for running the game: player's character sheets, a list of things you will need, and general directions. We have also added some accounts of what happened when we ran the scenario.

IF YOU WISH TO PLAY IN THE FREEFORM, DO NOT READ ANY FURTHER. TO DO SO WOULD DECREASE YOUR ENJOYMENT OF THE GAME. THERE ARE NO WINNERS AND LOSERS; YOU DO NOT NEED TO CHEAT.

INTRIGUE AT CASTLE MORIEN, or, WHO GETS THE JOB?

Player Information

The game is set in a 17th century minor European kingdom. Note though, that women may be appointed to official positions.

AIMS OF FREEFORM

The Ministry of Trade and Foreign Relations is vacant at the moment, as the last Minister died rather suddenly a few months ago. King Leopold will soon appoint a replacement, and some people who wish to be appointed to the post are petitioning the Duke of Morien at his country estate. All of the action takes place at the Duke's castle.

BACKGROUND

The last war was fought five years ago, against the infidels to the south. (Many ladies were widowed during that war.) In spite of several great battlefield victories for the kingdom, the war itself ended rather inconclusively for both sides. Each side blames the other for opening hostilities. Since then, foreign relations have been, if not friendly, at least peaceful.

WELL KNOWN CHARACTERS

King Leopold IV

Your king. He acquired his throne by being the victor in a civil war some twenty years ago. He is commonly regarded as being not too bright. He relies heavily upon his advisors, one of whom is the Duke of Morien. It is common (but not official) knowledge that the Duke will make the final decision on whom to appoint to the post of Minister of Trade and Foreign Relations.

(NPC—DOES NOT APPEAR)

Queen Katarina

A jealous woman. (NPC—DOES NOT APPEAR)

Duke of Gassner

One of the most ambitious and ruthless men in the kingdom, but is thought by most to have far less influence on the Royal Court than the Duke of Morien.

(NPC—DOES NOT APPEAR)

Duke of Morien

One of the most influential advisors of the King.

Malik

Bodyguard to the Duke of Morien. A Turk and a heathen, but an excellent swordsman nonetheless. Rumour has it that the Duke once saved his life.

Viscountess Isadora Martin

Foster-daughter of the Duke of Morien. She was orphaned during the civil war.

Count Christopher Friedrich Nicolai

An ambitious man, he is praised by many, yet feared by many. He is said to reward his friends and crush his enemies.

Countess Roseanne Haydn

A formerly wealthy socialite, widowed during the war five years ago. She is now impoverished. She is known to associate with the Duke of Gassner.

Count Frederick Helmont

Former battalion commander in the war five years ago. He was disgraced in battle, and discharged dishonourably.

Dr Edmund Dickenson

Emissary from King Charles (monarch of a small kingdom across the sea).

INTRIGUE AT CASTLE MORIEN, or, WHO GETS THE JOB?

What You Will Need

A house with at least four rooms (Great Hall, Dining Room, Kitchens, The Duke's Quarters) and preferably a yard (The Gardens, Stables etc.).

Costumes. We used SCA (Society for Creative Anachronism) costumes. The player of the Baron had his own elegant and original solution. He dressed in trendy modern clothes, down to the dark glasses. It defined his character brilliantly. Along the same lines, the ladies could wear evening dress. Cloaks, which are relatively easy to make, can be used to great effect to hide every day dress. Malik's player wore a turban made from a towel, and a fake eye patch.

Food and drink. Not all freeforms need this, but the climax of action for "Intrigue at Castle Morien" is timed to happen during dinner. Also, eight hours is a long time to go without food. Ask for contributions from the players. Each person could bring a particular dish.

Access to a photocopier. Each player will need a copy of their character sheet and the Player's Information page.

Two bottles of food colouring. These represent poison; one is to be given to Malik, and one to Count Nicolai. In our game, the green food colouring was used to stand for a love potion, and as a result two players and one referee had green stains on their hands. To avoid this you could substitute imitation brandy or vanilla essence. The bottles are nice and small—easily concealable.

Either a large hoard of 1c, 2c and 5c pieces or some other way of representing money. We used the following currency:

1 copper piece (a **groat**) represented by a one cent coin.
1 silver piece (a **shilling**) = 12 groats, represented by a five cent coin.
1 gold piece (a **mark**) = 12 shillings, represented by a two cent coin.
a 10 mark coin, represented by a New Zealand 20 cent piece.

Encourage the players to call the coins groats, shillings and marks. You could also use monopoly money, those foil covered chocolates that look like coins, and so on. It is essential that the money is represented by something physical, best carried in purses or pouches, and not by the usual role playing method of changing the amount written on a piece of paper.

Time. Allow several hours. We ran from 1.00 p.m. to 9.00 p.m., beginning directly after lunch, and feeding the players afternoon tea and dinner.

People. The game as it stands was written for 11 people (8 males and 3 females) as characters, needing 2 referees to run it. We have given instructions for decreasing the number of people if necessary, but it probably would not work well with fewer than 6 people (including at least one female character).

outcome. If food colouring is to be used, then it will need to be insinuated into food or drink, and the target will need to eat or drink it.

7. Lady Meredith may need some help in obtaining hand writing samples, which is bascially the only way in which she can discover the identity of the traitor at the start.

8. We served dinner around 6 to 7 p.m. Referees, Malik and Gustav ate earlier, as Malik is needed to guard the Duke at dinner, and Gustav never eats at the Duke's table. It was during dinner that the string of messengers arrived:

   First, to Lady Meredith, to tell her that the Duke of Gassner has been arrested. As the King's agent, she should be the first to hear about it.
   Second, to Count Nicolai to tell him about Gassner's arrest. Let Nicolai do whatever he wishes about it.
   Third, to Countess Haydn. She should be most happy to hear about the demise of her debtor.
   Fourth, to Baron Morrell. This messenger has been sent by Gassner's followers with the aim of implicating Morrell in his plot. If the Duke or Malik do not see fit to detain or interrogate him, he should talk loudly and wildly to either the guards, or possibly in Lady Meredith's hearing.
   Fifth, to Count Helmont, who again has good reason to be happy at Gassner's arrest.

   We also decided to have Nicolai receive a message from the (NPC) Countess who had discovered that Isadora was King Leopold's daughter, but Nicolai never used this information.

9. Because Nicolai's and Morrell's hand writings were similar (the players were siblings), the Duke and Lady Meredith suspected Morrell until Nicolai fled the castle. But in most games, this problem should not occur.

   The game was wound up shortly after, around 8 to 9 p.m., and all of the intrigues were revealed to the players. The Duke offered the job to Lady Meredith.

It is most important for the referees (and you should have two if at all possible) to attend to the flow and pace of action. If assassinations are taking place left, right and centre there will be no need to heat up things; on the other hand, if Lady Meredith cannot solve her puzzle or Nicolai looks like getting the job, referees will need to act. There are no hard and fast rules here; just keep the pace quick enough to be interesting, but not so quick as to be unplayable.

Read the referees' and players' accounts of the game for a guide, prepare thoroughly, and enjoy!

INTRIGUE AT CASTLE MORIEN, or, WHO GETS THE JOB?

Referees' Information

First, you must be familiar with all of the character information. Most of the information necessary to run the game is found there; it is not repeated here. You must also be able to remember at all times who is playing what character. We suggest you write up a list and keep it in your pocket during the game.

The characters have differing aims, but most centre around the appointment of a new Minister of Trade and Foreign Relations, an extremely lucrative and powerful position. You will notice that the characters have different motives for seeking the position.

Brief Background Information

The previous minister was not assassinated. He died of a heart attack. But because he died suddenly (and doctors were not acquainted with heart disease) many people suspect that he was poisoned.

The Duke of Gassner is connected with Nicolai, Morrell, Helmont and Haydn. The motive is different in each case. Nicolai is a willing co-conspirator. Baron Paul Morrell is a patsy, set up to take the heat off Nicolai if necessary. The Countess Haydn is a just-in-case candidate. She is not the Countess addressed in Nicolai's note. That Countess is an NPC, married to an elderly count, who is also an NPC. Helmont was betrayed to the enemy by Gassner.

A Note on Gender

Although in role playing games, players sometimes have a character of the opposite sex, this is not desirable in a freeform where player interaction forms the bulk of the game. You can see the difficulty for a player to remember that the male/female they are talking to is really supposed to be of the opposite gender for the duration of the game. If you cannot find enough female/male players, you will need to change some of the characters. See the note on numbers for instructions.

A Note on Numbers

As we said earlier, this scenario was written for 11 players. Look at the character list now for all 11 characters. A core of 6 are basically essential, because their storylines are connected with each other. These six are:

The Duke of Morien
Malik
Lady Meredith
Isadora
Count Nicolai
Baron Morrell

The other five, in decreasing order of importance, are:

Dr Edmund Dickenson
Count Helmont
Countess Roseanne Haydn
Martin Fritzlar
Gustav Gustavson

That is, drop Gustav first, then Martin Fritzlar, and so on. If there is a problem with the gender mix, Lady Meredith could become Lord Marcus and Countess Haydn could become Count Haydn. Isadora should remain Isadora. Dr. Edmund Dickenson could become Dr. Emily Dickenson, Martin Fritzlar could become Marian Fritzlar.

Directions

Before the game

1. Organise your players. Get a firm commitment from each player to turn up for your set date and time.

2. Arrange a suitable venue.

3. Give out character sheets in time for the players to prepare their costumes and to give some thought to their characters' aims. We withheld inside information until the morning of the game, to take away any temptation for players to tell others about their characters. Players should get only their own character sheet, plus the "Player Information" sheet.

4. Get whoever is playing Count Nicolai to write out by hand the following note:

   "Dear Countess,
   The plan is set. All that remains is to be appointed, and the new era will dawn! It is too late to go back.
   Count X."

   This note is to be given to the player of Lady Meredith. It represents the intercepted correspondence.

5. Buy the food colouring/imitation brandy/vanilla essence, or make something else to represent the poison. It must be safe because it is to be physically added to the player's food or drink. If the player detects it, well, then so does the character.

6. Arrange the food. We ran the game from directly after lunch (so the players provided their own lunch), and provided afternoon tea to represent "breakfast" of the next day. This meal was simple bread and salami. Most of the climactic action took place over dinner. This was not coincidental. As referees, we felt during dinner that the action was too slow, and deliberately sped it up with the arrival of messenger after messenger. The love potion debacle was instigated entirely by the players. Our dinner menu was:

   Entree
   Roast Potato

   Main
   Stew
   Omelette
   Boiled Rice
   Salad

   Dessert
   Baked Apple
   Rice Pudding

   This menu had two advantages. First, it was economical. Second, it could be prepared ahead of time, and mostly kept warm in the oven, and so the

cooking referee was absent from the freeform for a minimal time. You could ask for either money or food contributions from the players. For instance, each player could be assigned to bring a different item on the menu. To understand the significance of the potato, read the character sheet of the Countess.

7. Organise the "money." You will need something to physically represent money. Small coins or tokens are best, and you should make up a pouch for each player with the character's money. As a guide:

Dr. Edmund Dickenson	10 marks
Count Nicolai	10 marks
Baron Paul Morrell	120 marks
Count Helmont	3 marks
The Duke	8 marks
Lady Meredith	6 marks
Isadora	3 marks
Countess Haydn	groats or shillings only
Martin Fritzlar	25 marks
Malik	25 marks
Gustav Gustavson	groats or shillings only

Note that most characters will have access to more wealth through their estates and so on. This is just what they are carrying on them. If Isadora wants more money, she will have to ask her foster father for it. One mark is a great deal of money. Most commoners only ever see shillings and groats.

The Game Begins!

1. Certain characters should begin already inside the castle: the Duke, Isadora, Lady Meredith and Dr. Dickenson. Malik should probably also be there, but as Malik's player was late in our game, we decreed that he was carousing at the village with his good buddy, Gustav, who was also late.

2. Game time is evening, leaving a few hours of action before decreeing "lights out" and beginning the new day five minutes later, with afternoon tea for breakfast.

3. Acting as the Duke's servants, we greeted the players as they arrived at the house, in character, with mulled dark grape juice. (Heat grape juice gently with cinnamon sticks, cardamom pods, and whole cloves.)

4. Characters will introduce themselves, and generally drink grape juice and try to feel more comfortable with the whole concept of freeforming. We found conversation quite stilted at first, but after a few hours, players felt much more comfortable.

5. At the appropriate time, tell the Duke that it is time for him to retire. He will announce this and the other players should take the hint. If they don't, Malik should follow them around. (He would not let strangers freely wander the castle at night.) Announce the morning. Players will no doubt all gather around the food table, and action should continue.

6. There will mostly be little for the referees to do, but to try to keep abreast of what is going on. The players will probably break down into small groups, and wander everywhere to plot and intrigue. Even two referees cannot keep track of it all. Possibly Nicolai or Malik will decide that someone is dangerous and attempt to assassinate them. If sword fighting takes place, then a referee will need to consult the sword skills table to determine the

outcome. If food colouring is to be used, then it will need to be insinuated into food or drink, and the target will need to eat or drink it.

7. Lady Meredith may need some help in obtaining hand writing samples, which is bascially the only way in which she can discover the identity of the traitor at the start.

8. We served dinner around 6 to 7 p.m. Referees, Malik and Gustav ate earlier, as Malik is needed to guard the Duke at dinner, and Gustav never eats at the Duke's table. It was during dinner that the string of messengers arrived:

   First, to Lady Meredith, to tell her that the Duke of Gassner has been arrested. As the King's agent, she should be the first to hear about it.
   Second, to Count Nicolai to tell him about Gassner's arrest. Let Nicolai do whatever he wishes about it.
   Third, to Countess Haydn. She should be most happy to hear about the demise of her debtor.
   Fourth, to Baron Morrell. This messenger has been sent by Gassner's followers with the aim of implicating Morrell in his plot. If the Duke or Malik do not see fit to detain or interrogate him, he should talk loudly and wildly to either the guards, or possibly in Lady Meredith's hearing.
   Fifth, to Count Helmont, who again has good reason to be happy at Gassner's arrest.

   We also decided to have Nicolai receive a message from the (NPC) Countess who had discovered that Isadora was King Leopold's daughter, but Nicolai never used this information.

9. Because Nicolai's and Morrell's hand writings were similar (the players were siblings), the Duke and Lady Meredith suspected Morrell until Nicolai fled the castle. But in most games, this problem should not occur.

   The game was wound up shortly after, around 8 to 9 p.m., and all of the intrigues were revealed to the players. The Duke offered the job to Lady Meredith.

It is most important for the referees (and you should have two if at all possible) to attend to the flow and pace of action. If assassinations are taking place left, right and centre there will be no need to heat up things; on the other hand, if Lady Meredith cannot solve her puzzle or Nicolai looks like getting the job, referees will need to act. There are no hard and fast rules here; just keep the pace quick enough to be interesting, but not so quick as to be unplayable.

Read the referees' and players' accounts of the game for a guide, prepare thoroughly, and enjoy!

INTRIGUE AT CASTLE MORIEN, or, WHO GETS THE JOB?

The Servant's Tale

I have been employed as a servant at the castle of the Duke of Morien for many years now, and I have found the Duke to be at all times both just and generous. He is an honest man and so he wishes to avoid the intrigues of court life in our capital. That is why he lives on his estate instead of at the capital, although our great king counts our Duke amongst his most trusted counsellors. But there was a time recently when intrigue followed him to these parts, and our castle was invaded by the ambitious nobles of our small kingdom. You may think that as a mere servant I can hardly have been privy to the goings on of these great and important people, but I tell you, we who serve are neither ignorant nor stupid. What follows is the true tale of the events of *that* night at Castle Morien.

The good Doctor Dickenson came to our castle some days earlier; indeed, at much the same time as did the widowed Lady Meredith Gauthier. He was an emissary from the court of King Charles, she a historian from our King's University. When our Duke first heard that an ambassador was on his way to the Castle, he said "Ah, a spy!" He is not fooled often, our Duke, so I suppose he must have been right. But if the good Doctor was indeed a spy, he was an unfailingly polite one.

The Lady Meredith was polite, and charming too. Although I fear she became too close a friend to the Duke's foster-daughter, the Viscountess Isadora Martin. It was the greatest of sadness when the Duke's wife died of sickness all those years ago, and Isadora was deprived of a guiding hand. The Duke is mostly a firm man, but never so with Isadora. If I might venture my opinion, the lass should have gotten a good spanking years ago.

Forgive me; I digress. To return to the events of which I speak, five uninvited guests arrived in the early evening of the night before *that* night. They were the Count Christopher Friedrich Nicolai, the Baron Paul Morrell, the Count Frederick Helmont, the Countess Roseanne Haydn, and a common merchant, Martin Fritzlar. It is not usual that so many arrive, or that when they arrive the Duke's bodyguard, Malik, is absent, but absent he was that night. We served mulled wine, neither the best nor the worst from the Duke's cellars, as the aristocrats mingled and greeted each other with meaningless honeyed phrases that slid off their tongues with ease. There were mutterings as the guests discovered that all had come with the same intention, namely, that of being appointed by our Duke to the newly vacant post of Minister of Trade and Foreign Relations.

There was also a very loud muttering when the Countess Roseanne realized that the merchant who had swindled away her fortune was the same Martin Fritzlar who stood in our Duke's Great Hall. The linen maid of the guest wing of our castle told me that the Countess, who had only a few marks to her name and was heavily indebted to the vile Duke of Gassner, struck a deal with Martin Fritzlar to recover her losses. He said merely that he had lost the money in a speculative venture. Potato futures! But the potatoes were nowhere to be found. If there were no potatoes, cried the Countess, then where was the money? And if the money had gone, then where were the potatoes? Martin Fritzlar gave the Countess most of his ready marks, and promised her half of his next tobacco crop profits.

The Baron was a man most charming; he swayed the heart of our Isadora from the start, though perhaps what swayed her most was the prospect of escape from a dull provincial life. Isadora had longed for years to take part in the busy swing of capital life, but the Duke would neither escort her there, nor

let her travel alone. Isadora was insistent that she would no longer remain cooped up on a lonely country estate; the Duke was equally insistent that she would not go to the capital. Isadora was not a girl to meekly accept refusal, and when the opportunity of escape presented itself, she took it with alacrity. Events, however, turned out otherwise.

Count Christopher Friedrich Nicolai. Now there was a man you would not want to offend. Even out here in the country we had heard rumours of him. He was an ambitious man, much praised, yet feared by many. He was said to reward his friends and crush his enemies. He carried with him at all times a veneer of politeness, and never more so than to the Duke. And yet one always had the impression that if cornered, he would be most dangerous.

The other Count to land upon our doorstep that evening was Frederick Helmont, the disgraced commander. He had come to convince our Duke that he was innocent of wrong-doing and cowardice, and to ask for help in clearing his name. He was a personable young man, perhaps altogether too nice to make a good officer. Malik was ill-disposed towards him. I asked the Turk what he thought of the Count Helmont, and was told: "What about him? He ran away and lost half his men. He's just a coward."

Timur Malik was our Duke's bodyguard. They had fought together in the great war when our King Leopold came to the throne, and when it was over, Malik stayed in the Duke's employment. Tales were told that the Duke had saved Malik's life once, and that was the reason for Malik's loyalty. But the truth, as I heard it from Malik one night when he was in his cups, was simply that the Duke paid well, and on time. Malik, faithful though he was, had one weakness—the drink. Many times, when off-duty, he would go down to the village and get falling-down drunk with Mayor Gustav Gustavson who shared his weakness.

We all know Mayor Gustav—or someone just like him. He was the local bigshot, and at times thought rather too much of himself. He was single and of marriageable age; he was looking for a wife, but aiming too high. The local lasses were beneath his notice; it was to the castle he looked, and not to the servants. Although I tell you, many of the young ones would have been glad to become Mrs. Mayor.

Gustav was in any event a frequent visitor to the castle. On this night, he came in with Malik, both singing loudly, although God be praised they remembered to use the servants' entrance. The Duke had given his usual warning to his guests—"I fear that my bodyguard is somewhat sensitive; pray refrain from laughing at him as he is sworn to decapitate anyone who does so"—and so all kept their heads when Malik, drunk and dishevelled, let his Duke know of his return. (Malik is somewhat impetuous at times, and has little respect for many of our small courtesies—he is a heathen Turk after all.)

Shortly thereafter the guests all took leave of each other and retired to their rooms. It is as well that none of them plotted any harm to the Duke, for Malik was in no condition to carry out his duty that night. "Tell me, friend Gustav," he said in the kitchens the next morning, "did I take away from or add to the village population last night?" Gustav, although not quite sure, said that he believed Malik had added rather than subtracted.

During that next day, a great many things happened, and I shall endeavour to tell you the full story. Of course I did not see and hear everything that I describe, but all castles are full of linen maids, valets, groomsmen, kitchen hands, butlers and they all have eyes and ears. The story of Isadora I got from the second groomsman, the linen maid and the third footman. The goings on of dinner I had straight from the butler. And the tale of the

messengers came from the sergeant of the Duke's castle guard, with whom, on account of my widowhood, I am on friendly terms with.

Doctor Dickenson had come to the castle to influence the Duke's choice of candidate for the Ministerial Post. As an emissary of King Charles, he was only carrying out his duty in attempting to see that someone amenable to the desires of King Charles be appointed as Minister of Trade and Foreign Relations. In the end, as you shall see, he was successful, although in a way that none would have expected. But thrown as he was into the company of the beautiful and delightful Lady Meredith Gauthier, he soon proposed to her, and she accepted. All would have been well, but Malik, for some unknown heathen reason, started a rumour that the good Doctor had also proposed to Isadora. The Duke, as you well might expect, was somewhat surprised, having already been appraised of the betrothal between the Doctor and Lady Meredith. The Duke had earlier confided that "I'm thinking of palming Isadora off on the court of King Charles," but he did not have her marriage in mind.

Nor did the Lady Meredith take the news of her fiance's bigamy well. She seemed to have always lived a closeted life, what with being widowed in the last war, and then her work for the University. All those dusty books cannot be healthy. And such a preoccupation that she had! Going around and asking every guest to write a little thank you note to the Duke for his hospitality. (Count Nicolai, it was said, blanched a little when asked to sign his name.) Still, it is true that she always thought of others; for herself she lost hope when she heard of the Doctor's betrothal to Isadora. She wished to throw herself off the battlements, and it was only with the greatest difficulty that we dissuaded her. Malik, the instigator of this mischief, was found and it came out that the rumour of the second betrothal was only a lie. Malik confesses to knowing little of women, telling all who would listen that he finds it easier "to kill a hundred men than to fathom the workings of a woman's mind."

Isadora, although not engaged to the good Doctor, had lost no time in acquiring her own betrothals, though two of her intended were somewhat embarrassed to admit it. She put her main hope in the Baron, who seemed to be quite besotted with her. Malik suspected the Baron of treachery from the start, why, I do not know, but then, he is a heathen Turk. Wherever the Baron went, there went Malik. And in another instance of mischief, Malik gave coin to the scullery maid to spread the rumour that the Baron only wanted the post of Minister so that he would be worthy of Isadora. Isadora also approached Martin Fritzlar, who agreed to take her away with him, and Count Nicolai, who promised to think about it.

The Duke gave interviews for most of the day, between remonstrances from Isadora, to the two Counts, the Countess, the Baron and Martin Fritzlar. This proved quite wearing for him, and he could be heard to mutter "Not another one!" at times. In the end he felt that Count Nicolai, ambitious and ruthless that he was, could at least be trusted to do the job properly. The Baron was suspect on Malik's say; the merchant would be partial to his merchant friends; the Countess withdrew her candidacy after becoming reconciled with the merchant; and Count Helmont wished only to clear his name.

The Baron was perhaps also a little too free with his marks. Mayor Gustav ran a book on who would get the job. The Baron took out a handful of gold from his pouch, and placed five marks on himself. Nicolai bet on himself also, but a lesser amount. When the Duke found out that Gustav was taking bets, he called them off and made Gustav give back all of the money.

So, the Duke was harassed by his uninvited guests. His foster-daughter Isadora had arranged to elope with three men. Lady Meredith had wanted to throw herself off the battlements. Countess Roseanne Haydn and Martin

Fritzlar were wheeling and dealing, and each had given up hope of becoming Minister. The Baron was flashing money everywhere, and Malik was shadowing him. Count Helmont had convinced the Duke that he was innocent, but was not in the running for the job. Count Nicolai was favoured for the post.

And if that were not enough, things started to happen during the course of dinner. Five messengers came, all bearing the same tidings. Lady Meredith turned out to be far more important than a plain historian. A traitor and a dupe were both unmasked. And Malik slipped a love potion to the Lady Meredith, Isadora, and the Countess Haydn.

Lady Meredith, it transpired, was a spy. She was an agent in the King's secret service, and had been sent to Castle Morien to find a traitor. A letter hinting at treachery by a person who wished to be appointed the new Minister of Trade and Foreign Relations had been intercepted, although there were no clues as to who had written it. It was assumed that the sender would be petitioning the Duke of Morien, and so Lady Meredith was dispatched to our castle. She thought that perhaps she could identify the hand writing in the intercepted letter, and with that view in mind, she obtained samples of writing from all of the guests in the castle. And strangely enough, the Baron's hand most resembled that in the letter. The Duke agreed on that, after Lady Meredith took him into her confidence. It was realized only later that the signature was matched exactly by that of Count Nicolai. Lady Meredith conferred with the Duke after she received news by the first messenger of the arrest of the Duke of Gassner for treason. She had troops stationed nearby in case of need, and these she now called up to the castle.

In hindsight, you might think that the Duke was somewhat remiss in his actions that night, but remember that he had quite a few things on his mind by then. During dinner there appeared the series of messengers. But the Duke was in his quarters at the time, conferring with Lady Meredith, while his dinner grew quite cold. The second messenger was for the Count Nicolai, an unkempt man who left as soon as he had delivered his verbal message, which was, I believe, notice that the Duke of Gassner had been arrested for treason. Count Nicolai, however, on returning to the table, told the company that he had just been informed that his aged uncle was seriously ill.

Shortly thereafter came a third messenger, this time to the Countess Haydn, who bore the same tidings: namely that the Duke of Gassner had been arrested for treason. But the Countess told the company that she had merely been reassured that her children were all well, and for the moment she was believed.

Then, Gustav confessed to Malik that he wished to marry Countess Haydn, and inquired as to whether Malik could make a love potion which could be slipped unknowingly to the Countess. Malik said that he could, and produced a small vial of a noxious green liquid. This was added to the Countess's wine, whereupon she wished to know why her wine was green. Gustav replied that it was a special wine which he brewed himself in the village tavern (Mayor Gustav also owns the tavern). No matter, the Countess replied, she would not drink it, and insisted on being served from her own bottle of wine in the future. Well, that posed no problem. The potion was added directly to the bottle rather than to the glass. The tampered glass was removed to the kitchens, whence it was later returned to the Lady Meredith and Isadora who wished to try the special green wine.

The Countess called Gustav out to the balcony, and was roundly berating him for serving her green wine in the first place. Then the effect of the potion hit at once, and she had soon agreed to marry Gustav. Gustav was all for having

the ceremony at once in the village, before the effects of the potion could wear off, but before they could depart, the Duke had closed the castle gates.

And Lady Meredith and Isadora? Having drunk their wine, they were gazing at each other when the potion began to work, and were immediately enamoured of each other. They ran into each other's arms and made a great to-do about running off together, before the Duke confined his foster-daughter to her rooms, and locked Lady Meredith in his quarters. Malik was traced as the culprit, and was ordered to produce antidotes.

Malik completed his antidotes, which were given to the Lady Meredith and Isadora. He delayed the one for the Countess, insisting that she had drunk only a small draught of the potion, whereupon the Duke told him to make a matching small draught of antidote. It was done, and Gustav felt the full wrath of the Countess. The Duke told Malik that in future he was to refrain from making any such love potion, except on the Duke's own instructions.

The fourth messenger the Duke ordered to be detained. This man had come to tell the Baron the same as the others: that the Duke of Gassner had been arrested. And furthermore, that the Baron should flee because he also was involved in the treasonous plan. The messenger told this quite freely, although Malik was ready to loosen his tongue if need be. The Baron denied all wrong-doing, but the Duke, taking account of the evidence, quite rightly placed him under arrest and confined him to quarters.

It was during the Duke's interrogation of the Baron and the messenger that word supposedly came from the village calling for the Mayor's presence. There was a fire in the village, it was said, and Mayor Gustav was needed to boost morale amongst the fire fighters. The Duke sent Gustav to the village under escort, and turned his mind back to weightier things. Malik later confessed to this mischief; his friend Gustav had little desire to remain in the castle with the Countess once more in possession of her wits.

Count Nicolai wished to leave the castle immediately in order to attend his uncle in his illness, which was feared to prove fatal. The Duke refused to allow anyone to leave the castle until the traitor was proven. Although the Baron was suspected and under arrest, he had not yet been judged by the King's court. Nicolai seemed to accept the Duke's judgment, but we now know that he was all along making preparations to leave the castle suddenly. Strange to say, he was still at that time the Duke's first choice for Minister of Foreign Trade and Relations.

A fifth messenger came for Count Helmont to tell him also of the Duke of Gassner's arrest. He, too, was detained, but turned out not to be a traitor nor to be in a traitor's employ. A sixth then came with a message to Count Nicolai, but only Nicolai knew what the message was, as it came in a sealed envelope and was later destroyed by the Count.

The intercepted letter of treachery had been addressed to "Dear Countess," and the Duke assumed, not without reason of course, that the Countess referred to may have been the Countess Haydn. This she strongly denied, although she did confess to her illicit financial dealings with the Duke of Gassner, which was why she had been delighted to hear of his arrest. She had borrowed money from the usurer, and he had threatened to foreclose on all of her estates. Now that he would certainly be executed, the debt would be cancelled because it had no standing in law.

Then the Duke wished to have words with Gustav, regarding his recent behaviour. The Duke was reminded that he had allowed Gustav to go to the village, under escort, to fight a fire. The Duke asked whether the fire could be

seen from the castle, and being informed that it could not, gave orders for Gustav to be brought back to the castle, post-haste. The Duke was in conversation with the Lady Meredith when Gustav did return to the castle. But as the gates were opened to admit Gustav and the Duke's men, one rider with a spare horse rode out from the castle. The guards did shoot after him, but it was dark, and the target was small. The rider escaped, and the men ran to tell the Duke. Lady Meredith gave her troops orders to hunt down the rider, who must have been Count Nicolai as he was now missing from the castle, but he had such a start that it proved impossible to capture him. The Duke felt it unlikely that the Count had braved death merely to visit his sick uncle, and released the Baron from his quarters, but subject to further investigation. Count Nicolai had, by his own actions, condemned himself.

The Duke had eariler sent his own messengers to the capital to obtain some reliable information on the case. The messenger returned the next morning, with the news that the Duke of Gassner had indeed been acting treasonably for some time. Gassner and those arrested with him had cracked during the night, and had implicated Count Nicolai. Nicolai was as deeply involved in the scheme as was Gassner, and both had no doubt planned to betray the other in the event that their dastardly plot succeeded. The Baron was an innocent dupe.

And so Count Helmont, who had been set up and betrayed by Gassner, was vindicated. The Baron was cleared of any suspicion of wrong-doing. He turned out to be an illegitimate half-brother of Count Nicolai, which explained the resemblance in hand writing. Gassner had indeed backed the Baron and provided the funds which he so freely spent. The Baron had been sent to either bribe other candidates to withdraw and so provide a clear field for Nicolai, or in the event that some mishap occurred, to incur the blame. Doctor Dickenson and Lady Meredith remained betrothed, and Isadora was to join them on a study tour through the world's libraries. Countess Haydn's debt had vanished, and Martin Fritzlar acquired an influential business partner. Gustav had gawked to his heart's content, even if he remained single; and Malik, well, he was still a heathen Turk, and I cannot fathom the workings of a Turkish mind.

And who got the job? "Well," said our beloved and respected Duke, "Lady Meredith, if she could be persuaded to accept."

And so, all won in their own way, bar Count Christopher Friedrich Nicolai, who can hardly complain because he did get away with his head.

DUKE OF MORIEN

(RAYMOND KOSTKA)

You were King Leopold's Chief-of-Staff during the civil war of twenty years ago, and were responsible for the final victory: you lured the opposing pretender and his generals into a trap, and annihilated them. Since that time, you have been one of the King's most influential advisors (as well as a personal friend). You prefer not to take part in the tangled intrigues of court life, so you live on one of your country estates, and sometimes receive petitioners who wish to ask for your help or support. You expect to receive many petitioners who want to be appointed to the post of Minister of Trade and Foreign Relations.

Your foster-daughter, Isadora, was orphaned during the civil war. You have brought her up indulgently, and she is now mostly out of control. (Your wife died of illness some fifteen or sixteen years ago.) The commoners accuse her of being a sorceress, but you are a rational man and know that sorcery is impossible. You know that the commoners cannot and will not injure Isadora in any way, and so you refrain from commenting on her behaviour or activities. (You know that Leopold believes in sorcery, but that is a legacy of his commoner upbringing. Also, he is not too bright.)

Age: 43

<u>Inside Information</u>

<u>Isadora</u>. Isadora is actually Leopold's illegitimate daughter, born a year before the civil war began. No one knows of this, but Leopold and yourself. No one else must know, for Queen Katarina would not be pleased. Isadora wants to go to the capital, and while you have told her that you will take her the next time you go, you are stalling. If anyone saw Isadora and Leopold together, questions might be asked. (Isadora clearly resembles her father, but in her generally unkempt state the resemblance is hidden.) You have told her that she cannot go alone.

Count Frederick Helmont. It is true that Helmont was disgraced for cowardice, but as far as you are concerned, he was merely being sensible. By retreating when he did, he was able to save as many of his men as possible, without endangering the course of the battle. Since you left the military, the majority of the commanders have become hide-bound traditionalists. They do not understand that sometimes discretion is the better part of valour. You do not, however, interfere in internal army affairs. The Duke of Gassner is Commander-in-Chief of the army, and jealously guards his authority.

Dr Edmund Dickenson. He is, as he says, an emissary from King Charles (his credentials have been confirmed by the Royal Court). He claims that his visit to you at the same time as the petitioners for the post of Minister of Trade and Foreign Relations, is entirely coincidental.

Timur Malik. Your bodyguard first fought under your command in the civil war, and has worked for you ever since. You are a generous employer, pay him on time, and treat him as an equal. You have never had cause to doubt his loyalty, even though the rumour that you once saved his life is not true.

Lady Meredith Gauthier. She is a historian from the University. She is writing a history of the civil war, and is carrying out research in your extensive library.

Your aims for the freeform:

1. Choose the best person for the post of Minister of Trade and Foreign Relations. (You are not restricted to Player Characters.)
2. Keep Isadora's real heritage secret.

P.S. Regarding Dinner

1. Do not make your decision before dinner, although you are not obliged to make it immediately afterwards either, if you need more time.
2. Please announce the first course (the potato) along the lines of: "A great delicacy imported from the New World."

VISCOUNTESS ISADORA MARTIN

You were orphaned during the civil war (twenty years ago). As your father, Viscount Martin, was killed under the Duke of Morien's command, the Duke took you in and has raised you on his country estate. Since his wife died while you were still in early childhood, you have been raised rather indulgently, and are now completely out of control. The commoners accuse you of being a sorceress.

Age: 21

Inside Information

It is true that you are studying magic, but unfortunately you do not seem to be making any real progress. The Duke tells you that magic is impossible, but you know better.

Also, you are heartily sick of provincial life, and want to go to the capital. The Duke says that he is more than happy to take you there the next time he goes, but he seems to have no plans to go for quite a few years. He says that you cannot go alone.

Your aims for the freeform:

1. Find someone who is willing to take you to the capital.
2. Pursue your magical studies.

TIMUR MALIK

("Iron Lord")

You are a Turk and a heathen, and one of the best swordsmen in the kingdom. You are the bodyguard of the Duke of Morien, and have a long history of association with him.

You were an adventurer (perhaps even a mercenary) in your youth, and fought in many foreign wars. You met Raymond Kostka, the Duke of Morien while he was Chief-of-Staff in a petty civil war. You liked the man and became friends with him. Since the Duke's victory twenty years ago, you have worked as his bodyguard.

Many people believe that the only explanation for this loyalty is that the Duke must have saved your life in the past. The truth is nothing so melodramatic. He is the best employer in the known world. He pays generously and he pays on time. He treats you as an equal and with respect. In public you call him "My Lord Duke"; in private, ...

Age: 56

Inside Information

Although the Duke does pay well, you find it difficult to save (choose your own vice). As you are starting to get on in years, you think that it would be well if you started to put aside money for retirement. (You want eventually to return to your native country and settle down with your grandchildren.)

An additional benefit of working for the Duke is that he does not believe in sorcery. You do. You are a sorcerer. You have great knowledge of the uses of various herbs and poisons (refer to green food colouring). You can also "control" (that is, accurately predict) the weather. It pleases you no end that the Duke's foster-daughter receives all of the blame for any sorcery that goes on.

You also know that Isadora is of Royal Blood. You are not entirely sure of who's Royal Blood, only that there is a certain resemblance between Isadora and Leopold. You do not discuss this with the Duke, figuring it is his business alone.

Your aims for the freeform:

1. Protect your employer.
2. Build a nest egg for retirement, if possible without jeopardizing your employment with the Duke.

COUNT CHRISTOPHER FRIEDRICH NICOLAI

You are, as rumour would have it, an ambitious man. You wish to obtain the post of Minister of Trade and Foreign Relations for devious purposes of your own (which will be revealed in due course). You are a close associate of the Duke of Gassner, although that is not common knowledge. You are also a suspicious man, and strongly suspect that Gassner had a hand in the sudden death of the last Minister. (Gassner is backing you to be appointed to the post.)

Age: 29

Inside Information

You are involved in a conspiracy to usurp the throne. If all goes well, you will be Minister of Trade and Foreign Relations, and the Duke of Gassner will be King. Unfortunately, a piece of correspondence (in your handwriting) has been intercepted. In itself, it is no proof against any of the conspirators, but still, you are a little nervous about the matter. However, you could not pass up the opportunity to personally petition the Duke of Morien for your appointment to the post.

You may, if you choose, have obtained some poison before arriving at the castle (refer to blue food colouring).

Your aims for the freeform:

1. Secure your appointment to the post of Minister of Trade and Foreign Relations.
2. Do not let the conspiracy be exposed.

BARON PAUL MORRELL

You are an up-and-coming young nobleman. You are one of the most intelligent and most handsome of noblemen. You also possess excellent fashion sense and always dress in a manner befitting your station. You are an obvious choice for appointment to the post of Minister of Trade and Foreign Relations. You have powerful backers.

Age: 22

Inside Information

Your financial position has not always been so fortunate. Indeed, you were quite poor until some months ago, when several powerful noblemen approached you (including the Duke of Gassner), and explained to you that you were their choice for Minister of Trade and Foreign Relations. They gave you lots of money and told you to go and see the Duke of Morien (who would be making the final decision on whom to appoint to the post). These noblemen want their identities to be kept secret, for the time being at least.

Your backers suggest that while the Duke will not be susceptible to bribery, you may be able to convince other people to withdraw their candidature by making it worth their while.

Your aims for the freeform:

1. Secure your appointment to the post of Minister of Trade and Foreign Relations.

LADY MEREDITH GAUTHIER

You are the widow of Sir Edwin Gauthier, who died in the war five years ago, while under the command of Count Frederick Helmont. You are a historian at the University, and are currently working on a history of the civil war. That is why you are at the estate of the Duke of Morien—he has an extensive library, which contains much information on the civil war.

Age: 25

Inside Information

Your position as historian is merely a cover. In actual fact, you are employed as an agent of the King (or more accurately, of the Queen, as the king is not too bright). Recently, the King's (or Queen's) secret service intercepted a letter which hints at a major conspiracy against the throne. The letter alone is no proof, but again it hints that one of the conspirators seeks to be appointed to the Ministry of Trade and Foreign Relations (the only appointment currently being made). So you have been sent, in your guise as historian, to the Duke's estates where you know there will be people petitioning the Duke to appoint them to the post. You have armed back-up in the nearest town. (The Duke of Morien knows only that you are a historian working on the civil war.)

Your aims for the freeform:

1. Find out who the conspirators are.
2. Obtain proof for their arrest and conviction.
3. Don't blow your cover.

DR EDMUND DICKENSON

You are a scholar and a Doctor of Medicine. You are an emissary from King Charles, the monarch of a small country across the sea. You are calling on the Duke of Morien as part of your round of calls on all of the important nobles of the kingdom.

Age: 37

Inside Information

You are, of course, a spy as well as an emissary. Your real task in calling upon the Duke of Morien at this crucial time is to secure the appointment of a friendly and malleable person as Minister of Trade and Foreign Relations. (If asked, you claim that the timing of your visit is entirely coincidental.)

Your aims for the freeform:

1. Determine who the best candidate (for your purposes) for the post is.
2. Convince the Duke to appoint that person.
3. Don't blow your cover.

COUNT FREDERICK HELMONT

You were a battalion commander during the war five years ago. It is true that you were publicly disgraced, court-martialled for cowardice, and discharged dishonourably from the army. But you smell a rat. Your unit was ordered into an untenable position (by the Commander-in-Chief, the Duke of Gassner), and you strongly suspect that you were also betrayed to the enemy. In any event, you saved the situation (as much as you could) by retreating (and hence deliberately disobeying orders). Although many men died, if you had not acted as you did, all would have perished. And the battle was still won.

You were given a summary court-martial and drummed out of the army. You have been trying to clear your name for the past five years, and have only come to dead-ends. As a last resort, you have come to ask help from the Duke of Morien, knowing that he was Chief-of-Staff during the civil war, and therefore cannot be entirely ignorant of military matters. You also know he is very influential with the Royal Court, and may be able to convince King Leopold to quash your conviction.

Age: 28

Inside Information

As far as you are concerned, you did the only thing you could. The majority of senior army commanders are hide-bound traditionalists who do not understand that sometimes discretion is the better part of valour. You have also come to the conclusion that either the Duke of Gassner is an imbecile, or that he acted treasonably in the last war. You know that the Duke jealously guards his authority in the military, and the thought that he casts his aim higher has crossed your mind more than once.

Your aims for the freeform:

1. Convince the Duke of Morien that you are not a coward, and that your actions were fully justified.
2. Convince the Duke to intercede on your behalf.
3. Clear your name.

COUNTESS ROSEANNE HAYDN

You were once wealthy, and gave the best parties in the kingdom. You were widowed during the war five years ago, and since then your financial situation has gone downhill. You are now impoverished, but you still maintain the necessary trappings of aristocracy (carriages, servants etc.). The Ministry of Trade and Foreign Relations is one of the most lucrative in the kingdom. You wish to be appointed to the post mainly to restore your wealth.

Age: 32

Inside Information

Your financial position is not merely bad—it is horrendous. You have been impoverished for some time—your liquid assets had disappeared—but you still retained your lands. Unfortunately, you borrowed money from the Duke of Gassner, an old associate, for a speculative venture (potato futures). The merchant (Martin Fritzlar) swindled you. There was no proof, but once you are appointed to the Ministry, you will get revenge. You will also pay back your debts to the Duke (he hints that if you do not repay him, he will publicly foreclose on your lands which were used as collateral), and maybe do him a favour or two. Lastly, you will be able to rebuild your wealth, and once again live in the manner to which you have been accustomed.

Your aims for the freeform:

1. Secure your appointment to the post of Minister of Trade and Foreign Relations.

MARTIN FRITZLAR

You are one of the new rich—a mercantile capitalist. You consider yourself equal in every respect to the aristocracy, and it makes you angry that they still look down upon merchants. You wish to be appointed to the post of Minister of Trade and Foreign Relations for two reasons. First, you believe that a merchant is the best person for the job. Second, you wish to abolish the sumptuary laws and other laws which discriminate against merchants.

Age: 36

Inside Information

You recently lost a considerable amount of money in a speculative venture (potato futures). You are still a wealthy man, because you are too clever to put all your eggs in one basket, particularly a speculative one. But some of your co-investors were less intelligent (they were aristocrats after all!). One in particular lost all of her money, and accuses you of swindling her. You have explained all the facts to her (it was a speculative venture and the vagaries of the new potato market are unpredictable) but she remains insistent that you swindled her. The Countess Roseanne Haydn will not listen to reason!

Your aims for the freeform:

1. Secure your appointment to the post of Minister of Trade and Foreign Relations.
2. Convince the Countess that you are an honest man, and did not swindle her.

GUSTAV GUSTAVSON

You are the mayor of the local town. You come and go from the Duke's castle quite freely (albeit through the servant's entrance), usually with your drinking buddy, Malik. You have heard that many nobles and dignitaries are visiting the Duke and, as is your wont, you have come to gawk. You are single, and also have it in mind to find a wife.

Age: 34

Inside Information

You know that Malik is a sorceror.

Your aims for the freeform:

1. Gawk to your heart's content.
2. Find a wife. There will be several candidates at the castle.

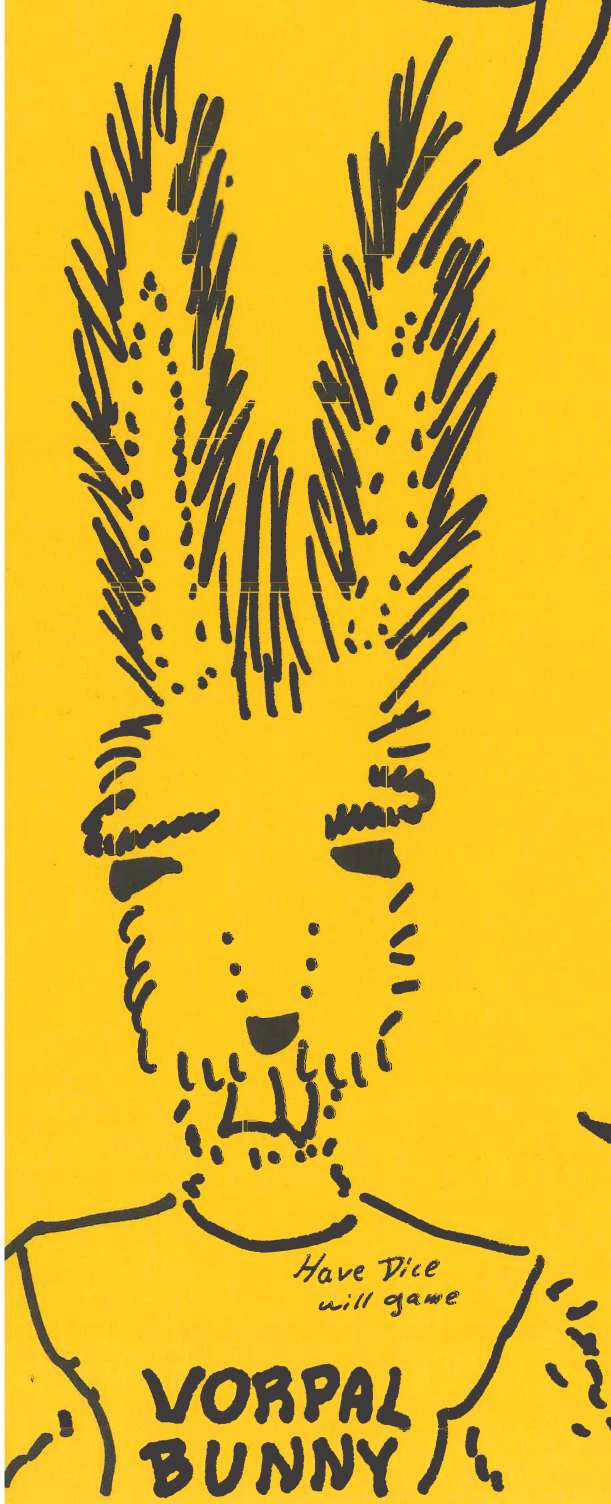
Are you interested in playing games? Join QUGS the University of Queensland Games Society. Members play many different games: role-playing games, board games, computer games, minatures, etc. Attend our meetings, Video nights, BBQ's and meet other members. You get the club magazine, the Queensland Wargamer as well

Club meetings are usually on the first Saturday of each month, in the Clubs and Societies Common Room (near the Bike Shop and Semper), from 9:30am to 5:00 pm

Join QUGS during O-Week or contact

the President: Gary Johnson
phone (h) 3714325

the Secretary: Peter Fordyce
phone (h) 8700454



Come to our 1993 O-Week BBQ!