

# **Nobility!**

## **A Game of Worldbuilding, Politics and Revolution**

### **The Setting:**

Welcome, friends, to Avalon! Please mind the corpse as you step into the throne room - we've had a revolution, you see. King Gareth Gladian, once Duke of Morhampton, now sits the throne after the summary execution of his mad nephew, Galahad II.

All across the realm the victorious revolutionaries grant fiefs to their friends and strip away those who would dare be loyal to someone so undisputably mad as the sixteen year old Galahad. The very travesty of it offends Our Lady, who resides in the great Lake of Solheim, and who shall bless the new monarch with water's touch upon his coronation - beyond dispute!

Now the many Earls cheer the new King's name as he settles into his throne, as his young sons Arthur and Ancel both ride to the far corners of the kingdom (backed by a considerably impressive entourage, of course) to extract oaths of fealty from the little lords.

It's very good you came to us, actually!

How about you kneel now? We'd hate to make this difficult for you and your family...

### **The Premise:**

In nobility, each player assumes the role of a minor noble within a single sovereign nation. You exist in the service of a king, and ultimately seek to fulfil your own personal ambitions and rise to prominence, whatever they might be or whatever that might entail.

Other players may help or hinder your cause, or may stab you in the back at the last minute. The ultimate goal is to create a chaotic and rich political environment within a nation and build a dramatic history over the numerous generations of your noble family.

Each turn, a player accrues a set amount of points termed '**Influence**'. which they can then spend in various ways (see below). In addition to this, every ten turns the player's current character (normally) dies, and their child or children comes into play. The heir will always be played by the player that made the previous character, but their brothers and sisters may be under the control of other players controlling other nobles.

Similarly, after every ten turns, the current monarch dies and their heir comes into play. The monarch is controlled by the DM, but they are also controlled by the players to an extent dictated by their **'Royal Influence'**, a stat that does not change in any fixed way each round but can be increased or decreased by certain actions. Each player has a different amount of **'Royal Influence'**, which can unlock certain **'Influence'** actions if it gets high enough.

Through playing the monarch, the DM will pursue affairs of the state occasionally that will influence all players, such as war with a neighbouring nation, outlawing specific actions, changing taxes (**Influence per turn**), or any other policy. Players with enough **'Royal Influence'** will also be able to enact similar changes. These changes do not require the players to respond to them directly, but rather influence the game and may prompt certain indirect actions from players.

Have fun, betray each other, and create a cool story.

---

### **Actions:**

**Expand Estate (5 Points):** Expand your estate by buying an extra tile of land. For every expansion you make, you gain an extra +1 on your **Influence per turn**. This expansion could be anything that makes sense for your character. Maybe it's farmland, maybe it's more slave pits, maybe it's an extension to some strange mechanism...

[Can be done by head of dynasty (or regent).]

[Can be done by claimant.]

**Create Vassal (6):** Grant a portion of land to a suitable courtier for his own purposes on the condition he acknowledges you as overlord. This requires at least 5 tiles of land and prevents overextension of administration, as well as improving your standing among those houses that consider your fiefs to be too numerous. The recipient of this action has an unbreakable alliance with their overlord, strained only by revolution.

[Can be done by head of dynasty (or regent).]

**Sell Land to Burgher (Free Action):** Sacrifice a portion of your fiefs to an opulent baron in exchange for his good favour in court. This rewards +5 influence points per tile sold.

[Can be done by head of dynasty (or regent).]

[Can be done by claimant.]

**Sell Land to Peer (Free Action):** Award a part of your estates to a fellow member of the nobility (a player), either as a symbol of alliance, as a business

transaction, or under duress. The reward to the seller and the cost to the buyer is negotiable... sometimes it may be expensive, sometimes it may be free.

[Can be done by head of dynasty (or regent).]

**Build Defense (3 Points):** Make your estate more defensible by erecting defenses. This action only applies to one area of your estate (i.e. one tile of land). This could be anything defensible; raising walls, building a tower, digging a moat...

[Can be done by head of dynasty (or regent).]

[Can be done by claimant.]

**Construct Building (3 Points):** Make your estate more diverse by building a specific construction. This is the main tool for justifying later actions and improving odds of their success. This could be anything; a blacksmith, a laboratory, an observatory, a spy house, a stables, a tavern...

[Can be done by head of dynasty (or regent).]

[Can be done by claimant.]

**Build Civic Construction (5 Points):** Provide funds for building a construction that all players can benefit from and may make their actions (even their actions against you) easier. In return, you gain 2 points of **Royal Influence**. This could be an aqueduct, roads, a bridge...

[Can be done by head of dynasty (or regent).]

**Dismantle Construction (3 Points):** Destroy a building previously constructed on a single tile of land. This can only be done to a building constructed by the player, and not any buildings built by uncontrolled members of the dynasty, unless that member of the dynasty is killed or imprisoned.

[Can be done by head of dynasty (or regent).]

[Can be done by claimant.]

**Build Army (7 Points):** Build a barracks and raise a militia army. This action only applies to one area of your estate (i.e. one tile of land). This is a levy of roughly five hundred militia soldiers from your estate.

[Can be done by head of dynasty (or regent).]

[Can be done by claimant.]

**Hire Mercenaries (12 Points):** Recruit a mercenary company. This is an army of roughly five hundred professional soldiers. You experience -1 on your **Influence per turn**.

[Can be done by head of dynasty (or regent).]

[Can be done by claimant.]

**Send Private Letter (Free Action):** Send a letter to another player OR any DM controlled entity, informing them of your plans and intentions in character.

This could be honest or insincere. This is a private action done through a private channel, but you still have to flag up that you're taking the action.

[Can be done by head of dynasty (or regent).]

[Can be done by claimant.]

**Marriage (10 Points):** Pay for a marriage between your dynasty and another. Your heir will now be able to make certain actions within the other dynasty as well as your own, and the other dynasty will gain a claimant. This can only be done:

- With the consent of the other player (mutual marriage).
- Following a successful war (forced marriage).

[Can be done by head of dynasty (or regent).]

**Assassinate (20 Points):** Arrange for the assassination of another noble. The likelihood of a success is weighted based on the actions of the players involved up to that point. On success, the target dies and they are replaced by a regent. If the target has a brother or sister from another dynasty, they become the regent! If the target has more than one sibling controlled by other dynasties, these siblings must agree who becomes the regent or a **Revolt** action is taken.

[Can be done by head of dynasty (or regent).]

[Can be done by claimant.]

**Declare War (5 Points):** Organize and declare a war against another player and their allies. Wars must have a reasonable cause or the warring character will be **Imprisoned** by the monarch upon victory, unless they **Declare Independence**. Wars will be settled according to combat rules (see below). The attacker must inform any allies through a **private letter** before declaring war.

If the war lasts longer than one turn... the attacker or defender can at any point propose a **peace treaty**.

If the war is one turn... the attacker or defender proposes a **peace treaty** at the beginning or end.

A **peace treaty** can entail almost anything.

[Can be done by head of dynasty (or regent).]

**Alliance (3 Points):** Negotiate an alliance with another player, a pact of showing a mutual commitment to protecting each other's interests in the event of war. Make multiple alliances to form a coalition. If war is declared on an alliance member, the other members will be obligated to join. If an alliance member declares war, they must inform other members beforehand.

[Can be done by head of dynasty (or regent).]

**Imprison (10 Points):** Throw a character in your court into the dungeons, preventing them taking any action. The player must have a legitimate reason to imprison another character (legitimate can be quite broad) or else the offended party can start a free **Revolt**.

[Can be done by head of dynasty (or regent).]

**Revolt (15 Points):** Stage a revolt against a player whose court you have a character in. A revolt is a form of war waged within a dynasty. The revolting party attacks with their troops and the defending party loses access to those troops. Defenses are ignored in a revolt, but relevant buildings and actions might help. Success is determined by the combat rules (see below). A successful revolt ends in the death of the current head of the dynasty, and the revolting party rules as a regent for the rest of their life. On their death, things return to normal.

A revolt must have some legitimate reason or the revolting party will be unable to use their militia. If they have hired mercenaries, they can revolt without legitimate reason but will be **Imprisoned** on victory unless they immediately **Declare Independence**.

**Declare Independence (15 Points):** Declare independence against your ruler, whether it's the monarch or the head of a dynasty your character belongs to. This action results in peace, unless your previous ruler takes objection, in which case a **Revolt** action begins, the success of which results in independence.

Succeeding in this action gives almost everyone a free reason to go to war with you, and so should only be used with careful planning...

[Can be done by head of dynasty (or regent).]

[Can be done by claimant.]

**Create Heirloom (8 Points):** Commission the creation of an artifact for your dynasty, passed down each generation. This heirloom can bestow any special quality of your choosing upon your character, within reason. Be creative! However, if your character dies and another player becomes your regent, they have the opportunity to take that heirloom for their own dynasty. Heirlooms can also be taken forcefully as the result of a war.

[Can be done by head of dynasty (or regent).]

**Send Royal Gift (8 Points):** Send a gift to the monarch to earn their favour. This rewards the player with 1 Royal Influence.

[Can be done by head of dynasty (or regent).]

**Influence Royal Policy (10 Points):** Use your connections in the royal court to mandate the creation of a royal law which influences all players. This law can be anything... outlawing certain practices, demanding certain actions, introducing new conditions. Be creative.

[Can be done by head of dynasty (or regent).]

[Requires 10 Royal Influence.]

**Influence Royal Culture (7 Points):** Use your influence in the royal court to stimulate the creation of a new fashion or tradition. All other players must

adopt this in some way, or suffer a -5 penalty to **Royal Influence**. This could be anything... religious, practical, fashionable. Be creative.

**[Can be done by head of dynasty (or regent).]**

**[Requires 8 Royal Influence.]**

**Instigate Royal War (15 Points):** Use your influence in the royal court to prompt the realm to go to war with a neighbouring nation (controlled by the DM). Making this action advantageous requires clever planning and an understanding of how the war might play out.

**[Can be done by head of dynasty (or regent).]**

**[Requires 12 Royal Influence.]**

---

## The Genetic Lottery; Your Ruler

The problem with people is that they are horrendously complex. A ruler can set out with an ideal in mind and die having completely bungled it up and sown anarchy across the kingdom because he was just a bit too soft on Duke Bolingbroke who happened to be playing the cards - and his partner in crime - the entire time.

It's not pushing it to say that a good ruler seems to be a stroke of luck; a subject not just of the times he was born in but the combination of the proper brains and - if applicable - brawn to get the job done. Meek men do not build armies and stupid men do not lead them well; but often we're stuck with a combination of both.

Below are the various categories you'll use to determine your ruler. Each time a new heir emerges, you must consult this section and roll as below to tell you just what kind of person they are, and then roleplay them accordingly.

The very best of luck. I hope you didn't carry off a cousin.

### Occupation (Roll 1d5)

#### **1 - Tactician**

Your ruler grew up with a military education, learning the ancient arts of warcraft rather than statesmanship. A handy companion on the campaign, and a possible competitor for generalship.

#### **2 - Administrator**

A bookish and stringent life of schools and routine have molded your ruler into the most dreadful beast in court; an economist. Your knowledge of domestic policy might not be ideal dinner conversation, but put into the right application it might actually be useful.

### **3 - Learned**

The diocese of the faith and the long litanies of text have shaped your character into a scholar, a fond consumer of treatise and bordering on a dangerously scientific set of principles. Whilst you are considerably more educated than the average noble, you ought to be careful where you utter your opinions.

### **4 - Courtier**

A dashing display of gallantry and grace, you have the adequate mixture of charisma and empty headed charm to impress a range of people from pretty girls to the King himself. How you actually apply your gift for oratory is entirely in your own hands.

### **5 - Intriguer**

A lack of moral scruples, fibre and general sense of honour often drive political animals such as nobles to become deviously calculated; your ruler happens to be a member of this festering rot on society. Though, certainly, a bit of dirty dealing did not hurt anybody...

## **Competence (Roll 1d3)**

Ye elusive animal! Many a ruler has promised great things and had grand visions in their field of expertise, but their lack of ability can cause disastrous battles, failed foreign business ventures and even droughts that kill thousands. On the other hand, their brilliance might sire in a golden age of dynastic prestige. Not the sort you want to die any time soon.

### **1 - Incompetent**

Your ruler spent most of their time pursuing more interesting things, like wine and girls, rather than focusing all that much on their education. They had a very eventful youth, certainly, but now they have boots they're not sure how to fill - if they even know what boots are. Idiots.

### **2 - Adequate**

The sort of student that would finish their trials without any unique commendations and the base, minimum grade. Your character has a decent grasp of their occupation - enough to know what is terrible and what is historically a 'good idea' - but lacks that spark of innovation and imagination to be truly great.

### **3 - Masterful**

A young star in the rising! An Alexander, a Caesar! Your character has demonstrated symptoms of greatness, and has all the drive, passion and commitment to see it through. Whether this was down to natural talent or an awful lot of effort, they certainly are prepared to rule – at least, in one aspect.

### **Positive trait (Roll 1d6)**

‘There’s a little bit of good in everybody,’ as the old saying goes. Whilst that might rub the more cynical among us the wrong way, even the worst dredges of humanity might have liked dogs. Let’s hope that’s not your ruler’s only redeeming trait.

#### **1 - Kind**

Your ruler has a soft spot for people. They often go out of their way to be a giving, generally good person. Whilst this does give them an excellent moral character, it is not the best trait for the cynical realist, or the murdering schemer. Perhaps consider knitting.

#### **2 - Just**

A strong sense of obligation to the law, secular from all rank and privileges. A peasant might bring a convincing case against a vassal and the vassal would lose his head; whilst this tunnel vision view of the world can be compromising politically, it is the foundation of many a justified tyrant.

#### **3 - Brave**

Watch the charge of the light brigade! Fearless warriors, into the hail of cannon fire! Smashed to pieces, never to be recognized by their loved ones! Casualties of a pointless war for an act of bravado! The brave are reckless, but fearless; hard to phase and hard to intimidate, they are both natural gamblers and figures of admiration.

#### **4 - Diligent**

A hard worker rises early, going to bed late. Many a capable ruler have worked themselves to an early grave under mountains of efficiently navigated stress, leaving a lasting legacy and more than a few grey hairs before the age of thirty. Your ruler is one of this stock of greying, ruthlessly driven men.

#### **5 - Temperance**

Your character has mastered the art of living humbly and without expense, shunning grand feasts and balls as well as the latest fashions in the name of the bare necessities to running their household. A rejection of the vanity of the world might not make them popular in society, but it certainly benefits them economically.

#### **6 - Gregarious**

A real charmer. Your ruler is affable in conversation, remarkable at dinner parties and a jewel in the tourney. The showman and the conversationalist are two distinctly different animals; the showman may be putting on a front, after all. A man possessed of the true art of swaying people has it in their nature.

### **Negative trait (1d6)**

Oh dear. Just as there is a spark of good in every man, so too is every personality flawed. The degree of the flaw is of course a matter of escalating from a slight phobia of dying on the battlefield to an utter lack of any human empathy, but we are not in the business of judging.

#### **1 - Craven**

It's perfectly rational to not want to die. It's also very humiliating to break out crying at the prospect of a pitched confrontation with another human being; your character's survival instinct very much holds the wheel, for better or for worse - perhaps leave war to bigger, scarier men.

#### **2 - Wroth**

You have a bit of a temper problem. A bit. That's what the servants told you. You can work on it. Come to think of it, wasn't he the man you shouted at for hours on end for serving you the wrong dish at dinner? The BASTARD. He should be fired immediately - you need to go and find him. How dare he speak to you like that?

#### **3 - Proud**

Nothing is wrong with vainglory. In the right proportions. Unfortunately, your character's burgeoning pride has afforded him none of that; much of his time is spent in self admiration and attempted validation of their own greatness. Not that he needs it. His portrait he has framed over the roof of his bed canopy so he may wake every day to glance at sheer beauty has already afforded him his advantage.

#### **4 - Crude**

It's perfectly possible to be a decent, charismatic but utterly crass fellow. You were never taught Society manners; or perhaps you simply don't care for them. Your principled stand against the vanguard of civilization certainly marks you out of the King's court; some would say for all the wrong reasons.

#### **5 - Lustful**

You have a bit *too* much of a soft spot for certain people. The gossip might already be in court; wait, did you make sure they washed her before they brought her to you? Oh, dear. Well, let's hope there isn't any unique growth there in the morning. What would your wife think? Ah, well. The less she knows.

#### **6 - Sociopath**

You're a machine, lacking any capacity for empathy with your fellow men. This is a serious dent to charisma, as you understandably just, quite frankly, do not care what those idiots all think. This has a considerable isolating effect, of course, but look on the bright side; you can impale all of your new enemies and not even feel a twinge of remorse in the morning.

## **An Additional Note: Your first character...**

The process for determining the traits of your first character is more merciful. You are able to choose what traits they start with, but have a fixed amount of points to spend on these traits.

You start with five points to spend. You do not have to spend all of them, but if you run out of points to spend, you must roll to randomly decide the rest of your traits as above.

**Incompetent** occupation = 1 point

**Adequate** occupation = 2 points

**Masterful** occupation = 3 points

**Positive** trait = 2 points

**Negative** trait = 1 point

---

## **Combat**

Matters of combat are settled in very common sense terms. The involved parties get together and discuss out-of-character how a battle is likely to play out. Depending on what they agree upon, each side receives certain modifiers on their rolls that determine success. Each player rolls an Xd10, X denoting the amount of troops involved divided by 100 (so 500 = 5), with certain positive or negative modifiers added on top of this.

For battles lasting **one turn**, both players roll and whoever achieves the largest roll wins the battle.

For battles lasting **more than one turn**, both players roll and lose an amount of troops equal to the roll of the opposing player. Whoever is left with more troops wins that phase of the battle, and then the process is repeated for subsequent phases. Each phase might require the addition of different modifiers depending on the changing circumstances.

---

# Noble Template

**House Name:**

**House Insignia:**

**Physical Characteristics:** *What physical qualities are typical of your House?*

**Cultural Characteristics:** *What are the ideals that define your House?*

**Brief History:** *Very brief roots of your House.*

**Keep Appearance:** *What does the ancestral building of your House look like?*

**Family tree:**

**(1) Your First Character:** Qualities here (i.e. Poor Tactician, Kind, Craven)

**(2) All your descendents, in order of generation...**

---