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# A FUNNY THING HAPPENED ON THE WAY TO SUDENBERG...

A NORDIC-INSPIRED GAME  
OF UNEXPECTED BEDFELLOWS

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**This document is for the use of players.**

**Please familiarize yourself with it – you don't need to memorize the whole thing, though!**

Around four weeks out of Sudenberg is the small town of Wusterburg. It's a crossroads of the Empire, the Dwarves, and the Border Provinces that's a hive of trade: some like to say the buildings are only falling apart because all their money goes to maintaining the roads!

More importantly, however, it's one of the last towns before one enters the Border Provinces proper, and, more importantly, one of the few towns that has the inns capable of housing a large number of people. After that... well, it's a long, lonely, uncomfortable road. Most caravans heading to the Border Provinces make a point of stopping by this town and getting some rest before venturing through the mountains, to the Border Provinces. And, apparently, there's this dwarf who goes by the name of Bugman who makes some *really* good ale.

Unfortunately, it just so happened that a few unrelated groups happened to be making their way down to Sudenberg at the same time, and they all happened to have the same idea of resting in Wusterburg for a few days...

The local dwarves who run the inn *almost* hesitated before accepting all their bookings, but dwarves are dwarves, gold is gold. Instead, the manager of the inn instead came up with a solution to avoid a war breaking out between the groups, one the dwarves used to keep hostile clans in check: mix 'em together, like a good brew, so they dunno what's what! Each guest found themselves randomly assigned to one of the four 'houses' of the inn, and, for once, dwarven ideas didn't get anyone killed. It's been a decent few nights!

But now, it's the last night before they head off, and there's a lot of pressing matters people need to handle before they go. The road to Sudenberg is dangerous, and it's safest to travel in as big a group as possible...

This game's design was heavily inspired by another game run by the talented team at *Immersio*, called *Freehold*. We'll be stealing a lot of their ideas and mechanics (particularly their 3x3 design, which we've upgraded to 4x4. Thanks, Penny, Jason, and Justin!)

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## Lexicon

**OOG/IG:** Out of Game, AKA the 'real world', and In Game, AKA the 'Warhammer world'. We make a note to differ these two, along with players and characters, to make the separation between the two more distinct.

**Corpsing:** Stolen from the acting world, 'corpsing' is when an actor/actress laughs in a scene, ruining the take. In LARP, it's when a **player**, not a **character**, cracks a joke or laughs. For example, a Sigmarite joking about how they're surprised a worshipper of Ulric and laughing wouldn't qualify; dropping a reference to Game of Thrones during a dramatic moment would be.

**Narrators:** Full-time volunteers, who'll primarily be making the game run.

**LARP:** If you don't know what this means by now, go to a doctor.

**Nordic LARP:** A set of principles for LARP originating from Northern Europe.

**Golden Rule:** Make sure **everyone** enjoys themselves. This includes the other players, NPCs, organizers, and yourself, of course!

## Goals

In running this game, I've set out a few important goals that I want to accomplish, that I think the other warbands participating in this game will appreciate. These will be explicitly outlined here, primarily to make them clear, but also for later evaluation – did this game do everything we set out to do?

**Enjoyment:** LARP should be fun. Enough said. If people are upset or not enjoying themselves, something's gone wrong. It's very important that people are *glad* they attended.

**Improvement:** Roleplaying, like everything else, is a skill. We'll be identifying areas of 'weakness', and focusing on improving them through workshopping and the event itself, and hope to see improvement.

**Development:** All four of the warbands participating have various OOG friendships; at the end of this, there should be more opportunities for these warbands to interact.

**Commitment:** Every player should commit to the spirit of this game, rather than corpsing it. There's times to drink and joke outside of the event, but this game is about going as 'deep' IG as we can.

# Characteristics of a Nordic LARP

Chances are, if you've been to LARP for a while, you've heard of this mysterious 'Nordic' LARP philosophy. Australia is roughly the other side of the world from the Nordic nations that pioneered this style, but it's the style, not the location, of the LARP that we're focusing on.

We like to summarize the characteristics under one 'golden rule', a responsibility every player has:

*Make sure **everyone** enjoys themselves.*

## Co-operative Storytelling

Contrary to what you might have experienced, LARP is not a game that can be 'won'. It's a contradiction of its creators, a chaotic collaboration. This means it's of vital importance that every player gets involved, with the spotlight and interesting moments being shared around. (Remember the golden rule?)

The 'stronger' the character, or more talented the player, the heavier their responsibility to ensure others are involved and having fun. TV shows and books have only a few main characters (unless George R.R. Martin is involved), but in a LARP, everyone is the main character in their story, and nobody should feel like an 'extra'. Despite playing 'against' each other, we're still playing together.

## Playing for Drama

One of the central ideals of many NordicLARPs is the idea of 'playing to lose'. Playing to lose means that, even though the characters are focused on victory, the players can actively try to fail. In some games (such as *Swordcraft*), this isn't a common idea, and what, exactly, this means varies depending on the current context. An zealous Witch Hunter might have snuck into Mousillon's camp and discovered their secret, but the participant might choose to be caught 'accidentally' by its members, to give them a chance to hide their slip-up...

Playing for drama does not mean losing at every opportunity, undermining yourself, or refusing victories. It means playing for the most dramatic or interesting story for *everyone*. Sometimes that means 'playing the villain', or making a terrible mistake. Other times, it means letting someone else do so.

Like everything else in this document, it's not a rule, but a guideline for everyone's enjoyment.

## Tools over Rules

This LARP is about social interaction – negotiations, conflicting loyalties, romance, conflict, deal making, and trickery. The game mechanics are there *purely* to help you have a meaningful experience – not to stop you from playing. This means that our few mechanics are very loosely defined. Their job is to get players inspired and working on reasons and alibis to have powerful roleplaying scenes together. This means many of the rules are not 'rules', as such, but tools to inspire and be used by players.

For example, in our workshop, we will cover a mechanic by which players can enter a scene, unnoticed. This isn't a 'spying mechanic', but a tool players can use to take part in a scene that they find dramatic and interesting.

## Workshops

To make sure everyone is on the same page, understands and can use the mechanics, and to help facilitate those deep relationships and plots, many Nordic larps start with a series of workshops. We'll be doing a few of these, but we'll be keeping it in proportion to our playing time. The workshops are mandatory. If you arrive late, and miss the workshops, we won't let you play, as it would defeat the purpose of this game.

## Intense Immersion

Many LARPs in this style aim to maintain a 'full illusion' of the game. Costumes and sets are richly detailed. Game organisers and NPCs are costumed and have an in-character reason for being there, and props and NPCs are represented in the game, not imagined. Breaking character and corpsing is kept to a minimum.

# Themes

## Grim Horror

The world of *Warhammer* is not a nice place. There are rarely any great heroes – they get taken out pretty quickly by the evils around them – and even the best likely bring about as much pain and misery as they remove. You struggle to find a spot of hope in the dark world surrounding them.

**Questions for characters:** What are my reasons for persisting? What gives me hope? What miseries have I experienced on my way here? Do I still think the world can be improved, or am I part of the problem? Do I care, one way or the other? What's the worst thing that's ever happened to me?

## Relationships

Everyone has, to some extent, has developed conflicting relationships since arriving in Wusterburg. Maybe you've discovered that you *really* like playing cards with an enemy mercenary, or have struck up a forbidden romance with a filthy Sigmarite. At the same time, though, you're part of a greater force, a warband, that has clear goals and opinions about the other groups present.

Sometimes, the relationships formed crumble under the pressure of service to one's lord, or duty to the nation. But sometimes, those relationships manage to persist, or, even better, are strengthened.

**Questions for characters:** How do you feel about your warband? How do you feel about your bunkmates? Is there something you're looking for that you can't find in your warband? Are there people you would lie, or betray, your warband to help? Are there people you would exploit if it benefited your warband? Who, specifically do you care about, or despise, both within your warband and outside of it?

## Compromise

You're surrounded by potential enemies. Even while you sleep, you're stuck in an intermingled group, away from your warband. The only reason things haven't ended violently is because of the compromises you've been willing to make – be it ignoring a bunkmate's snoring, striking an unexpected friendship with a foreigner, or calling a ceasefire over a religious dispute.

These compromises are going to be useful – they're going to continue, in fact. In a day, you'll be travelling with your warband to Sudenburg, a journey that is infinitely safer with company. The leader of your warband has an array of tasks that need completing before the night is through. And you've got your own, personal aims. Suddenly, those compromises you made with your bunkmates might be your means of accomplishing those goals, even if it means making a few more in the process.

**Questions for characters:** Who, outside of my warband, do I trust? Who do I think is planning to betray me, or am I planning to betray? What kind of deals am I willing to make to accomplish my goals? How can I be certain those deals are secure? Do I want money, favors, items, or something else? What can I offer, trade, or do, to get what I want? Do the ends justify the means?

# Character Design

Thank you to **Justin** for his work designing **Pax Europa**, which was a great resource when it came to this section's content on relationships.

Chances are, you've already designed a character for *Swordcraft* and its new *Blood and Gold* setting, and if you haven't, you'd better get a move on – it's on in four weeks! But, at this game, there's some new wrinkles we want to add to that character, things to make it more involved. Like everything else in this document, it's a guideline, rather than a rule. However, we do want to note that we've added these design elements to make your game more interesting, so we encourage you to use them!

## Bunkmates and Project

Your bunkmates might not be your warband, but for the past three nights, they've been the people you've been closest to – sharing meals, playing cards, sleeping, drinking, or training with. The dwarves have done a remarkably good job you busy and *mostly* separate, and thus made sure you can't easily communicate with your warband. And as happens with any group, a relationship, and identity, has formed between its members – especially as the dwarves have you working on **something** for tonight.

During workshopping, you'll be sent off with your fellow players to talk and discuss what's happened over those three days, with the help of a Narrator. During that time, you'll decide what your bunk was like, with your fellow players, and also collectively decide what your **something** is.

Are you performing a play about the Three Emperors? Will you be entertaining the tavern with a rowdy, barely rehearsed song? Are you going to unveil a new type of ale, or reveal a new wonder of engineering? Talk with your fellow players about what you've worked on. As a OOG guideline, your **something** can be as little as a minute long – all that matters is that it's appropriate for the setting, and something you've worked on together. (Bonus points, of course, if things take an *interesting* turn while you do so.)

## Personal Goals

Independently of your group workshopping session, you should start developing some individual goals for your character. Maybe they want to find someone to send money off to their wife, cure a cursed ring they found, cheat someone out of coin, learn about other lands, make a trade agreement on behalf of their family, beat someone in a duel, or earn the approval of their warband leader – or all of the above!

Every character will have at least one suggested 'personal goal', and potentially some information on what they've been up to during the week. As with everything, these are just guidelines – if you don't like it, tell a Narrator and we'll change it!

# Relationship Design

As mentioned previously, you'll be given an opportunity to design some relationships that have formed between you and your bunkmates. Forming these relationships is not mandatory, but encouraged, for your enjoyment. As a guideline, we suggest you have a **positive** relationship with **two** of your bunkmates, and a **negative** relationship with **one** of your bunkmates. For extra drama, make as many of these relationships with bunkmates outside of your warband! We've provided some suggestions as a sidebar.

We'll also encourage you to do the same with your fellow warband members, if you get a chance to speak with them before game. Again, try to have a **positive** relationship with two of your comrades, and a **negative** relationship with **one**.

## Consent and Relationships

Remember that consent is important. No matter if they are friendly or antagonistic, all of your relationships need to have the consent of everyone involved. This is especially true of antagonism and romance, but applies to all relationships that put any type of expectation on other players. If the dynamic of your relationship changes in game as well, that still requires consent – a friendship can't blossom into a romance unless both players have agreed it should.

Consent can also change. Relationships organised before the game may not work in game. A player may find the relationship is not what they want. In such a case it is fine to drop out of a relationship - just let the other player, or players, know. If your partner drops out of a relationship, you **thank** them for letting you know, and let them get on with their game. **Don't** pursue them for explanation.

## Playing Relationships

Relationships IG are different from what you experience OOG. They're much more compressed and 'heightened'. Everything is simpler and happens faster. Reactions and counter-reactions are more over-the-top. For this reason, we have some tips for playing relationships. They're meant to give you some ideas and inspiration. And if you feel you don't need them, that's OK!

## Friendship

Friends talk about things small and large. Talk to your friends about what's going on in your own life, and ask what's going on in theirs. Overshare as much as possible! Try to get involved in what they're doing, and do your friends favours. Lots of favours. Talk them up whenever it's appropriate (and whenever it's not.) Help them out of any trouble they get into, and ask for their help when you're in a dilemma. Their problems should be your problems, and there's nothing better than making your problems their problems! Above all else, be loyal, and be supportive.

### Relationship Ideas

**Friends:** Who are the people who have your back, whose support and confidence you can rely on? Who will you support without question?

**Adversaries:** Who are your rivals? Who do you have bad blood with and why? How do you express this antagonism?

**Romances:** Lovers and paramours, present and past, open and secret. The world is a big place; you might not have seen each other for years.

**Transactional:** Someone you need something from, or who is helping you with something.

**Relations of duty:** Someone you answer to. Someone you outrank. Someone you serve.

**Prejudicial relations:** Someone you react to, based on your prejudices (and that player's consent).

Unless you're going to screw them over, of course, which can be interesting (though should be negotiated and consented to). After all, the worst of enemies sometimes start out as the best of friends.

## Conflict

Enemies come in all shapes and sizes, but they have one thing in common; they will go out of their way to make your life worse. Of course, you wouldn't be enemies if you weren't willing to do the same to them! Share as many dirty secrets as you can discover, and lie and make rumors up if you can't. Gossip about them behind their back. Get involved in the lives of your enemies, purely so you can make them worse. Make your distaste obvious whenever you see each other. Fake smiles, nasty "compliments" or outright verbal attacks are all wonderful elements to roleplay, as long as there's **enthusiastic consent**.

But most importantly, be prepared to change your views. Enemies today can be friends tomorrow.

## Romance

Again, remember, **any** type of romance – even a one-sided type – requires a player's enthusiastic consent. We're intentionally repeating this in this section, because we want to encourage a safe environment for players.

Romance is a tricky thing, IG and OOG. Sometimes it's simple and joyous, and makes everyone happy to watch and observe. But often – especially in Warhammer - it's complicated and dark, and whatever's keeping two (or more!) people together is deeply unhealthy. Even better, it can also be one-sided, existing only in someone's head. There are many ways to be romantic. Take walks along the balcony, sharing innermost desires and dreams. Hold hands constantly. Stand up for each other when there's trouble afoot. Write love letters and poems to each other. Hide your love from those that would snatch it from you. Promise each other the world. Fast and furious is much more interesting than slow and safe.

And remember that sometimes love fails, and that is also a part of romance. Better to have loved and lost than never to have loved at all, right?

# Mechanics

Credit for most of this section goes to **Immersio** and their LARP, **Freehold**. Many of these mechanics are lifted from, or inspired by, their hard work designing a negotiation system.

There are three types of play that require the use of consent mechanics. These are violence, intimacy, covered here, and the use of powers, covered below them. Interaction with PCs or NPCs require the same levels of consent.

We also have some mechanics down the bottom involving death and injury, along with some guidelines for procs and combat.

## Conversation Mechanic

Violence and intimacy in game use the same consent mechanic. A conversation must be had between players before you begin a violent or intimate action in a scene. This conversation has a particular formula which should always be used, in order to prevent misunderstandings.

The conversation begins with an OOG **question** of:

*Off-game, violence?*

*Off-game, intimacy?*

The other player will **respond**. The response will either be enthusiastic consent, or something else. Either way, you then **thank** the other player, because they have communicated to you their preferences and desires in the scene, and that is important, and worth thanking them for. Remember the golden rule? We want players to enjoy themselves, and the easiest way to make that happen is to make them communicate what they want, and do not want.

In the case of **less than enthusiastic** consent, or a **lack** of consent, you return to IG, and continue the scene without the aspect you had asked about. The other player doesn't want that element, or doesn't really want it, so there won't be any in this scene.

In the case of an enthusiastic yes, **ask** the other player how they would like to do it. The other person, ie, the person who didn't first ask the question, always gets to define the limits of the roleplay.

For example, you might break character in a tense scene to ask, *Off-Game, Violence?* When they answer, *Absolutely!* you would then continue, "Thank you. How would you like to do it?" Your partner in the scene might reply, *Why don't I try to draw my sword, but you leap in and stop me and wrestle me to the ground and stab me.* Then look to fill in the details; you might ask, *Is that going to be a fatal stabbing?* They are at liberty to make that decision:

### The Consent Conversation

**1 – Ask:** Player 1 asks the initial OOG **question**.

*Off-game: violence?*

*Off-game: intimacy?*

**2 – Listen:** Player 1 waits for a **response**.

- If Player 2's **response** is **lack of enthusiasm**, then Player 1 should **thank** Player 2 for letting them know their limits and preferences in the scene, and then move the scene along without the suggested aspect. Move to Step 6.

- If Player 2's **response** is **enthusiastic consent**, Player 1 should **thank** Player 2 for letting them know their limits and preferences for the scene. Go to Step 3.

**3 – Detail:** Player 1 **asks** Player 2 how they would like to incorporate that into the scene.

- If Player 2 cannot think of a specific way to incorporate that into the scene, Player 1 should acknowledge that Player 2 doesn't see an obvious way to fit the suggestion into the scene. Move to step 6.

- If Player 2 makes a specific suggestion, Player 1 can accept it, or make suggestions for a slightly different way to move forward.

**4 – Discuss:** Player 1 and 2 discuss the specific suggestions that have been made, until they find something that they are both comfortable with.

**5 – Confirm:** Player 1 and Player 2 confirm the final decision, to be sure they both understand it.

**6 – Carry On:** Make a quick ready check, then continue the scene.

characters only ever die if their players agree to it. In this case the other player might decide, *No, let's make it serious, but not fatal.*

Then, you quickly check that you're both ready, and get back into character to play out the scene.

For those unsure about this system, there is a summary on the right. You will probably find that you won't need to refer to the summary in game, since with a little familiarity, the system is quite easy and instinctive. But for those wanting to look through it, and feel familiar before the game starts, we've included it.

## Supernatural Effects

In the world of *Warhammer*, while magical, divine, and dark magic is rare, it does exist – and the warbands arriving in Wusterburg are no exception. Be it the divine purity of a Sigmarite Priest or the cold spells of a Kislevite witch, many characters will have the ability to influence the world around them, supernaturally. For this game, we will represent this with the **really, really** mechanic. This phrase is a signal to players that a supernatural power is being used.

The player utilizing their power states the effect that are looking to get by using it, using the phrase 'really, really' to signal to other players that it is in use. For example, when attempting to subvert someone's will with magic, a player might say, "I **really, really** think you need to do what I say."

Having signalled to the other players that they're using a power, those players get to interpret how it affects their characters. Maybe their abilities work exactly as expected, maybe things went awry and the effect was slightly different, or maybe nothing happened at all. These powers are fickle, after all, and things rarely go to plan.

If you see someone using some kind of power, you should try to interpret it in a way that will be fun. For example, it might be appropriate to be awed by someone's well-portrayed, magical ritual of fear, to ensure they can have their 'moment'. However, by the same token, if the power as expressed wouldn't be fun for you, just express its effects differently, or roleplay the power failing to take proper effect.

Just remember: nobody likes the character that always wins, and is never affected, or loses, anything. Even the most devout or strong stumble, sometimes – and recovering is often far more interesting than merely resisting.

## Lore

It's important to note that *Warhammer's* lore is vast, complex, and frequently contradictory. We've intentionally avoided including too much lore in this document, because it gave our design team a headache from the sheer *density* of it. More importantly, in a new setting, a lot of changes might have occurred within your warband. There's also a lot of new characters in this game, some of whom you might know and have detailed relationships with... only to blank when it comes to their name. We've got a way to deal with this, though!

### Lack of Sleep

*Sorry, Sir, I haven't been sleeping properly. What was your rank, again?*

*I am your Sergeant, my good man!*

*Now, tell me about these undead.*

*Sergeant, have you been sleeping properly?*

*Why would you think those Bretons are undead?*

*Ugh, I have been sleeping badly as well. Those Bretons, though...*

Things have been rough, lately, and a lot of people are tired. If you can't remember a fact related to game, there's an excuse that communicates your lack of knowledge, OOG – *I haven't been sleeping properly*. Using it is a way to make an OOG correction, or request information, without breaking immersion. Obviously, if a player uses this mechanic, you should ignore any mistake their character has made. As an example, we've included two brief snippets of a conversation using this mechanic.

## Death and Injury

You cannot be **killed** at this game. However, you can **choose to die**.

Being killed at a LARP is very seldom fun, or meaningful – you come back pretty quickly. Dying at one can be, but only if it is chosen by the player, for dramatic impact. For this reason, at this game, you cannot kill other characters without their explicit OOG consent. The same goes for injuries that will ruin a large part of their play.

This means that while conflicts will happen, and fights and duels can become quite serious, nobody gets killed unless they **choose** to. And since dying means missing out on the rest of the LARP it's not something that's going to be happening often. If you **choose** to have your character die, you should make sure it's in an interesting way!

The corollary to that is that when death does happen, it is a big deal for all characters still in the game. It must be said quite clearly, though, that we do not expect character death to be a central part of the LARP. It may happen in extreme cases if the players so choose, but this is not a LARP where we expect a high death toll.

In a similar vein, no-one wants to spend an entire LARP maimed, crippled, or in a sick bed. (Unless you find that fun, of course!) If your character has been injured at the LARP, don't lie around playing injured for any longer than you want to. Find a priest to restore you, get a prosthetic leg, enlist an alchemist's help to make a concoction, or find a witch who has a remedy. Make your game interesting, instead of boring!

## Relics and Artifacts

In Warhammer, there are many strange items, many of which have powerful effects or abilities. Most of them are horrific, and only a few are positive – thought that doesn't stop people from trying to grab literally anything that has some magical resonance, in the hopes that they'll beat the odds.

One of the many mysterious items players might bring along will be picked up, presumably by someone who **really, really** shouldn't have done so. However, we obviously can't have players constantly near their props, letting people know what can or can't be touched, or what might happen. As such, we ask that players clearly label any relics or items that indicates the intended effect. For example, a Hound may have a sacred spear on display, with a note specifying that the divinity of Myrmidia flows through the spearhead, making the tip burn and purify evil with the glory of the sun.

## Combat

It's important to note that this event is held at a **licensed venue**, and any actual fighting – even if consensual – will not be tolerated. With that said, a large number of our playerbase comes from Swordcraft, and has the props and costuming for combat, plus conflict is an inherent part of the Warhammer setting. Because of this, combat is permitted in game, using the above conversation

negotiation – a **question**, a **response of enthusiastic consent**, **asking**, **discussing** the outcome, and finally **carrying on**. It's important to note that once you have decided who will win, it's polite for the losing player to decide the narrative of their loss.

Players are then encouraged to act out the fight in a suitably dramatic fashion. This fight must be done at a controlled speed with lightest touches.

**Under no circumstances should anyone throw a punch or swing a sword with force.**

## Narrators

Our last note is reserved for our Narrator team, the people responsible for running and writing the game. Like everyone else, they're subject to the **golden rule**, and want you to have just as much fun as everyone else. By the same token, if you're not enjoying yourself, and don't know why, or what to do, then you should feel more than welcome to approach them and talk about how you're feeling! Maybe you're running into a lot of roadblocks accomplishing your goal, aren't enjoying it, or have run out of things to do. Maybe you have a really cool thing you want to see in-game, and need help to make it happen.

We're here to fix that! If there's anything you need from us, you should approach us. Like everything else in-game, it might be negotiated or take a little bit of time, but we'll always be there to help.