

The Social Distinctions of Vandlar

The Kingdom of Vandlar has stood for just under a century in its formal state. This young developing kingdom however was formed more so on the structures and laws of far away lands and the origins of the non ingenious settlers who traveled to Vandlar some one hundred and seventy years prior to the Kingdom's formation. These races were the Humans, Hobblings, Gypsies, and eventually Stone Elves who came and made their home on the continent. That wasn't to say that the years separated from their former homes along with the alliances made with the indigenous Dwarves of Vandlar did help form a strong foundations of uniqueness that kept Vandlar from being a mere clone of its predecessors.

What follows is a break down of what are considered the most major of social distinctions throughout the Kingdom. This will detail how these social focuses are viewed as a whole, what functions they perform, and the benefits most common to their life style.

Uncivilized Outsiders

This classification deals with the races that the Kingdom, or civilized people as a whole deem unfit for mainstreamed society. These are the Barbarians, High Orcs, Wylderkin and High Ogres. Barbarians have been granted lands within the Kingdom of their own in accordance with the treaty that ended the conflict between the settlers and the Barbarians. Orcs, Wylderkin, and Ogres however have no land they can call their own, and see no true need for it to be any other way. They roam in projected territories as they have for as long as any of them remember and the places they take refuge go undisputed by the nobles of the Kingdom to maintain a cordial relationship.

While the average citizen of Vandlar may feel these races are uncouth but it is in no ones rights to mistreat them when they make their presence known in civilized settlements. That is not to say mistreatment does not occur, but as long as the laws of the Kingdom are abided it is within a noble's obligation to defend these outsider's right to be present within their spheres of authority. High Orcs, High Ogres, Wylderkin, and Barbarians alike are not the most settled of races, they take to wandering exploring naturally and while the feelings of superiority might be equally exchanged between them and the denizens of the Kingdom it is not a rare sight to see these less established races socializing in the local taverns of the lands they wander. Many of these individuals fall quickly into a career of adventuring.

Despite the animosity that still brews between the descendents of the Barbarians and the citizens of the kingdom from the Barbarian War things now remain rather peaceful. The Ogres, Orcs, Wylderkin, and Barbarians rise with the citizens of the Kingdom in this age to meet many threats to the lands of Vandlar broadening their acceptance with many of the more civilized races as time progresses. These races are far

less common to be found as citizens in the Kingdom, though that does not mean they are barred from doing so. Those who seek to ingrain themselves have a slightly more difficult time finding acceptance, and more often than not the vast majority have no desire to be part of the human dominated culture.

Civilized Outsiders

There are many races who are unarguably cultured and civilized who have no place in the Kingdom but whom also inhabit the continent of Vandlar, and the southern continent alike. Many of these races have been present for far longer than the Humans, Hobblings, Gypsies, and Stone Elves who traveled through the mists. The Humans expanded vast borders and not without conflict, most notably with the Barbarians, they did however come to peaceful terms with many of the indigenous peoples of the continent. The dwarves have for a great part entered the fold of the Kingdom's whole, while many others maintain their independence such as the Harroo (Sarr), Biata and Elven races. There are also the Wild Lands, a section of the eastern part of the continent that was put aside for free thinkers and independents when the kingdom was formed.

The peaceful cohabitation of the kingdom and these other races works in everyone's favor. Embassies have been established along with trade agreements. The leaders or representatives of leaders of these races attempt to meet as regularly as possible, sharing in information and advancements where mutual trust and progress can be agreed upon. A strong example of this is the relationship between the Kingdom and the research center of Zarden. Zarden even while existing in the Wild Lands provides for the Kingdom vast amounts of magical research and items while it remains in the Kingdom's best interest to protect this center despite their highly independent ways. These relationships are not without tension such as the center's study of necromancy and the Kingdom's laws strictly forbidding such practices.

It is no secret that some of these elder races look with some hesitation upon this fast growing vastly human populated kingdom who quickly came to dominate the continent at large. While this leads to a great deal of caution and sometimes tension between the powerful races of Vandlar a steady peace continues to be maintained. It is not uncommon for many of these other races to be found fully ingrained in the Kingdom's society either, fulfilling roles from a commoner to holding noble titles themselves. Vandlar excludes no one who shows dedication, loyalty, and pride in being part of the Kingdom. If all qualities are displayed, these races find little trouble becoming accepted and full fledged members, with future generations already being born and ingrained directly into the Kingdom.

The Commoner

The commoner, as many would prefer to be called are often referred to as peasants and serfs by the less amiable people of Vandlar. However such words do nothing to demean the fact that these individuals are the backbone of the economy and the most numerous of social classes in the Kingdom's entirety.

The distinction of these men and women comes mostly in the fact that they are not land owners. They almost entirely rely on wealthy merchants and landed nobility to be fair land owners. Most are more than eager to accommodate prospective farmers and skilled crafters. The benefits are more than mutual, and are more often than not deemed quite fair. In these arrangements the skilled laborers are supplied with the land, buildings, and equipment, or a means to make their own. In turn generally they are obligated to produce what their lord or landowner requires.

In turn they perform their function with percentages of their earning or their trade's output being given to their landowners or local nobility. These percentages are worked out early in any relationship, and rarely prohibit the laborer from picking up and moving on elsewhere if he finds the arrangement to not be in their best interest. With the land they work on practically their own to do with as they please, and the umbrella of protection that their local nobility is obligated to provide, few see a need to invest in land of their own, finding the added responsibility and hassle, and not worth the extra privileges it may grant them.

Many commoners do however strive to progress up Vandlar's feudal ladder. Rather than spending their earned wages on the many fine things available through trade, they instead save up to purchase land and perhaps a merchant license of their own, both of which will grant a much stronger sense of independence, although a much larger percent of risk and responsibility.

Citizenship is what makes a commoner truly part of the Kingdom as a whole. Citizenship is something any born into one of the Kingdom's settlements is automatically granted. However in a Kingdom sharing space with many other nations and races that largely exist outside of their spheres of power, it is not hard for one of another race wishing to join to become sponsored and be accepted into the fold. Some entire races such as the Dwarves are considered largely part of the Kingdom as well, though still existing outside of it to some extent, having their own King. The Kingdom was founded by Hobblings, Humans, and Gypsies initially, all travelers from through the mists from other lands. To present day others who travel to the Kingdom through these mists can find and make a home as a Citizen of the Kingdom, its roots as being formed by pioneers far from ignored.

The Merchants and tradesman

What separates these individuals from the commoner is a stronger sense of independence. They more often own their own land and shops, or have joint shares with others of their caliber. They dictate what they choose to make with their skills and

resources and secure their own contracts for trade. Also many of this class serve as land owners, giving the commoners land or shops to work in, entitling themselves to the privilege of dictating what these common folk produce..

The tradesmen and merchants of Vandlar are held to higher expectations and scrutiny however than the average commoner. All they've worked for and established can be swept away from them in a moment if the local nobles feel they are not practicing good business. These expectations are held in high regard by many, but some do make vast attempts to ignore them while staying under the local authorities' radar. Examples of these poor practices would include anything involving some form of forced labor, or the smuggling of goods and avoiding the awareness of the Kingdom's Auditors.

The benefits to this station in the society are obvious, but the extents of the prestige a merchant can earn are great and vast. An expert tradesman who produces goods of unquestionable quality can often be sought for large scale projects by the Kingdom's nobility. These sorts of jobs can lead to a great deal of wealth along with an educated say in how the projects are carried out. This might include the construction of a large building such as a castle, or a suit of armor for a Knight. A merchant may be looked to as a sole source of goods a Lord wishes to trade, or find himself the sole provider of some exotic goods only he has secured. This rise in prestige often leads to holding titles of important offices, either as advisors to nobility or auditors. It is also not unheard of for an extremely successful merchant or tradesman to be made a Squire or Lord. Often these extremely business savvy people make for excellent Lords and Knights in places of trade.

Adventurers

Some might argue that adventurers merit no social distinction, that they are vagabonds and mercenaries with no reputable qualities and bring trouble wherever they wander. While this might sometimes be the case, the truth is different. Some of the greatest heroes of bard's songs and local folklore fall into this broad category that is often and most commonly referred to as adventurer. What is an adventurer? What makes one seem to be the lifestyle common with many dangerous professions. Treasure hunters, explorers, mercenaries, or simply those possessed by wanderlust fall into this often dangerous adventuring lifestyle. They can be found fighting the savage beasts of the unforgiving wilds, delving into lost and unknown ruins, researching new and wondrous things, and all while providing a great deal of security to the common denizens of the continent for no further wage than what they find on the way.

The Kingdom of Vandlar has a strong tradition of adventurers, dating back a mere few hundred years to the first settlers striking out through the mists in promise of gold. These first settlers brought with them a pioneering spirit, looking for new starts and vast treasures. Even with the formation of the Kingdom the wild lands of Vandlar continued to inspire this adventures' spirit. While many over the generations have settled into a more calm and average lifestyle the profit of adventuring continues to hold appeal. People from all beginnings and walks of life who are willing to take the risk can find

wealth far beyond what a farmer or simple laborer can hope to make. This allows many to walk the life of an adventurer for a short period in their life, those luck enough retiring early into a comfortable and by comparison, quiet lifestyle.

Some in authority do find a certain degree of problem with adventurers. The presence of many can alter the economy greatly with what the adventurers rake in along with their specific needs which often include vast amounts of weaponry, potions, scrolls and the like. To a larger extent most merchants will agree that this is all good for business, but the greater presence of such items has the risk of creating discomfort among the common populace, a band of armed and skilled people is nothing to consider lightly after all. This tipping in the power scales can often be a cause for some fret to the authorities, but to a large extent it is a non issue.

The majority of nobles will welcome adventurers into their towns for the commerce they bring and the problems they seem to be willing to deal with for no charge but what they find. They are highly skilled and cost nothing to have trained. Their very nature makes them readily employable and the slight imbalance their presence causes outweighs the cost of conscripting commoners into military service in times of need. These facts make them looked to for aid by not only nobility but the common men and women as well who are troubled with constant infestations of the uncontrollable monsters of Vandlar.

The Military

Vandlar's military tradition is a proud one. From the first years of the Kingdom's formation it has always had some semblance of a standing army. Young men and women who show a talent for battle often begin their military careers in local militias. Here they serve for a time under whatever agreements are made in the area between the armed forces and the residing nobles. The pay is often fair, and barracks provide a stable home and meals. Vandlar is still very much an untamed frontier in many areas however, and the duties of these men and women are not always as calm and safe as many who sign up would hope.

The militia is the most basic form of the Vandlar's army. These small regiments are formed by Lords and Ladies to safeguard their holdings from danger and keep the peace among their residents. Terms of service are the most typical arrangements, ensuring that weak hearted individuals will not take on the responsibility simply to abandon their post at the first sign of danger. The penalty for abandonment can vary, but is often severe enough to discourage deserters. These localized garrisons serve the community in various ways, many even training farmers and other commoners how to defend themselves and where to meet in times of dangers to arm themselves and fight alongside the standing troops. In times of great peril it is not unheard of for able bodied citizens to be drafted directly into these local militias, especially if Barons and Dukes call for troops from their lords to bolster their armies for war. Traditions may vary from place

to place, but there are generally very few ranks inside these units, and are often lead by a Captain of the Guard.

Ducal and Baronial armies are generally far more formalized than that of the local militias. Troops are organized into larger groups with far more specific purposes. Where as with militias you might see assorted troops fighting with various styles, in a Ducal or Baronial army you will see shield baring swordsmen, polearm wielding lines, and archers all formed up into separate rank and file units. These units fight in conjunction with one another rather than as a mass. These standing armies are usually stationed at the Ducal and Baronial capitals. In times of strife they may be moved to deal with various threats, even if to make a simple show of force. Like militias many of those serving in these armies are signed on for a period of time, but many who choose to make a career of military service wind up in these forces after moving on from their local militias to put their experience to greater use. Nobles are often given the rank of General to lead these large forces; however one does not need to be a noble to be a General. Below the General is a formalized system of ranks and progressions.

Nobility

The feudal system of the Kingdom is unusually fair and open for people of all ranges of birth and walks of life to strive to this high position of authority and prestige. This highest of honors come at great expectations of self sacrifice and responsibility. No one can be promised nobility, and birth by no means ensures it, though it can not be denied that noble bloodlines do grace Vandlar with men and women well suited to lead. These proud bloodlines may seem to lay out an ideal of lineage and inherent right to rule, but that is a misleading truth. The granting of a title or the naming of a successor falls on the shoulders of Barons, Dukes, and the Royal family.

All Nobility is expected to uphold the laws of the Kingdom, and of their individual holdings. With ultimate authority comes a great deal of responsibility, and just as title and privilege can be granted by noble superiors, it can also be taken away. The founders of the Kingdom made this clear, and it is what separates Vandlar from many other feudal societies. This law holds true even for the King, whom if lesser nobility deem unfit to rule are obligated by the oaths and codes that bind them to remove their sovereign and raise one more fit to rule. The same bloodline that originally rose to the royal status of the Kingdom remains in power to this day, but has held such a station not through force, but of holding true to the standards originally set down. This philosophy cements the fact that no one is guaranteed to keep forever what they've strived to, though it is a policy that still can't weed out all corruption. It however does keep the doors open, allowing for some unlikely but well suited candidates to enter the fold of the Kingdoms hierarchy and become powerful and influential leaders of their own accords.

While there are many formal ways to address a noble, it always remains proper for one to refer to their direct sire as, "My liege." Thus, a Squire would call the noble

they are training under, as well as the noble who squired them, “My Liege,” where formalities are either required or expected. One’s liege lord can change multiple times in a noble’s career as they either move through ranks or are transferred from one noble’s household to another.

Below are the qualities and code all nobles are expected to know, hold close to their heart, and never turn away from.

-Code of chivalry

Thou shall respect the weak and thou shall constitute thyself the Defender of them.

Thou shall love the Kingdom in which thou hast sworn fealty.

Thou shall not recoil before the enemy.

Thou shall make war against Evil without cessation.

Thou shall scrupulously perform thy Noble Duties, if they be not contrary to the laws of the land.

Thou shall never lie and thou shall remain faithful to thy word.

Thou shall be generous and thou shall give freely to everyone.

Thou shall be always the champion of the Right and Good against injustice and Evil.

-The characteristics expected of all Nobility.

A Noble’s actions demonstrate...

Prowess: A noble seeks excellence in all endeavors expected of a noble, martial and otherwise, seeking excellence in all skills to be used in the service of justice, rather than in personal gain. A noble who acts with excellence will be respected and more desirable to emulate.

Loyalty: A noble must be known for unwavering commitment to the people and ideals of the land.

Justice: A noble must always seek the path of righteousness, unencumbered by bias or personal interest. A noble must judge with unclouded perception, ensuring their decisions can be backed by Truth.

Mercy: A noble must always measure mercy with righteousness. A noble who knows no mercy, can never truly be loved by the people. Mercy is a show of greatness when a crime permits it to be given. A citizen set to rights through an act of mercy serves the Kingdom's strength more than one who died with no chance for redemption.

Protection: A noble must protect the weak. It is the people who ultimately allow a noble to rule and it is a noble's duty to protect those subjects against any evil that would seek to oppress them.

Courageous: A noble must often choose the more difficult of paths so to better serve the people he serves and whom serve him. Fear is weakness in character and courage is the steel that protects us from such. Wisdom is the sword a noble must arm himself with, so that courage is always kin to bravery, and never stupidity.

Humility: A noble must not boast of themselves. Speak first of the greatness of other's deeds, both of your kin and ancestors before you.

Generous: A noble must be selfless. A generous hearted person can better discern the path of mercy when passing judgment on others.

Nobility: A noble must be such in title and in heart. Being a noble means one must strive for a noble heart by displaying these characteristics and a true sense of chivalry.

Squire

The squire is the first step one must take on the path to nobility. Those who take on this title have little to show for the great deal of responsibility they adopt. This is a traditional trial period one undertakes before they are inducted into knighthood. The squire is obligated in this time to serve his liege without hesitation, learn all he has to offer, and strive beyond their liege's teachings alone to better understand their own strengths and abilities.

Many squires find their first steps into service by simply being the sons and daughters of already established nobles. These children do hold an advantage by their birth in that they are closer the noble courts, and assuming their parents have already proven loyal, their offspring are that much closer to being noticed by a Baron or Duke. Children often begin their training as early as 8 years of age, and many achieve Knighthood by the time they reach adulthood at sixteen. This however is not the only way squires are found, and there is no cap on the age a squire may begin. People from all professions and walks of life are eligible to be honored and taken under a noble's wing. Only a Baron or noble of greater rank can squire an individual. From there the squire may be assigned to a Knight, or serve the Baron directly.

A squire is expected to perform all the functions their liege deems fit to lay at their feet. A squire approaches these tasks and duties with the utmost importance, but not with simple unquestioning loyalty. A squire's duty is to learn and should never be used as

a mere errand boy for their liege's simple conveniences. A squire's constant task is to learn and sharpen their mind to better prepare them to serve the Kingdom. This is done not by simple service to one's liege but by studying, understanding, and demonstrating the characters of nobility and the code of chivalry. Once these codes are well ingrained, as well as maturity having been reached a squire becomes eligible for Knighthood at his liege's choosing.

A squire presents himself in a humble fashion flanking his liege in formal occasions and may be expected to present proper colors in their attire as well. This serves as a dual purpose, first so the squire might always be learning, and second because a squire should be a trusted other to their liege. If a squire and their liege can not form a circle of trust, the arrangement should be ended, the squire either assigned elsewhere, or his squire-hood ended. This bond must be extended both ways, never just by one individual. It is common and respectful practice for a squire to sport the colors of their liege. There is also no requirement to address a squire in any specific way; however a squire may introduce himself with Squire preceding his first and/or last name.

When a squire's liege deems them suited for knighthood the ascension can be anything from lengthy and traditional ceremonies with roots going back to the old lands the settlers had come from, to a simple dubbing. If the squire was handed on to another to train under, the Baron, Duke, or member of the Royal family who initially accepted the squire must give the final approval, and be present for, if not entirely conduct the dubbing of the squire to that of a Knight.

These varied ceremonies, be they simple or complicated can be preceded by days of other traditions and trials. Sometimes a squire is expected to spend two days in quiet solitude with little more than texts of history and the codes of chivalry to keep him company. This time alone is meant to allow one to absorb the weight of the responsibility they are about to undertake while acting as a trial of its own. These traditions vary by personal preference and more than likely taken from their own upbringing into Knighthood.

Knights and Dames

The service of a Knight starts the moment they are dubbed such. The first thing that is decided, and often times while the young noble is still a squire, is where and whom they will serve. This is especially true to a Knight who trained beneath another Knight. The decision falls to any nobility with authority in the area of the rank Baron or higher. They will decide where the Knight's efforts and skills are most well suited and to whom they'll be in service of.

At this point it is common practice for a knight to wear the colors of his new liege lord. These might be the colors of the city or town his lord rules over to be seen as a new and constant noble presence in the area. A Knight is still likely to also wear the colors of the Baron, Duke, or the Royal family in which they serve. If the Knight's direct liege is the King himself then the Kingdom's colors are presented. These colors can be adorned

in many forms, from that of a simple sash, surcoat, tabard, or many other appropriate options. If the Knight or his family has heraldry of any sort, it is still his choice whether to present such in unison with the colors and heraldry of the courts he now serves.

A Knight is a symbol of authority and law enforcement. They act as the primary tools of Kingdom when it comes to performing arrests and bringing enemies of the Kingdom to justice. The power a Knight has to arrest others is varied by rank and number. A Knight rarely is charged to pass judgment on others, this task falls to their liege, be it a Lord of whatever settlement the arrest occurs in, or the noble house the Knight serves. As the laws of Vandlar lay out, a noble has the ultimate authority in deciding the fate of one who breaks the law. A Knight is inclined to make sure these laws are abided, and to take any who would seek to break them before his liege, or if permissible dispense justice as the Knight sees fit then and there.

A Knight is properly addressed by 'Sir.' If the name, first or last is not known by those addressing the Knight, 'Sir Knight,' will become the appropriate acknowledgement. In the case of a female Knight, she may request to either be addressed as Sir, or Dame, depending on her own personal preference. This is also traditionally paired with the taking of a knee in the Knight's presence. The strictness of this will vary from person to person, some expect it and some simply do not.

Another kind of Knight does exist however. A Knight with no lands and/or no specific liege lord is considered a Knight Errant. These Knights are men and women who have progressed through the rigorous life of a squire and received the honor of being proclaimed Knight just like any other, but however due to various circumstances have fallen to more outer ring of service. This can happen when there is no liege lord who has need for a new Knight in their service. After all a Knight is an expense on whoever's budget they are sworn to serve; the liege a Knight serves is responsible for a certain degree of support and funding, if not also a home. The loss of lands through destruction, or one's liege being slain can also lead to this sort of floating lifestyle. A Knight of this status generally wanders the lands with limited authority, looking to serve where he can even if for a short time before moving on. These individuals are no less honored, but they do carry less weight in authority. In the young growing kingdom of Vandlar however, these circumstances are few and far between, and when they do occur they are rarely prolonged.

Knights exist in three tiers, from most powerful, to least they are the Royal, Ducal, and Baronial Knights. Most Knights start as Baronial Knights and progress from there, though some do manage to fall first into the service of a duke's noble Household, or the King's more rarely still. More common is it for a Baron to speak well of his knights, and for the Baron's Ducal liege to elevate a Knight from a Baron's household to his own. This is a benefit to both parties, the duke's own house strengthens, and the Baron's Knight is simultaneously giving his Barony greater prestige in the Duke's court. Knights can hold additional minor ranks within the holdings of whatever liege they serve. These ranks vary in nature and authority, ranging from captains of castle guards, field masters in charge of training, holding military ranks over various armies the Kingdom can field in

both magical and martial divisions. Not all a Knight's extended services and position are combative in nature. Knights can adopt ranks in the Royal College of Auditors, serve as wizened advisors, and others as diplomats who win victories for their liege in the courts of nobles rather than on the battlefield. Some Knights are even granted their own Lordships, giving them holdings of their own. A Baron or Duke must always see fit and approve of such, because granting lordship cements that Knight quite strongly to one region.

Being a Knight comes with no inherent elevation of that Knight's family. A Knight exists as a noble by themselves, and while their sons and daughters may have more doors into the political world of Vandlar, they are granted no additional rights and privileges than a regular citizen.

Knights of the Crown-Royal Knights of the Crown are those who the King himself has personally selected to serve him. The majority of their responsibility is to serve as the King's guard and attend to his needs. They are the smallest of the ranks in number, but are some of the King's most trusted allies, Generals and advisors. In times of war the King may send one of these Knights with a writ granting them authority to seize control of Ducal and Baronial forces.

While not typically out policing the realm, when sent force they command some of the greatest authority in bringing criminals to justice, having the legal authority to seize any they see fit, regardless of rank and title.

Ducal Knights-Ducal Knights are members of the Duke's house and court. Most are selected from the finest of Knights in service to the duke's Barons. These Knights are not as often tied to a specific town or region, but rather remain mobile, going where their Duke deems their services are needed.

A Ducal Knight can arrest and detain any commoner found accused of crimes against the Kingdom. However the Knight must bring any they detain before the local Magistrate unless instructed otherwise by the Duke.

To detain a Baronial Knight, only one Ducal Knight is required, however in this instance the Knight must be brought before the Baron he serves and the Duke contacted.

To detain a Knight of the Crown, two Ducal Knights are required. The detained Knight of the Crown will then be brought directly to the King for trial and judgment.

To detain a Lord or fellow Ducal Knight, two Ducal Knights must be present, or a Ducal Knight and two Baronial Knights. Trials for Lords and Ducal Knights are most commonly going to be judged by the Duke himself and the regional Baron where Lords are concerned.

To detain a Baron, three Ducal Knights must be present. These trials must be handled by the Duke of that region and the King.

These authorities are general rules, writs and extra authority can be granted by the Knight's Ducal Liege.

Baronial Knights-Baronial Knights are in service to a specific Baron's house. Typically the Baron will spread these knights out across their province, sending them to serve various Lords in a multitude of functions. Be it simple enforcement of the laws, to lead a local militia garrison, or serve as an advisor to the lord. The extent of services a Knight is deemed fit to provide will be entirely dependent on the skills of the Knight themselves and the needs of their Baron liege.

Baronial Knights act just as Ducal Knights do in the function of arresting commoners.

Baronial Knights must be five in number to detain a Knight of the Crown. As with Ducal Knights, these detained members of the King's court must be returned to the King immediately.

To detain a Ducal Knight or Lord, four Baronial Knights must be present. Trials will be overseen by the appropriate Baron, or Duke where his own Knights are concerned.

Two Baronial Knights are required to arrest a fellow Baronial Knight. Judgment will rest on the shoulders of the Baron the Knight belonged to.

To detain a Baron, six Baronial Knights are required. The Baron will be brought immediately to the Duke for trial.

These authorities are general rules, writs and extra authority can be granted by the Knight's Baronial Liege.

Lords and Ladies

Lords are minor nobles whose authority and power is fairly limited to the outpost, town, city, or whatever settlement they hold their Lordship over. Within that settlement they hold a great deal of individual power as the head of policies, laws, and of course as the acting magistrate.

The title of Lord can be earned with little more than coin, though some degree of a fair reputation and good standing with the Baron of the region you wish to buy your settlement in helps. Not all Lords are those who buy their way into the prestige, some are simply granted the honor by Barons, Dukes, and the King himself the size of settlements

a Lord may reign over is varied, but the general rule of thumb is that they at least have a population of a hundred commoners, be it in the settlement itself or in farmlands gathered around.

While a Lord holds a great deal of authority in their own land it is permissible for a Lord to divide up responsibilities and establish a small ruling house of his own. In this way a Lord can even pass on the job of Magistrate to another. Like with many things in the noble realm however, if one of the Lord's subjects fails miserably at a given job, it may very well fall on the head of the person who gave him the power in the first place. For this reason there remain many Lords who keep all the major powers and responsibilities themselves. Lords can generally be considered as part of a Baron or Duke's house, depending on the conditions of the terms they earned their Lordship. The Baron or Duke above them is responsible for keeping an eye on all Lords and Ladies in their court, being sure to swiftly cancel any laws that go against the Kingdom that a Lord or Lady may have put in place in whatever settlement they rule over.

Lords and Ladies are most properly addressed as "My Lord," or "My Lady." It is also customary for a knee to be taken, but not all Lords expect such treatment and make no demands of it. These courtesies are often extended to the family of the Lord in charge as well, his wife and children regarded and respected as nobles. It should be noted though that they hold no authority as such, and the only authorities they can have are those within the Lord's rights to grant. For instance, a Lord might make his son, a skilled swordsman, into the Captain of his garrison, or he may place his brilliant daughter in charge of dealing with Commoners and their problems brought to the family. Should the Lord or Lady in rule pass away however, it is not guaranteed that any of the family will be allowed to step into their shoes, be it offspring or spouse. In some cases though the Baron or Duke will see fit to pass the Lordship on to the spouse of the deceased or his children, which presents a semblance of lineage that is not often disliked by the common folk who have already grown accustomed to the family in charge.

Lordships boil down to being landowners who have commoners living in their owned property. Because of this they do not have all the powers of Knights, and can in fact only arrest commoners. Even in this regard they rely heavily on Knights to be sent to their aid to represent more political power, especially in cases where they may be having conflict with neighboring lords, or feel threatened by their neighbors own Knights. A Knight is dedicated to the Codes of Chivalry, a Lord is not and they are only expected to uphold and represent the laws of the Kingdom in a fair way, not to fight evils win great battles and thwart chaos where ever it may rise. This is not to say some Lords don't do all these things, but in general they are supposed to expand their influence through the growth of the settlement they control, and this can lead into conflicts with their neighbors be it intentional or not. If a Knight ever becomes a Lord, and some often do, or a Lord a Knight, which is less common, then that person must find it in them to fulfill both responsibilities with equal care and effort.

Barons and Baronesses

Barons are powerful nobles who serve one of the Kingdom's two dukes. They oversee large territories of the Kingdom. It is their personal responsibility to ensure the safety and progress of all who inhabit their region of power, aiding them in any way they can while protecting them from all external threats. They are also the first in line to deal with many of the other races that inhabit the continent the Kingdom is founded on. Such races as Elves, Barbarians, Mystic Wood elves, and many others who share the same space with the King's people but do not swear fealty to the crown may exist inside a Barony but politically have nothing to do with it. If such a Realm of another race exists within the borders of a Baron's province it is their duty to maintain good relations, keep the peace, and respect the realms of their neighbors.

A Baron's household is vast, and how it is organized is largely up to the Barons themselves. All Barons divide a great number of tasks to members of their own house's court. Be they Lords, Ladies, Knights, their own family, or even commoners and merchants who have proved apt and able at the functions needing to be filled. This Baronial household bears the burden of the entire Barony's well being. It must ensure the lands are protected, the Lords are ruling fairly, and the Knights are acting in the best interests of those they protect.

One can earn the title of Baron through outstanding and dedicated service to the Kingdom, and are usually pulled from the ranks of Ducal and Baronial Knights as well as proven Lords and Ladies. Having friends in high places is of course of great value in political escalation but the paths to rise from bottom to the top exist. If a Baron falls to continue to serve the Kingdom in the extraordinary fashion that earned him in the position in the first place, it takes but an agreement between the Baron's Duke and King to see the Baron's house replaced by another.

Barons are the largest authority in their own Barony. They hold power to make laws that do not contradict those of the Kingdom, and can hold their Lords and Ladies accountable to uphold these laws as they see fit. It is proper to address a Baron as "Your Excellence" while also customary to kneel; many nobles in the Kingdom do not demand such. The family of a Baron is extended proper respects as well, the spouse often being referred to with equal title to the Baron, or at the very least referred to as Lord or Lady. The respectful address of "My Lord," and "My Lady," is also extended to the children of the Baron as often the Baron offers estates to their close kin, such as cousins, uncles, in laws, etc.

Dukes and Duchesses

In Vandlar there exist two Duchies. The Duke's who rule them are appointed directly by the King himself. Large are the realms that the Dukes are responsible for governing, each with several Baronies. The Duke has the authority to place laws down for all their Baron's to adhere to, and in turn all the Lords within those Baronies. Only the members of the Royal family can overturn any decisions made by a Duke which is rarely

needed given the amount of trust and prestige that must be had for anyone given such a high appointment of nobility.

The Duke's household and management are styled very similarly to that of a Baron's as described above. They make laws, work with the nobles under them, and over all are set to forward the goals of the King and the well being of the Kingdom. Their families are regarded much in the same respects as a Baron's would be and they too can appoint Lords, Knights and even commoners to various tasks, functions, and places of honor. Dukes are hand picked by the King, and as there are only two at a time, such can be hard for any to fathom achieving. However the titles of duke and duchess have not remained through the Kingdom's history in one family or another, so there always exists the chance for a great Baron or other esteemed noble to rise to the position.

A Duke or duchess is properly addressed as "Your Grace," and kneeling is very customary and expected in most situations. In most cases the spouse of a Duke or Duchess will be regarded quite the same, and all their children addressed as Lords and Ladies out of respect in much the same way a Baron's family is treated.

The Royal Family

At the head of the royal family is the King, or Queen. No higher a position in the hierarchy of the kingdom can be achieved by any in the Kingdom's entirety. The Royal family has not yet changed hands, and is one of few examples within the Kingdom's politics of title and rank being passed down to the next of kin. The Royal seat resides in Porthaven, and from here the King governs the lands. While this royal bloodline remains unbroken to present day, during the formation of the Kingdom it was never stated that it could not pass hands to another. All the same there has never been cause for such, and the Kingdom has prospered and progressed under the rule of the Mordacus' bloodline to present day.

The Royal house is a far more complex organization than that of Ducal or Baronial houses. Offices of high authority exist in many functions, near noble titles in their own right with the power they are allotted and the amount of power they wield over the Kingdom's society, military, economy, and magical practices alike. The level of complicated politics this political body manages across the kingdom makes it easily five times larger than the typical Ducal house, and far more than that of a Baronial house body.

The Royal family exists as the most powerful individuals in the Kingdom. Their signature on any writ or document makes it near infallible to the scrutiny of any other individual or body of people. While some have come to fear any holding such power, most rather see it as an authority well earned from the trials of history, and respect the powers granted to the original King during the Kingdom's formation. The common person and even many nobles do not even typically deal with the King and his family, and rarely need deal with nobles beyond that of their local Baron. As such the King

stands mostly to ensure the well being of the Kingdom and does not actively force his hand over the worthy Dukes and Barons of the land. One of the largest reservations of power that the King holds over the land itself is the ability to put Principalities in effect. These would be divisions in the Kingdom where the Kings offspring, Prince and Princess alike would take governorship over several Baronies or perhaps even several Duchies if the Prince chose to break his land up further. This has however yet to occur.

The proper way to greet members of the Royal Family, be they King, Queen, Prince, or Princess is to kneel. The King and Queen most often should be addressed as “Your Majesty,” while Prince and Princesses should be addressed as, “Your Highness.” Around these simple formalities exist over a hundred years of developed decorum and proper courtly behavior. This alters as time moves on, and often lesser more informal versions of such courtly behavior end up trickling down into the Ducal and Baronial houses, though these trends change more by local custom, culture, and region the further you travel from Porthaven.

Houses, Titles of Office, Guilds, and miscellaneous organizations

The King’s House - The King’s house consists of the Royal Family, the King’s advisors and the King’s Knights. The King has three main advisors who aid him in the running of the Kingdom. These advisors also have assistants under them who are not within the King’s house. They are as follows:

Lord High Wizard - who handles any and all magical affairs as they relate to the kingdom.

Lord High Marshall - who is in charge of military affairs, and is the King’s primary field commander.

Lord High Steward - who is in charge of domestic and foreign matters and works with the Auditors of the Kingdom.

A Duke’s/Dutches House - This is composed of the Ducal Knights, Lords, and their Squires, and any commoners that the count desires. Each member of the Dukes House will wear the colors associated with their liege.

A Baron’s/Baroness House – This is composed of the Baron’s Knights, Squires, Lords, and any commoner advisors the baron desires. Each member of a Baronial house will wear the colors associated with their liege.

A Lord’s/Ladies’ House- Generally these houses are small and less formal, and their members more so incorporated into the house of the Duke or Baron that they serve. All

the same it stands to be mentioned for they are governing body of their own settlement, often including Knights sent to aid them and any squires that may be training under those Knights.

Knightly Orders - There exists many Orders of Knights all across the continent of Vandlar. These groups are political and moral in what they represent in most cases and their membership may span Knights of both Duchies and many Baronies. Rather than rallying under a common noble, they instead rally under common ideals. Some of these Orders live to thwart the threat of undead, making efforts in the Courts and in the field to drive out living-dead abominations and the necromancers who create them. Barons and Dukes alike do often see the need to prohibit the Knights of their houses from joining these orders, they provide in great quantity additional support and resources to various problems across the continent. On the political end some view these orders as a threat however, as many move for favor with the courts and the commoners, moving to get a great Knight in their ranks look at for the next Baron,, and even after some of these men and women earn their Barony, they do not fall out of touch with the Knightly orders that helped elevate them to such.

Common Orders - These are groups with stated objectives that have pledged to aid all the nobles of the land, not one single noble. They are issued a charter by the Kingdom and are expected to join the Kingdom's Guilds and aid local nobles in the lands where they travel. In return, the Kingdom will aid the Order in fulfilling its stated objectives with advice and information, when available. Nobles may never be members of an Order, as this would conflict with their noble duties. Commoner Orders generally focus on a specific trade, politics, and/or common goals.

Guilds – Within the Kingdom there exists many guilds. Organizations of people that work directly with the Kingdom better life for the citizens in one way or another. The range of charters a guild can be issued and the services they provide can be many. Most common guilds are ones representing one of the two schools of magic. Earth or Healer guilds generally provide magical services in the way of performing resurrections, tending the sick, healing the injured, and any other general services it can provide to better the well being of the area their guild serves. Celestial guilds generally provide services in magical studies, item identification, and magical warding and safeguard of commoners in times of strife. Still there are many others such as Historians guilds, Mercenary guilds, crafting guilds of various natures just to name a few.

Ambassadors – The continent of Vandlar is home to many races, several of which exist in their own formal societies or even a more nomadic existence across the land. The Kingdom, while young and powerful does take measure to recognize and do well by the races that never officially became part of the Kingdom. While races of all kinds can be found within the fold of the feudal hierarchy, those who choose not be are respected none the less. The title of Ambassador can be granted by Barons, Dukes, and Kings alike, though the area the Ambassador will be recognized is sometime limited to the zone of influence in which the one that granted them the title has. These ambassadors will be given writs by the Noble, and will often be allowed special rights and privileges while

visiting settlements of the Kingdom. Such has been a careful tradition as bonds of trust still grow between the Kingdom and the longer living nations and societies. So far such has been met with some degree of success in keeping the peace and forming friendships.

Embrook Academy- Embrook stands as the most noteworthy Academy of magical studies within the Kingdom. Here many of the magically talented citizens, both noble and commoner alike come to learn the arts of magic. Within the College of magic there is a Hierarchy of its own, and many choose to take life long careers in the study and furthering of magical power the Kingdom possess. This facility was largely founded by Stone Elves and to this day attempts to rise to the fame and bounty of Knowledge possessed by the facilities of Zarden.

College of Auditors- The Auditors are an organization created by decree of the King and under the immediate command of the Royal Auditor Sheira Emilsin. The Senate of the Auditors is an immense, austere building located close to the Royal Palace with business, trade and work happening at all hours of the night. The Auditors work closely with the Seneschal and the Treasury ensuring that the tariffs, taxes and mercantile activities of the entire Kingdom are in accordance with the Laws and Decrees of the King.

Auditors of various ranks serve the many Nobles, Cities and Merchant Houses of Vandlar. The College of Auditors maintains the records of taxation and trade activities for their charges and compiles their archives in the Senate. Auditors are empowered to grant Merchant Licenses to applicants and issue Writs of Trade- documents which establish the value of trade goods and offer a measure of insurance and protection for those goods listed on the Writ. Many merchants rely on these Writs to ensure the quality and price of goods both sold and purchased and discerning customers making a large purchase will often ask for the Writ which accompanies the sale to take to the Auditors for their own assessment and re-issuance.