

Chivalry For Commoners

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County Knight of Dragonshire

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Part One: The Code of Chivalry

Thou shalt respect the weak, and thou shalt constitute thyself the defender of them.

Most persons, commoner and noble do work which is helpful to society, whether they be slaying monsters, or staying behind to heal the warriors who do, whether they are protecting our borders, or staying home to make weapons for those who do. One must protect the weak from physical or verbal attack. All persons are deserving of respect until they have earned your disrespect, and even then, all should receive common courtesy.

Thou shalt love the country in which thou hast sworn fealty.

Nobles are in the service of the land, and of the people of the land. Nobles are expected to protect the integrity of their respective noble court. While we must respect those of other lands, and may be called upon to defend them in times of need, one must love their own land first, and ensure the safety of their own country before that of others. It would be inappropriate to send all of one's troops to defend a neighboring land, leaving none to defend your own. It is inappropriate to send food to another land, if people were starving in your own. The rest of the Code of Chivalry prevents this from being taken to excess.

Thou shalt not recoil before thine enemy.

One must not hesitate to defend their lands. This does not mean rushing into battle without a plan. It would be a violation of this code to do absolutely nothing to stop your enemy. When faced with attack, it shows more respect for this law, and for your lands, to assemble forces and a plan and seek to effectively defeat the enemy rather than to rush in and face certain defeat.

Thou shalt make war against evil without cessation.

Evil is not to be tolerated. Doing things for the greater good is not synonymous with choosing the lesser of two evils. To show tolerance to the smallest of evils, will invite other evils. Nobles are to behave in a manner that is above reproach at all times, and in all places.

Thou shalt scrupulously perform thy noble duties be they not contrary to the laws of the land.

While squires, as commoners, may not, in general, question the order of a noble, nobles are responsible for their actions. I will now quote an article written by Baron Vandal Ravensblood of Capulus:

“Recent events have made obvious the need to clarify a point of law concerning the duty of nobles, and the degree to which one must follow the orders of one’s liege. The example given in the school of chivalry is this: Suppose your Baron were to order you to kill the Duke? What would you do? The answer traditionally considered most correct is that you should obey your immediate liege, and kill the Duke, and then IMMEDIATELY demand an explanation - preferably in time for a life spell to be administered should the explanation prove unsatisfactory. This hypothetical situation has sadly been extrapolated by unscrupulous nobles and squires to allow them to think that they can follow any treasonous or unlawful order issued, and not be held accountable for crime. Let me assure you that this is not the case.

One should always follow the orders of one’s liege without reservation when time is of the essence - on the field of battle, or when the order is to be acted upon immediately. It is essential that there be trust in a relationship between Vassal and Lord. Remember however that one of the benefits of nobility is that a noble may demand an explanation from a superior, and he or she may expect an answer. Under certain circumstances it may in fact be your duty to demand such an explanation. These circumstances would be any time an order is given which appears to be treasonous or unlawful. Further if it is known that your liege is suffering under the effects of enslavement or other form of charm, you have no duty whatsoever to follow orders which you believe are the product of the charm. If dishonorable orders are given, should the circumstances allow, you must demand an explanation. If the explanation is unsatisfactory, it is your duty to disobey and report your Liege to his or her superior. If you have not done so, but had the opportunity to, it is you who will be held

responsible, as well as your liege. Remember, your oath is not only to your immediate superior, but also to his or her superiors, on up to- at the present time, Princess Andrea, from whom all rights originate. Any oaths of nobility which are purely personal to the Baron (ess), Count (ess), or Duke (Duchess) who issues them are invalid. A noble's oath should not only be to his immediate liege, but should also include an obligation to his or her liege's superiors, from whom their right to confer nobility originates. So, if you are sitting in a council and treasonous acts are planned, you should demand an explanation. If acts are ordered on the field which are unlawful, you must immediately demand an explanation when the opportunity presents itself. If in either case the explanation is unsatisfactory, it is your duty to report your liege, and if acts have already been committed by yourself or by others, you must turn yourself in for justice or mercy. This clarification has been approved by Princess Andrea, Duke Andros, and Duchess Alexa, and is to be considered authoritative and lawfully accurate. Ignorance will not be a defense. Hopefully this will prevent a lot of unnecessary executions."

Raven's Herald - Jan '94

Author's note: as of the writing of the second edition, Prince Kevynn Blackfox is the current Prince of Northmarch, and Joseph Saxony, the current King of Evendarr.

Noble title is not a license to commit crimes, nor is the management of lands to be used solely for personal gain.

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

A noble must never lie. Not even to protect the most important secret. Silence is acceptable. Lies are not. Do not swear an oath to protect someone if you cannot. Do not swear fealty to someone if you cannot follow his or her orders. If you swear an oath to a Liche, you are bound by that oath. You may be in violation of your oath to make war against evil if you keep that oath and you will be in violation of this part of The Code if you break your oath. It is best to avoid making such promises. Swear only to those that you trust, and have faith in.

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

A noble's generosity is not limited to money. Nobles should be generous with their time and energy, their knowledge, and their life. A noble should be willing to lay down his or her life for the land, its people, or its liege. Thou shalt be everywhere and always the champion of the right and the good against injustice and evil. To many people this is the most embracing part of The Code. I have however, heard many people complain that one cannot always fight against evil. You must uphold The Code, even when no one is looking. You must behave in a chivalrous manner even in foreign lands. For example, if you go to the Northlands you may not cast Necromancy there.

The following are two local additions to The Code. They are not part of the accepted Evendarrian Code, but are respected in Ravenholt.

Thou shalt be courteous.

Most people are deserving of respect. Those few that have earned your disrespect are still deserving of basic courtesy. Being vindictive and rude is unbecoming of a noble.

Thou shalt be humble.

Arrogance is unbecoming of a noble.

Part Two: The Laws of Ravenholt

Dispensing Justice

Any noble within his or her jurisdiction is duty bound to address the matter of common law, and make judgements concerning the breaking of laws. It is the noble's option to turn matters of common law over to the local magistrate. Nobles may in fact be asked to do so in certain locations such as Ravenholt City, where it is expected that all matters of common law will be handled by the Lord Magistrate. Upon completion of any trial, a brief report must be submitted to the Ducal scribe (at this time, Quin Tarmeger) so that repeat offenders are exposed and so that all nobles may have access to these reports.

The following is a list of crimes within the Duchy of Ravenholt. Mitigating circumstances should be considered by the judge in each case, and acted upon as harshly or as leniently as the judge or court may see fit.

Anyone attempting to commit a crime should be tried as if the crime were actually committed.

All are subject to the laws, but only citizens and recognized visitors are protected by them. For example: A lizardman is considered an invader. The citizen who repels him is not guilty of a crime. You may not be arrested for doing the following to an invader, a monster or their property:

Arson, Assault, Theft, Murder, Casting/using Charm or Dominate, etc. (Euphoria is always illegal.)

You will be arrested for commission of the following crimes even against monsters or invaders:

Kidnapping, Necromancy, Pretending to Noble Title, (You may not claim to be a king in front of the goblins) and Slavery. (Forced servitude) (No one may own slaves in Ravenholt, monster or not.

These are the two classes of crimes; Low crimes and High crimes.

Low Crimes are punishable by fines, incarceration, or by confiscation of possessions. The circumstances should be considered when determining the exact punishment. Multiple or repeat offenses may be punishable by death. D

Definitions for Low Crimes.

Arson

The destruction of another's property with fire.

Assault

Placing someone in fear of harm, seriously threatening another person, or causing harm to a person or to their property.

Bribery

Obtaining favors, money or other property by force, intimidation, or by illegal means.

Conspiracy

Planning to commit a crime, aiding a criminal or obstructing the investigation of a crime is conspiracy. In matters involving nobility, this will be considered treason. In matters involving Undead, this will be considered Necromancy.

Contempt

Willful disrespect of a noble or public official, or the willful disobedience of an order given by them. Please know that Prince Kevynn Blackfox has passed a law making it mandatory that all nobles be addressed by their proper titles.

Forgery

Production or planting of false documents or money for the purpose of deceit.

Theft

Stealing or destruction of another's goods by any means. Tax evasion is considered theft.

Definitions for High Crimes.

High Crimes are punishable by confiscation of goods and by death. Obliteration may be ordered for repeat or multiple offenders. Again circumstances should be considered when judging the severity of punishment.

Kidnapping

Taking and constraining a person with unlawful force.

Murder

Taking another person's life, even if a life spell is administered.

Necromancy

Casting of a necromantic spell or ritual is necromancy, as is the knowing creation or possession of any necromantic item (Any item that was created through the use of necromancy, or produces a necromantic effect.) or conspiring with undead.

A common example given in the school of chivalry is this:

“Your liege orders you to cast necromancy. What do you do?”

While on the field of battle, killing is often necessary. I assure you that necromancy is not. You do not have five minutes to undo this criminal act. Necromancy is a crime against our very existence. As a spell caster myself, I was often concerned about how I would handle this situation. After asking both my liege, and my former liege, I received the same answer in both cases. I was instructed to disobey the order, and confine them and have them identified. I could not serve any liege who would at any time require me to commit this particular crime. Any earth caster would be wise to clarify this with their liege, and then decide if they can indeed swear an oath to them.

Another common example is this:

“Suppose that necromancy were the only way to save your liege’s life?” I assure you that necromancy is never the only way, and is never a sure success in battle.

Pretending to Noble Title

A commoner who seeks to convince another that he or she has a noble title is guilty of this crime.

Slavery

Submitting another to dominating force against their will, or the buying or selling of another to enforce servitude. This can be done through the use of charm, dominate, enslavement, euphoria, love poisons, or by the use of physical or implied threats.

Treason

Attempting to overthrow the lawful government of the land by means of force, or trickery. This crime may be punishable by death, and by confiscation of all worldly goods. In the matter of High Treason, the attempt to overthrow the Duchy, Principality, or Monarchy, obliteration is mandated, and may be to the final death. Banishment after obliteration is also an option.

Part Three: Honor Combat

Honor Combat may occur when a noble feels themselves to be the victim of a significant insult. This noble will issue a challenge to the offending party. Honor Combat includes that challenge, the naming of terms, the contest itself, and the consequences.

The challenge is made by the noble who has been insulted. The challenge may be made directly, or by the challenger's squire or other representative to a noble of equal or of lesser rank. If a noble wishes to challenge a higher ranking noble, he or she must have a sponsor of equal or of higher rank to the person challenged, to issue the challenge on their behalf. The sponsor need not believe that the challenger is correct, only that the issue has merit.

Nobles should not challenge commoners, but rather should bring them up on charges of contempt or treason. If a commoner were to challenge a noble, the combat may be refused with no loss of honor to the noble.

The terms are named by the person who is challenged. Terms include method of combat, and the terms of that combat ending. Combat maybe with blades, other physical weapons, spells, poisons, or even nonviolent means such as a road race, or a game of chess. Ending the battle may be by first blood, loss of consciousness, death, checkmate or other acceptable terms dependant upon the type of combat chosen.

Some may disagree and state that nonviolent means are inappropriate. I ask you to consider the following situation. You are insulted by someone who claims that you are of low intelligence. Does combat or chess best prove that their claim is false?

The consequences are claimed by the victor after the battle and may include apology, loss of title, fine, or death. It is the challenged or the challenger who pays the consequences. A

champion if involved does not pay. If a fight is to the death, the champion must be lified, and their representee killed instead.

Champions may be named for two reasons. 1) Inability to meet the terms chosen, or 2) Infirmity. A champion must be a noble of equal or lesser rank to the noble for whom they will fight. Commoners and squires are not allowed to be champions. A champion will fight to defend the honor of the noble who has named them. If you ever must name a champion, remember that they are fighting on your behalf. It is unchivalrous to precede their name with phrases such as, "For lack of a better choice, I choose.."

If the parties can not agree on terms, a noble of higher rank, who holds both parties in their chain of command, may decide the terms. This settlement may include choice of terms, allowance of champions, or indeed a decision to disallow the combat altogether, and issue a rebuke to either or both parties. Either combatant may ask to have the dispute overseen by a third party voluntarily without the need for an intervention.

The parties must agree on a mediator of noble rank who will oversee the combat... The noble chosen must be sure that both parties will live up to the terms, and behave honorably. The mediator is also the referee of the combat itself.

Part Four: Proper Address

All nobles, squires, and other commoners need to be familiar with the acceptable forms of address.

King/Queen - Your Majesty or Your Royal Majesty

Crown Prince/Princess - Your Royal Highness

Prince/Princess - Your Highness

Duke/Duchess – Your Grace or My Liege

Count/Countess –Your Excellency or My Lord/Lady Count(ess) or My Liege

Baron/Baroness – Your Eminence or My Lord/Lady Baron(ess) or My Liege

Viscount/Viscountess – Your Excellency or My Lord/Lady Viscount(ess) or My Liege

Lord/Lady –Your Lordship/Ladyship

Lord Seneschal – My Lord/Lady Seneschal

Magistrate – My Lord/Lady Magistrate

Bannerette – Good Sir/Dame Knight

Knight – Sir/Dame ____

Squires - are commoners and should be addressed as Squire ____

Merchants - M'Lord/M'Lady

Other commoners - Goodman/Goodwife

This is part of the Zine Library for the NERO Live Action Roleplaying game. For more details about this game please check out Nero International at nerolarp.com and the local POLAR chapter at polarlarp.com.

If you know anyone that wants a copy of this send an email to the POLAR staff at zines@polarlarp.org and we will ship one out for you!

The contents of this document are available to characters in the game world of Tyrra and can be known by your NERO character if it would make sense for them to have read this document.

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