

Castle Barrack

THE FOREVER WINTER

player's
guide

SKOTOS

Castle Marrach

THE FOREVER WINTER

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The Castle is a live and vibrant place. This guide can only record the state of affairs at the time the guide was written.

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A

distant mountain peak thrusts upward against the cold, gray sky. Overhead, clouds churn and seethe, spewing forth flurries of snow and jagged spears of lightning. Swirling mists cloak the frost-bound slopes of the mountain, hiding from view whatever may lie below.

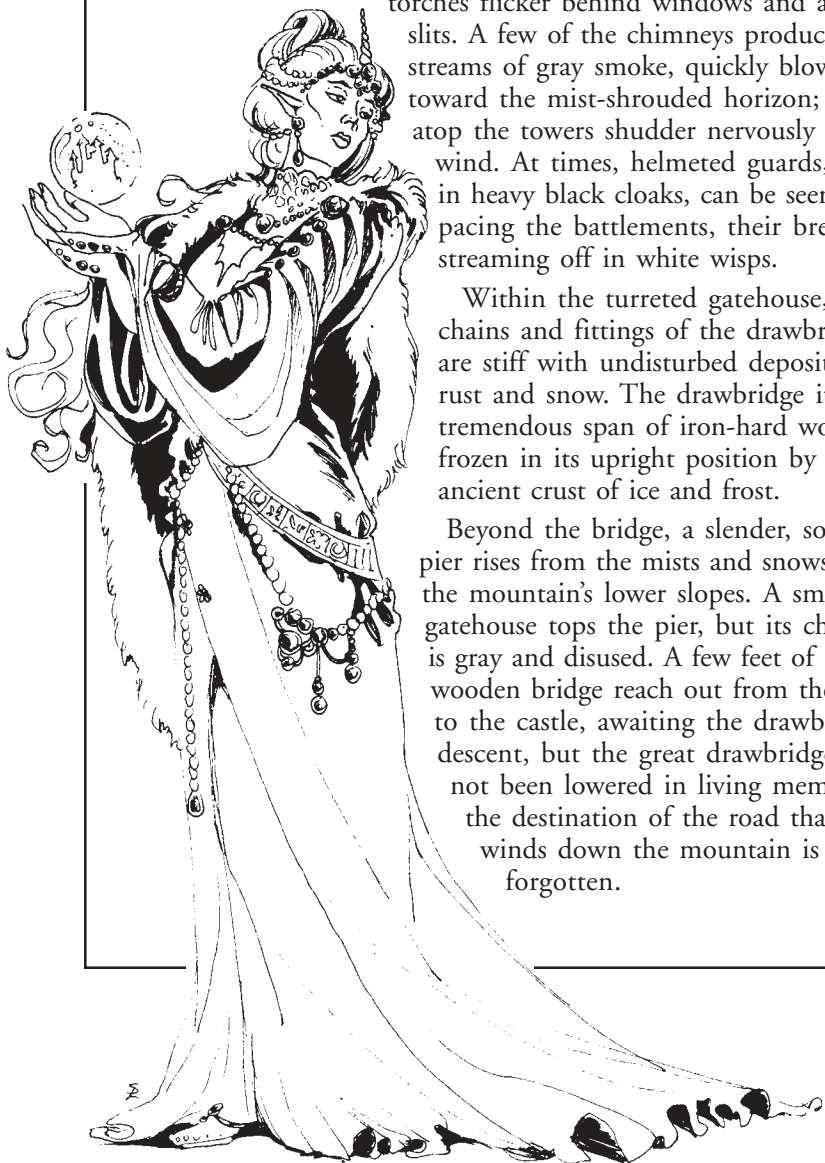
At the very pinnacle of this titanic pile of rock and ice rests an imposing edifice of cold, gray stone — Castle Marrach.

The lowest levels of the fortress seem to emerge from the bones of the mountain itself, sheer walls of stone that sweep upward as plinths, buttresses, and arches to an elevation of a hundred feet or more above the native rock. As the structure rises higher and higher, balconies, galleries, and casements give variety to its shape. Dozens of towers crown the heights, rising amidst a riot of staggered rooflines, dormer windows, heavy chimneystacks, weathervanes, and steeply peaked gables.

Snow and ice crust the battlements; torches flicker behind windows and arrow slits. A few of the chimneys produce thin streams of gray smoke, quickly blown toward the mist-shrouded horizon; flags atop the towers shudder nervously in the wind. At times, helmeted guards, clad in heavy black cloaks, can be seen pacing the battlements, their breath streaming off in white wisps.

Within the turreted gatehouse, the chains and fittings of the drawbridge are stiff with undisturbed deposits of rust and snow. The drawbridge itself, a tremendous span of iron-hard wood, is frozen in its upright position by an ancient crust of ice and frost.

Beyond the bridge, a slender, solitary pier rises from the mists and snows of the mountain's lower slopes. A small gatehouse tops the pier, but its chimney is gray and disused. A few feet of wooden bridge reach out from the pier to the castle, awaiting the drawbridge's descent, but the great drawbridge has not been lowered in living memory; the destination of the road that winds down the mountain is long forgotten.



THE CASTLE MARRACH

As a guest of Castle Marrach, you arrive mysteriously, with little memory of your past, or how you came to be in this place. The Castle is a vast maze, with hundreds upon hundreds of rooms, twisting corridors, spiraling stairways, and shadowed alcoves. The Castle's inhabitants move through its labyrinthine ways, shrouded in veils of secrecy and intrigue. Servants pass you in the hall, murmuring in some unrecognizable language. Guards refuse you access to certain rooms. Fellow Guests pass rumors of spies who disappear from chambers as if made of vapor, and of unearthly sounds that drift from unexplored sections of the Castle.

You are one of the Newly Awakened, one of the Guests recently come to the Castle Marrach, by methods unknown. For years, perhaps decades, the stone halls were nearly silent — and dust gathered in the less-used corridors like a shroud — but now there are New Awakenings in Castle Marrach, and the Queen will only say, "There is a greater purpose."

In this ancient fortress you will dance, scheme, gamble, skulk, woo, and fight duels; take part in balls, feasts, and mysterious rituals; and court the Favour of the nobles of the castle, for with Favour comes power and prestige. Knowledge and Favour are the currency of Castle society — knowledge of plots, of treachery, and of secrets; and Favour that grants the authority to act in the nobles' names.

The mysteries of Marrach — the cause of the eternal clouds and snow around the Castle; the meaning of the strange festivals conducted at odd intervals; the true identities of the Castle's residents; and the reason for their presence in this isolated place — are all subjects of covert discussion by the Newly Awakened.

These questions and many more will be answered as the story of Castle Marrach is told.

A Castle Split in Twain

When you awaken you find yourself in a Guest Room, one of the personal chambers created for the Newly Awakened by the Queen. Your memories of dark corridors and dank rooms far beneath the Castle will quickly fade.

The Guest Rooms are located on the second floor of the Outer Bailey — the western half of the Castle. You will find your access to the Inner Bailey — where the Queen’s Court hold sway — is barred. But the Outer Bailey has a society all its own.

The Outer Bailey is the darker side of the Castle. Honor and chivalry are bywords here, but they are ignored by some who hope to twist the denizens of the Outer Bailey to their own purposes. Watchmen patrol the halls; duelists offer challenges over matters of honor; battle guild members revel in the joy of combat; poets offer praise for the Queen, or sometimes criticism; and chroniclers note all that is done. The Lord Chamberlain Launfal is the ultimate authority in the Outer Bailey, supported by the strong arm of the Winter Watch.

In contrast, the Inner Bailey is a place of light and civility. Honor and chivalry are not just bywords here, but the rules of the land. Nobles dance and dine through the nights under the benign guidance of the beloved Queen Vivienne. Members of the Royal Collegium speak of culture and education; the Knights of Stone and Petal politely compete for ascendance; the Company of Players offers dramas for the Queen’s personal entertainment; the court hangs upon the words of its most noble members. It is the Queen who rules in the Inner Bailey, along with her consort, the Lord Chancellor Boreas.

Some speak of a third world within Castle Marrach, hidden deep beneath the corridors known to most. It is a world of darkness and deceit, where necromantic magics are practiced, where secret societies meet in silence, where thieves and spies skulk and whisper of mysteries.

A poet in the Castle once wrote:

*The Outer Bailey is the True World,
A world as flawed and imperfect,
A world as amazing and terrifying,
As any of our human souls.*

*Above us rises the Inner Bailey,
A realm of faerie tales reborn,
A realm of dreams given life,
A true reflection of our Wintry Queen.*

*Below us there lies,
Only nightmare.*

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A Vision of the Queen

But how can all of this compare
To She who entered then ...
When first we saw Her Majesty,
Beloved Queen Vivienne?

She entered as if trailed by stars,
Pale like the winter moon,
And suddenly a silence reigned ...
Musicians stopped their tune.

So tranquilly She walked the room
Up to Her marble throne.
Lord Boreas was by Her side ...
So brilliantly they shone!

Then lovingly She spoke to us.
Her voice was calm and clear.
She told us of Her care for us,
That each of us is dear.

“There is a greater purpose to
Your presence here,” quoth She.
And it will be important when
We learn what it may be.

The role that destin plots for us,
She told us in that hall,
Shall bring both succor and release
Somehow to one and all.

“We cherish each of you,” She said,
“...Ourselves at your avail.”
And peacefully She smiled at us,
So noble, lovely, pale.

Then gifts were offered, honors too,
A knighthood challenge set ...
At last there came a moment which
I know I’ll ne’er forget.

When formal speeches had been spoke,
She held the crowd in thrall.
She clasped Her hands together, said,
”There’s magic in us all.”

A faint light glimmered ‘tween Her
hands,
Raised up above Her head,
And then a graceful gesture showed
The truth of what She said.

A sudden silence, so complete
Fell soft upon the night ...
A musical vibrating sound,
Then white and brilliant light.

The mirrors hanging on the walls
Reflected not our eyes ...
No more we saw the stately hall,
But starry midnight skies.

— *From the Ballad of the Winter
Ball*
by the Bard Viola

An Ancient People

In recent years the Outer Bailey has filled with the Newly Awakened, people brought into the Castle with little memory of their past. They have created a new and lively society within Castle Marrach, and many have even moved on to the Inner Bailey itself. You are one of these Newly Awakened.

When the Newly Awakened first came into the Castle they found another people already here ... a people who speak of having lived in the Castle for decades or *centuries*. In the Outer Bailey these people were the leaders of ancient guilds, including: Evayne Harper of the Remembers, Corporal Petris of the Watch, Mark Trewayne of the Duelists, and Dame Oriana of the Gardening Society. In the Inner Bailey they are the nobles and those Favoured by the Queen, including: Jester Dagonet, Prince Bertram, Sir Alrik, and Sir Bragi.

Already, the Newly Awakened have made a profound impact upon the Castle, but the elders of the Castle still have plots and machinations all their own.

A Place of Opportunity

Though the elders of the Castle exert powerful influence, and though they are the heart of the oldest plots and machinations of Marrach, their numbers are few. At the time of the New Awakenings the Outer Bailey was sparsely populated, or so the rumor mongers say. There were but three duelists left. The chroniclers were all gone, their guild abandoned. The remains of the Watch found few citizens to police in the largely empty corridors.

Thus, you have awakened in Castle full of opportunity. Ancient guilds are still being rebuilt, their ranks filled by the Newly Awakened. The Court of Vivienne is being repopled, from the Pages of the Royal Seneschal to the Royal Equerries of the Queen. The Royal Household, the Royal Army, the Chancery, and the Treasury alike are all great hierarchies built upon nothing; new keystones are needed, lest they collapse upon themselves.

It is the Newly Awakened who must fill these vacancies. You can rise to greatness due to the opportunity offered by the propitious time of your awakening.

A World of Plots

The arrival of the Newly Awakened marks a new time in Castle Marrach—a time of new plots and fresh intrigues, of honors regained and animosities re-kindled. Since the Last Awakenings, a sense of lethargy had settled over the Castle, but now that has changed. Now, ancient gears have been set in motion and now everything will change.

When you first Awaken you will know little of the ancient rivalries that underlie Marrach. The Castle’s history and mythology will be as much of a mystery to you as your lost memories and the purpose of your presence in this cold, stone edifice. But, very soon you will learn. You must.

Castle Marrach is a place of stories, of plots, of faerie tales. You will investigate ancient and newly formed guilds alike, trying to find the one that best calls to your heart. You may seek a mentor from among the oldest of the Newly Awakened, or perhaps just befriend such peoples. Through these methods you will soon become enmeshed in the intrigues of the Castle.

You must find your own way amidst the plots of Marrach. You must follow your own heart. You cannot help but delve into the stories of Marrach, but you must also find the creative spark within yourself. You must invite others to share in your own stories, as you discover your true nature and find your true place in Castle Marrach.

The Style of Castle Marrach

Castle Marrach is a fantasy game set in a world beyond our own. Perhaps it is a realm of dream, ruled by the unconscious. Perhaps it is a realm of stories, ruled by the imagination. Perhaps it is a realm of enchantment, ruled by magic. None knows for certain. Though Castle Marrach reflects the background of the Middle Ages, it occupies another history entirely.

The Castle is a timeless place. The chimings of the grandfather clock and the great bell tower betoken the passing of the hours, but the days have no meaning. There is no calendar in Castle Marrach; its winter is forever. Festivities and celebrations in the Castle are solely undertaken at the bequest of the Queen, not according to the passage of time.

Castle Marrach is a place of socialization. Conflict is more likely to be resolved by a sharp tongue or a sharp wit than a sharp blade. It is a place of stories, poems, and chronicles. It is home to the bard and the poet, the artist and the crafter.

Castle Marrach is a game unlike any that you have played before. It's a game of creativity, where you join together with other players from all over the world, taking on Roles of other people in another time, and telling the story of another place. It's a game where you will have an impact upon the plots of the world, and may even introduce plots of your own.

The Themes of Castle Marrach

Castle Marrach centers around a number of themes including: chivalry, fantasy, romance, intrigue, and mystery. These are the ideas that should be central in your mind during all parts of the game—from creating characters to running plots.

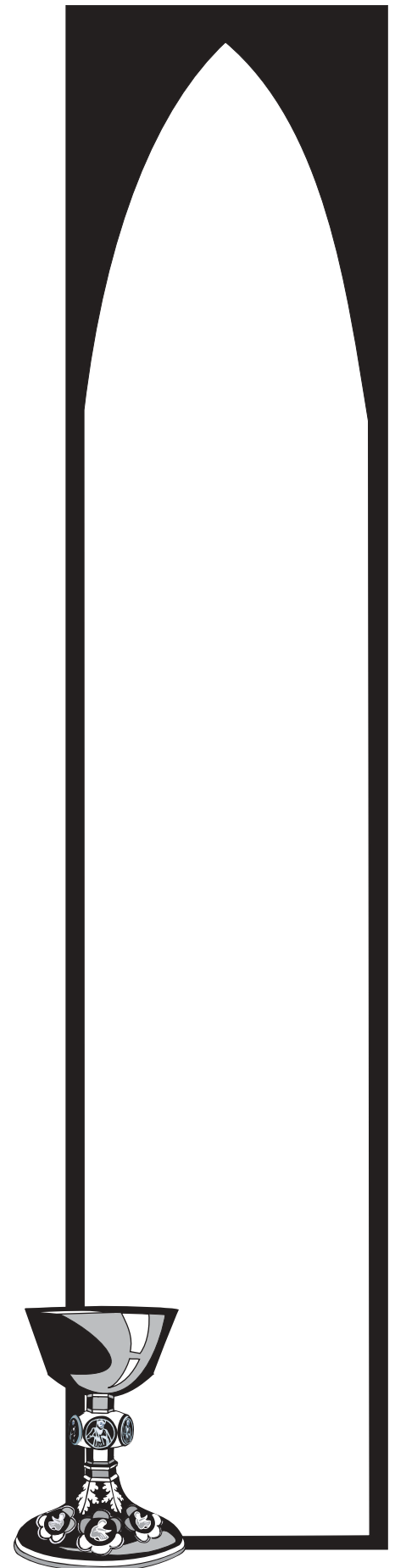
Chivalry encompasses honor, loyalty, and trust. It is at the heart of the tales of King Arthur and the Lais of Marie de France. In Castle Marrach, brotherhoods of knights uphold the rights of the oppressed, and duelists remind us of the value of truth and honesty. In the world of chivalry, respect may be more important than life itself.

Fantasy includes elements such as the exploration of the unknown, the wonders of discovery, and the power of heroism. Magic and the supernatural exist side-by-side with our mundane world. Ancient curses, immortal enemies, powerful spells, magical creatures, and dire prophecies may all be found within Castle Marrach.

Romance centers around true love and the idea of courtly romance. Ladies and gentlemen alike may be wooed in the ways of love. Sometimes lovers are star-struck and sometimes love is unfulfilled, but on that rare occasion two individuals might find their perfect partners under the wintry skies.

Intrigue is hidden within the romance of Castle Marrach. Members of the Court scheme for position and power, helping their friends to rise and their enemies to fall. No apparent truth is the literal truth, and only a true friend can be entirely trusted ... and true friends are rare indeed.

Mystery is the core of Castle Marrach, the solid foundation upon which the rest of the edifice is built. There are several major mysteries in Marrach, such as the origin of the Castle, the reason for its isolation, the past lives of the Guests, and their purpose for being here. However, smaller mysteries abound too: the purpose of the elusive Cats & Rats, the secrets of the Black Guard, and even the true natures of many of those within the Castle's walls.



Choosing Names

Selecting a name for your Role can be one of the most difficult decisions when you're starting to play Castle Marrach. The following suggestions may offer you some ideas.

- **Make your name memorable.** Roger is too normal. Try Rodger, Rogier, Rudiger, or Ruggero. Instead of Jane, try Janelle, Janisa, or Gianna.
- **Avoid names that are long or hard to type.**
- **Avoid chatroot handles.** Silverknight or Windswept may sound cool, but don't fit the Medieval milieu.
- **Avoid famous names.** Lancelot and Guenevere are too well known for you to be able to co-opt them for your own character.
- **Avoid titles.** Titles in Castle Marrach must be earned.

Sometimes you may inadvertently choose an inappropriate name. If you do, one of our StoryGuides will be happy to suggest alternatives. They can also change your name for you, so you don't have to create a new character.

QUICK START

This entire Player's Guide is intended as a tool to get you started playing Castle Marrach. But, we know that some players will want to get started right now, reading this guide at their leisure at a later time. Some of the information in this Quick Start can also be found elsewhere in this book, but it should prove a great starting point if you'd like to get going at once.

The World of Marrach

As related in *The Castle Marrach* (pgs. 2-5) the game of Castle Marrach is set in an ancient castle, sitting atop Mount Ardan. The actual Castle is divided into two sections, the Outer Bailey in the west and the Inner Bailey in the east. Very little is said about the Realms Below.

As you awaken for the first time you will find yourself in one of the guest rooms on the second floor of the Outer Bailey. For the months to come, until you prove yourself, you will dwell in the Outer Bailey, not yet granted access to the Inner Bailey, hopefully not yet pulled down into the Realms Below.

Some members of the Inner Bailey call the Outer Bailey lawless, In truth it simply has its own society, separate from the Inner Bailey. This is the society that you will come to know when you first dwell within the Castle. It centers around guilds of people, each seeking Favour within Castle Marrach, each full of individuals trying to find their own happiness in this strange new world. It is policed by the Winter Watch and overseen by the Lord Chamberlain Launfal.

Favour is the coin of the realm in Castle Marrach, and a Newly Awakened guest would do well to remember that from the first day he steps forth into the halls outside the guest rooms. It is only by seeking the Favour of those in positions of authority that guests can gain their own power within Marrach, power supported by the tradition and authority of an ancient realm.

As a new player to Marrach, you will eventually want to read the specific background on *The Outer Bailey* (pgs. 8-19). Some of the most important information is also referenced in the section that follows.

Playing Castle Marrach

Castle Marrach is an online roleplaying game, centered on socializing with other players and interacting with them in plots. As a result, the game is very open-ended, and it's somewhat difficult to offer a precise listing of how to get involved. The following, however, offers one way to start playing the game.

1. Get into the Game

To start off, point your computer's web browser to:

<http://www.skotos.net/games/marrach/>

This is the portal for Castle Marrach. It contains the latest information and links of interest to Marrach players. If you're not yet a member of the Skotos community, click "Create Account"; otherwise select "Play now"

2. Create a Character

Creation of a character in Castle Marrach is done through a simple web-based set of forms. Just click on the "Create a Character" link once you've

logged in to the Castle Marrach game. You'll be able to choose the physical characteristics of your alterego and learn a little bit more about the background of the game. If you'd like more information on the character creation and Start Story process, read **Playing Castle Marrach** (pgs. 30-35).

3. Learn to Communicate

The first thing you need to understand is how to communicate in this game. This can be done with the *say* command. You'll eventually want to learn more complex communication commands, which are described in the section on **Using the Parser** (pgs. 36-44).

> say "My name is Ruggero."

4. Learn to Move

Moving around in Castle Marrach is equally easy. You just need to type in a cardinal directions to move that way: *n, e, s, w, ne, se, sw, nw, up, or down*. Note that the map window to the right of the client always shows your current surroundings, and you can also click on the arrows to move around. Finally, clicking on the map window will pop up a map of your current floor.

> east

5. Get Some Clothes

You'll start off dressed in the linens worn by all of the Newly Awakened. You'll want to head up to the west side of the Third Floor to visit either the Tailor or the Seamstress and get dressed. The maps of the Outer Bailey on pgs. 18-19 show the relevant locations of the guest rooms and the clothes makers. See the nearby sidebar on "First Commands" for the exact directions and how to use the *ask* command to retrieve clothing.

6. Find Some People

The game of Castle Marrach is all about people, so find some! Your best bets are the Outer Courtyard and the Dining Hall, both located on the Ground Floor and the Practice Room, located on the western half of the First Floor. Again, the maps on pgs. 18-19 can help you, but remember you can also click on your client map at any time to pop up a map of your current floor. Once you've found people, hang out and listen. It'll give you a sense of you game before you try and plunge in.

7. Join a Guild

Once you're more comfortable with the game, it's easiest to really get involved by joining a guild. Skim the list of Outer Bailey guilds on pgs. 8-15 and find one that interests you. Then go ahead and start talking to people, learning more about the guild you're interested in and what it takes to join. This will help you to get involved in plots and really start participating in the story of Castle Marrach.

8. Make Your Own Way

After that, the sky's the limit. The more you become involved in Castle Marrach, the more you'll be able to tell your own stories and set your own goals. Read the rest of this guide some time. It'll give you lots of ideas!

First Commands

Stuck in your room and don't know what to do? Here's a set of first commands.

- Leave Your Room: east
- Go to the Clock: north, north, look at clock

Men:

- Visit the Tailor: e, e, s, e, n, up, s, w, w, n, w, w, w, s, nw
- Get Clothes: ask tailor, ask tailor for pants, ask tailor for tunic, ask tailor for sandals
- Get Dressed: remove wrappings, wear pants, wear tunic, wear sandals
- Go to the Dining Hall: se, n, e, e, e, s, e, e, n, d, d, d, e, s, w, n
- Socialize: say "Hello!"

Women:

- Visit the Seamstress: e, e, s, e, n, up, s, w, w, n, w, w, w, s, sw
- Get Clothes: ask seamstress, ask seamstress for gown, ask seamstress for sandals
- Get Dressed: remove wrappings, wear gown, wear sandals
- Go to the Dining Hall: ne, n, e, e, e, s, e, e, n, d, d, d, e, s, w, n
- Socialize: say "Hello!"

THE OUTER BAILEY

Newly Awakened guests find themselves in the Outer Bailey, assigned to one of the colorful Guest Rooms created to accommodate new arrivals. The atmosphere of the Outer Bailey is one of civilized practicality. Honor and the code of chivalry are widely, though not universally, accepted. Most Guests try to better themselves and the Castle by joining the many guilds in the Outer Bailey. The Queen is far away, but the radiant influence of her nobility still shines upon the Outer Bailey, enlightening it.

The Outer Bailey provides for all of the needs of the Queen's Guests. Tailors and seamstresses sew clothing, and cooks bake food. Couriers carry messages, and servants clean. The Lord Chamberlain Launfal regularly visits the Outer Bailey, meeting with petitioners in his offices.

Gaining access to the Inner Bailey, via the Great Bridge to the east of the Outer Court Yard, can be accomplished by leading a life of honor, nobility, and chivalry. Some Newly Awakened Guests have accomplished it in mere months; some will not after a lifetime of effort; some do not even try, preferring the hard realities of the Outer Bailey to the soft fantasies of the Inner.

The Outer Bailey is almost a separate world, full of intrigues and mysteries all its own.

The Guilds

The guilds of the Outer Bailey provide the basis of society there. A variety of organizations exist to answer queries and resolve problems that the Newly Awakened might have. Questions of memory, creativity, security, and community are just a few of those addressed by the guilds of the Outer Bailey.

The organizations of the Outer Bailey vary greatly. Some are schools, some are informal social groupings, some are philosophical agreements, and some are official guilds chartered by the Lord Chamberlain Launfal. Some Outer guilds have influence within the Inner Bailey as well, though the Royal Guilds, chartered by the Queen Herself, tend to have the most influence in that more rarified portion of the Castle.

Guild Reference

The following quick reference outlines the main inclinations of the most prominent guilds of the Outer Bailey.

Artistic

- Academy of Dancing Arts
- The Chroniclers
- The Friends of the Muse
- The Poets' Brotherhood

Cooperative

- The Awakened
- The Counsel
- The Courtesy Circle

Magical

- The Alchemist's Apprentices
- The Keepers of the Unveiled
- The Sorceress' Apprentices

Martial

- The Battle Guild
- The Duelist Society
- The Winter Watch

Occupational

- The Crafter's Guild
- The Garden Society
- Medical Students

Spiritual

- Natura Balanus
- The Rememberers



Academy of Dancing Arts

Current Leader: Mintle

Prominent Members: Aleena, Radulf, Dimitri

An organization formed after the time of the New Awakenings. The Dancing Academy teaches those who would learn the art of courtly dancing. Lessons are announced in the Castle calendars.



The Alchemist's Apprentices

Current Leader: Master Orson

Prominent Members: None

At present, Master Orson, the alchemist of Castle Marrach, has taken no apprentices among the Newly Awakened. In fact, he has only once or twice appeared outside of his quarters since the New Awakenings began. The older residents of the Castle say that he has taken apprentices in the past, and may possibly do so again at some future time.

The Awakened

Current Leader: Khalea

Prominent Members: Jayland, Faith, Garrik

The Awakened is a recently created guild dedicated to helping the Newly Awakened in Castle Marrach. They show new Guests important locations within Castle Marrach. Originally, they also taught courtesy and etiquette, but the Courtesy Circle has taken over that task.

Membership in the Awakened is available to all who desire to offer aid to other Guests within Castle Marrach. Prospective members should talk to a current member of the Awakened and see the current leader to join. They may visit the Sunset Room at the south end of the Guest hallway for more information.

Rumors say that members of the Awakened have been given magical artifacts which allow them to detect Newly Awakened guests emerging from their guest rooms for the first time.



The Battle Guild

Current Leaders: Umichan

Prominent Members: Jonathan, Khalea, Faith

A guild formed by members of the Newly Awakened, the Battle Guild offers a home for Guests with the heart of warriors—without the history or hierarchy that have become a part of the Duelists and the Winter Watch. Members of the Battle Guild revel in honorable combat and personal bravery. During the initial discussions of the purpose of the Battle Guild, it was suggested that the Battle Guild should support the Queen's warrior spirit, acting as a balance between the passion of the Duelists and the justice of the Watch.

Currently, gaining entrance to the Battle Guild is a simple matter. Prospective members must speak with a prominent member of the guild and attend a few Battle Guild-led practices. New members are officially welcomed into the guild at the monthly meetings. A single Preceptor leads five Elder Teachers, but at heart the organization is intended to be a fraternity of equals.

Despite being a young organization, The Battle Guild has already gained

Rules of Charters

There are numerous organizations in Castle Marrach that exist without a formal charter. Charters are not required for groups of like-minded people to gather together on a regular basis.

However, charters do confer advantages. The Queen and the members of the Royal Court tend to look more kindly upon organizations which have been officially chartered, and are more likely to extend their Favour to members of such organizations. Likewise, if requesting scarce resources — such as equipment, meeting rooms, or the time of members of the Court — a chartered organization is more likely to be heard.

Organizations interested in becoming a chartered guild should compose a draft of their charter and present it to the Lord Chamberlain Launfal. A charter should include the following elements:

- A simple description of the purpose of the organization.
- A drawing or description of the symbol of the organization.
- An explanation of how a Guest might seek membership in the organization.
- A statement of any restrictions placed upon members by the organization.
- A detailing of expected meeting times for the organization.
- Any other information that the members of the organization consider important and relevant.

In general, all guilds are initially chartered by Lord Chamberlain Launfal. If a guild gains sufficient Favour, or if it is of sufficient interest to the Nobles of the Court, then it may in time become a Royal Guild, chartered by the Queen Herself.

some recognition among the nobility of Castle Marrach. Catharsis, then Master at Arms of the Battle Guild, was chosen as the first new Knight among the Newly Awakened. Nonetheless, the Battle Guild still seeks respect in the Castle; its members are not yet allowed to carry swords in public.

The Cats and Rats

Current Leader: Unknown

Prominent Members: Unknown

Very little is known about the Cats and Rats. In fact, naming them a guild may be presumptuous, as it is possible that the actions attributed to the Cats and Rats might have been accomplished by one or two independent criminals. What is known is that the Cats and Rats have on occasion bedevilled the Outer Bailey with all manner of vandalism and maliciousness. Most notably, they attempted to spoil the first Poet's Convocation following the New Awakenings by first writing seditious poetry about the Queen, and later cursing the festivities.

Some Newly Awakened guests seek to solve the mysteries of the Cats and Rats. Others secretly seek to join them.



The Chroniclers

Current Leader: Lord Chamberlain Launfal

Prominent Members: Court Chronicler Sorcha, Assistant Chroniclers Arian and Criothan

The Chroniclers is a loosely structured guild whose purpose is to record the ongoing history of the Castle and to report it back to Castle Guests. This task is carried out throughout the Castle; in the Outer Bailey Junior Chroniclers record the everyday happenings of the Newly Awakened, while in the Inner Bailey Chroniclers of the Court note the goings-on of the nobility of the Castle. The one requirement made of the Chroniclers is that their chronicles must be unbiased and impartial. Due to their importance in the Castle, the Chroniclers are personally overseen by Lord Chamberlain Launfal.

Prospective Chroniclers may join the guild by recording one or more notable events upon scrolls and submitting them to any Chronicler for consideration. Initially, members will be accepted as Junior Chroniclers, but with experience they may become Assistant Chroniclers or even one of the Chroniclers of the Court.

Before the time of the New Awakenings, the guild of Chroniclers was abandoned. It has been reformed since, at the direction of the Lord Chamberlain Launfal. Some rumors say that the last Chroniclers of the Court before the New Awakenings met gruesome ends, and that the written history of the Castle is sparse as a result.



The Counsel

Current Leader: Nutmegger

Prominent Members: Chorus

The role of the Counselors of the Outer Bailey is clearly stated in their charter: "Our primary mission is to act as official mediators in disputes, arguments, and challenges among the guests of the Outer Bailey. The role of the Counselor is to be an objective third party arbitrator." The Counselors

are always available to mediate disputes, provided that both members of the dispute are interested in such mediation.

Guests seeking membership in the Counsel must speak with the Counsel leadership. They will be required to submit five petitions, penned by Guests in the Castle who can speak toward the good will of the petitioner. Lord Chamberlain Launfal is the advisor to the Counsel.

The Counsel is one of several guilds formed by the Newly Awakened. Due to the founding role of Seeker Margaret, some claim that the Counsel supports the role of Balance advocated by the Natura Balanus cult, and that the Counsel is opposed to the Duelists and workers of magic as a result.



The Courtesy Circle

Current Leader: Adalyn

Prominent Members: Davionna, Mintle, Kassiana

The Courtesy Circle endeavors to bring the art of courtesy to members of the Outer Bailey, in particular preparing them for possible admittance to the Inner Bailey as Honored Guests. It also serves as a forum for the discussion of courtesy and etiquette within the Castle. The bywords of the Courtesy Circle are *courtesy*, *respect*, and *consideration*.

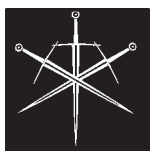
Membership in the Courtesy Circle may be gained by acclaim of the Guild Committee at a Courtesy Circle meeting. Prospective members should state their intentions in advance by speaking with the Assistant Mistress or sending her a scroll. There are currently four ranks within the Courtesy Circle: Members, Instructors, Assistant Mistresses, and Mistresses. The latter three ranks form the Guild Committee.

The Courtesy Circle is one of the youngest of the guilds in Castle Marrach. It expands upon many of the teachings of the late Dame Oriana.

The Crafter's Guild

Prominent Members: Ferguson, Rivelan, Taralyn

A guild in the process of forming at the time of this writing. The group's working charter says that the guild will be: "A common ground for craftsmen of all walks of life, where they can share innovations, learn new crafts, and supply the castle residents with quality crafted goods."



The Duelist Society

Elder Members: Allenya, Edouard, Mark

Prominent Members: Edanya, Faer, Martel

The Duelist Society bywords are *honor*, *valor*, and *grace*. Its members defend honor, protect the name of the Queen, and aid the weak. Though they have no titles and no official place within the Castle hierarchy, the Duelists are some of the most trustworthy and honorable Guests in the Outer Bailey.

Guests may only join the Duelists by gaining the trust and respect of current members. New members are accepted in triads, reflecting the first triad of Allenya, Edouard, and Mark. Prospective members are urged to select their triad carefully, for fellow members will be their oath brothers for life.

Although widely accepted by the Newly Awakened, The Duelist Society was actually born just nine years ago, at the start of the Last Awakenings. Mark, Edouard, and Cyril were the founding members, but their triad was broken asunder when Cyril was accepted into the Court of the Inner Bailey. With Allenya's aid, Mark and Edouard reformed the first triad. On occasion,

Rules of Courtesy

Although less strict in the Outer Bailey, rules of courtesy do exist; they have been widely taught by such kind folks as the late Dame Oriana and the late Sera Viola. Those who wish some day to become Honored Guests with access to the Inner Bailey and the Queen's Court would do well to remember these simple rules, which form the basis of common courtesy.

- Fellow Guests should always be spoken to with honor and respect. Ladies should be referred to as Sera, and gentlemen as Ser.
- Members of the knightly class should be referred to either as Sir or Dame.
- Members of the nobility should be referred to as Lord or Lady. If additional titles have been granted, such as Lord Chamberlain or Lord Chancellor, then the complete title should be used.
- Princes and Princesses should be referred to as His or Her Highness. The Queen should be referred to as Her Majesty.
- Bowing and curtseying is appropriate when meeting other Guests in the Castle.
- Hospitality is a virtue, but hosts should be prepared to offer suitable accommodations, refreshment and entertainment for their guests, or they would do better not to host guests at all.
- Though moderate use of liquor is appropriate for social gatherings, outright drunkenness is frowned upon.
- When leaving a small gathering, it is proper to seek permission or acknowledgement from the person leading the event, or from the person of greatest status present.

A Vision of Swords

Sir Launfal: And so, I return to my office for another day. And by my pocket watch, I see that I am only a few minutes late.

[Allenia enters.]

Sir Launfal: Greetings, Sera, how might I help you?

Allenia: Where do I get a sword?

Sir Launfal: Swords are not issued to just anyone, Sera ... ?

Allenia: Allenia.

Sir Launfal: ...Sera Allenia. They are for use in honorable combat only.

Allenia: Of course I'd use it honorably, I just need to get one first.

Sir Launfal: Joining the Winter Watch is currently the only option available to guests of the Outer Bailey, though sers Edouard and Mark once sought to form a society for men and women of honor.

Allenia: What? Those two?

Sir Launfal: You've met them?

Allenia: They were so busy bickering with each other, I couldn't get a word in edgewise!

Sir Launfal: Yes, ever since the other of their number was elevated to knighthood, they have been unbalanced as only a pair. They could benefit from another who could take that one's place.

Allenia: Men and women of honor? Sounds good. Would I get a sword if I joined them?

—From *The Duelists*, Act I, Scene II
by the Playwright Harwood

the Duelist Society has been known to eject uncouth members; rumors say that Victor Savory, who initiated the first duel following the New Awakenings, was once a member of the Society, but is no longer.



Friends of the Muse

Current Leader: Chorus

Prominent Members: Cherish, Edanya, Judith

The love of the performing arts is at the heart of the Friends of the Muse. They support all type of art, including plays, music, and dramatic readings. In the past they have arranged formal dances and sponsored games of Live Chess in the Outer Courtyard. Through their performances, the Friends of the Muse attempt to discover love and beauty in the world.

Performers, social organizers, and patrons of the arts are all welcomed to the Friends of the Muse. Potential members may gain acceptance into the society by aiding the guild with at least one production—be it play, music, or other social event.

Since the time of the New Awakening there has been notable animosity between the Friends of the Muse and the Poets' Brotherhood; this reached a height just before the first Poets' Convocation, when each guild was claiming the other was writing certain seditious poetry that was appearing in the Outer Bailey. Recently, the Friends of the Muse put on their first dramatic presentation since the New Awakening, an original work called *The Duelists*, written by the playwright Harwood.



The Garden Society

Current Leader: Roxanne

Prominent Members: Dame Oriana (deceased), Tamm

The Garden Society is renowned for bringing beauty to the Outer Bailey via flowers, plants, and gardens. Its members are trained in the lore of plants and the art of growing. Under the peerage of their founder, Dame Oriana, the Garden Society was also a bastion of etiquette in the Outer Bailey, though the Courtesy Circle has now taken on that role. Although primarily centered around the love of beauty, the Garden Society has also been known to wield political power within the Outer Bailey.

Membership in the Garden Society is determined by interview. Currently, only women are allowed full membership in the Garden Society. However, in recent months, under the auspices of the Garden Society's new leader, Sera Roxanne, a new Garden Auxilliary has been formed, whose membership is open to all members of the Outer Bailey. Guests seeking membership in the Garden Society would be well advised to apply for membership in the Garden Auxilliary first.

Rumor says that Dame Oriana was once a member of the Inner Bailey and was expelled for reasons long forgotten. Dame Oriana formed the Garden Society long ago, using it not only to bring beauty to the Outer Bailey, but also courtesy and chivalry. After the New Awakenings, Dame Oriana fell victim to a mysterious illness which eventually took her life. The cause of her death may forever remain a mystery, though some blame a mysterious Shadow which began to appear in the Outer Bailey shortly before the Dame's demise.



The Keepers of the Unveiled

Prominent Members: Faer, Kaine

One of several guilds formed since the New Awakenings, the Keepers of the Unveiled are tasked with investigating the supernatural and protecting the Queen from those same forces. Among the forces that the Keepers have investigated are the mysterious Shadow of the Outer Bailey and a certain ghost whose kiss is said to cause muteness. The former leader of the Keepers, Corbin, is said to be insane and is long missing. Some say that the Keepers of the Unveiled have gone underground as well.

Medical Students

Current Leader: Dr. Meilyr

Prominent Members: Apprentices Anabeth, Severin, Nurse Ecremis

Although not a formal guild, there are a number of students in the Outer Bailey who are studying under the College of Medicine. Apprentice Anabeth teaches her Nurses to heal the wounds and miseries that are a normal part of everyday life.



Natura Balanus

Current Leader: Lady Nadira

Prominent Members: First Acolyte Charmiam, Acolytes Eben, Isaria

Natura Balanus is the Faith of Castle Marrach. The Priestess Nadira advocates a belief system where all things are kept in balance. It is faith of change and changeability, of openness, mutability, and compassion. Some of the central precepts of Natura Balanus are: “Find whatever means possible to protect truth, honesty, and balance. All things in balance.” and “Do not make fame, status or sensual pleasure the sole aims of your life. Live in balance with all these things.”

All Guests are already members of Natura Balanus, though there are many who do not know it. Nonetheless, all are Seekers, searching for truth. Guests may become avowed Seekers by undergoing a short ceremony. Guests may become Acolytes by showing a strong understanding of the precepts of Natura Balanus and taking part in a more intimate rite.

Many of the Newly Awakened first became aware of Natura Balanus through the mute Acolyte Dolfin’s collection of wrappings during the month after the New Awakenings. After a period of time, a ritual was held where the wrappings were burned. Nadira has offered no explanation of the wrapping ritual to date.



The Rememberers

Current Leader: Vaden

Prominent Members: Evayne, Garrik, Radorcha

The guild of the Rememberers is focused on what came before life in the Castle. Most Guests in Castle Marrach can remember something from some time before ... usually a single memory. The Rememberers attempt to explain those memories and also to awaken new ones within their members. Evayne Harper, the leader of the Rememberers at the time of the New

A Vision of Memory

A poem

I had a dream the other night.
But actually, that’s not the truth.
I didn’t dream the other night,
And, in this dream-I-didn’t-have,
I found myself awakened.

Awakened by a dream is strange,
Bedazzled by a dream is joy,
Enchanted by a dream is bliss,
Enlightened by a dream is rare,
And, though my dreams are passing fair,
I’ve never had such dreams as this,
This dream I didn’t have.

For there, awake, I walked with her,
The noble goddess of this realm.
Her stature regal, eyes abyss,
She strolled along the corridors.

And I, who followed close behind,
Was much content to do the same,
To go where’er my mistress willed,
Through fire, through hell, through
death again.

For then she owned me heart and soul,
My mistress cold and pale as snow.
I longed for her to make me whole,
For Memory be her name.

So, we, a pair of passing fair,
Did pass the dreamtime hours there,
But where be there no voice can tell.
It was at once both sweet and hell,
For all the things she showed me there
Were visions plain and true.

Sunsets regal, fleeing burning,
Joy at killing, daughters laughing,
Prostrate multitudes before me,
Scribing symbols, oak and sky.
Scents of new earth, sullied courtyard,
Armed assailants soon enclosing,
Soaked by sea-salt, miner’s weary,
Verdict coming, fire and friend.
Sound made festive, pointed waiting,
Sons grown taller, crimson fingers,
Long-gone voices, plucking music,
Fall exhausted, nervous op’ning.
Smell of berries, grinding pigment,
Ebon sky with silver twinkles:
All these were then set before me,
By my lady mistress there.

—From “A Nameless Poem”
by the Forgetter Yuen

Rules of Sumptuary

The sumptuary laws of Castle Marrach prohibit certain costuming. They are upheld in both the Inner and Outer Baileys.

- Reserved uniforms, such those of the Winter Watch and the Royal Guard, may only be worn by those entitled to them.
- Crowns, coronets and badges may only be worn by those entitled to them.
- Damask, satin and silk may only be worn by Honored Guests.
- Fine furs may only be worn by Nobility.
- Silver and gold cloth may only be worn by Nobility.
- Velvet may only be worn by Nobility.
- Cerulean dyes may only be used by Royalty.
- Special dispensations may be made by the Queen or Chamberlain.

Violations of the sumptuary laws are misdemeanors under the Queen's Capitulary, and may result in imprisonment.

Awakenings, has been known to say that she helps people to "become reunited with their true life."

All Guests are welcome to join the Rememberers, provided that they are willing to record their own experiences of the Time Before and share with others their dreams, which reveal their Great Lives. Meetings are regularly held to welcome new members into the fold.

Although well established, the Rememberers do not seem to have ever gained the patronage of the nobility of Castle Marrach. Their members have only rarely become Honored Guests. The last leader of the Rememberers, Tylus, is said to have gone missing with no explanation.



The Poets' Brotherhood

Current Leaders: Ophidias

Prominent Members: Avocet, Kassiana

The Poets' Brotherhood is an old guild, said to have been founded in response to the foundation of the Friends of the Muse. The Poets' Brotherhood is solely dedicated to poetry, though its definition of poetry has on occasion been expanded beyond the written word, as was the case when the mute Dolfen was brought into the Brotherhood. The Poets' Brotherhood holds regular meetings where members can come together and share their verse, and on occasion sponsors poetical contests or convocations, sometimes working together with the Friends of the Muse.

Membership in the Poets' Brotherhood is gained by acclaim of the Brotherhood's members. Potential members are invited to share their verse with the group and the best are awarded the rosette which is the symbol of the Brotherhood. The poet Ommale has writ: "No one may claim a rosette for themselves, except for the one who requests one through their actions of expression. Only those people with extra pins may give them to those who meet the requirements, and blessed be those who bear one pin, for they should have two."

At the time of the New Awakenings, the poet Ommale was the head of the Poets' Brotherhood, but he has since turned over leadership to members of the Newly Awakened. Rumors suggest that the courtiers of the Inner Bailey are unappreciative of the works of the Brotherhood.



The Sorceress' Apprentices

Current Leader: Lady Serista

Prominent Members: Apprentice Elea, Initiate Santlar, Novitiate Radulf

Although not a proper guild, Lady Serista has gathered together a group of Newly Awakened who hope to learn the secrets of sorcery. Besides advancing their own studies of magic, these students also aid Lady Serista in the occasional expedition.

Guests interested in becoming one of the sorceress' apprentices must attend the magical classes taught by her apprentices. Here they will learn the ways of sorcery and the costs associated with this magic. The process of initiation can take many weeks.

Prospective sorcery students should be warned that the way of magic is costly and dangerous. Many of Serista's first apprentices after the New Awakenings were severely weakened by their binding into the ways of magic; one was killed. And, some found that they were ultimately unfit for the practice of sorceress magic, despite the price that they had already paid.



The Winter Watch

Leader: Corporal Artegal

Prominent Members: Armsman Jarrod, Armswoman Judith

Protecting the Guests of the Outer Bailey and maintaining the laws of the Queen are the main directives of the Winter Watch. Their official credo is: “To defend the Castle against all perils, within and without.” Whereas the Royal Guard is primarily directed toward the protection of the Queen and the Court, the Winter Watch is specifically directed toward law enforcement in the Outer Bailey. The two organizations are intended to be entirely complementary, with neither subservient to the other; but because the Winter Watch is a much younger organization than the Royal Guard, it tends to fall into a secondary role for matters of the highest importance. The Winter Watch reports to the Lord Marshal of the Royal Armies and the Lord Chancellor Boreas. It has full authority to arrest and imprison disruptive elements in the Outer Bailey.

Members of the Winter Watch are drawn from the general population of the Outer Bailey. They are selected by interview. Members of the Winter Watch who have not yet been sworn in are Deputies. Full members are Watchmen. Assistants to the leaders of the Winter Watch are Armsmen, and the leader of the Winter Watch is titled Corporal.

Older members of the Outer Bailey, notable among them the Duelists, have been known to nickname the Winter Watch “the Weasels” because of their ermine badges. More recently, The Winter Watch has been called “the Ducks” because of the quacking duckcalls some guild leaders use to summon them. Newly Awakened Guests should be aware that using either name is a violation of etiquette and courtesy. They should also remember that the Watchmen are among the few Outer Bailey residents with keys to the dungeons below.

Rules of Law

The Queen’s Capitulary outlines the laws of Castle Marrach. It includes laws about sumptuary and dueling which are described elsewhere in this book. In general, The Capitulary requires honor and courtesy of the Guests of Castle Marrach, with disruptive behavior resulting in imprisonment in the dungeons and worse. Some of the more notable laws of Castle Marrach include the following:

- **Disobedience shown to a superior may result in imprisonment.**
- **Poisoning, cannibalism, desecration, or arson may result in expulsion.**
- **Disorderly conduct may result in 5 days in the stocks.**
- **Utterance of inflammatory statements or statements derogatory to the Queen may result in 2 days in the stocks.**
- **Mugging, burglary, or petty theft may result in a public lashing.**

Other Guilds

A number of other groups exist in the Outer Bailey, but are not old enough to be fully described in this Player’s Guide. They include:

- The Carpenters
- The Lawyers
- The Linguistic Project Assembly
- The Philosophers
- The Seamstresses

Players interested in these guilds would do well to ask about them in the Dining Hall or check for postings in the Lecture Hall. New groups are also frequently being created.

Notable Persons

There are a number of residents of the Outer Bailey who are notable for the profound influence they have on that portion of Castle Marrach. Some of members of guilds, while others have remained aloof of these organizations.

Lord Chamberlain Launfal: *The Royal Chamberlain.* A middle-aged man with thin, graying hair. His appearance is discreet; his gray clothes are of simple design but fine fabric. Although properly a resident of the Inner Bailey, the Lord Chamberlain Launfal spends several hours a day personally administering the affairs of the Outer. He has also been known to offer aid to the Newly Awakened, if asked politely.



Lord Chamberlain Launfal

Corporal Artegal: *Leader of the Winter Watch.* Artegal joined the Winter Watch almost immediately following his awakening over a year ago. A man of formal and soldierly reserve, he is committed to ensuring justice and order in the Outer Bailey. His disdain for the Duelists as lawless trouble-makers is well known, and he holds a particular grudge against Ser Martel, who recently killed his mentor and predecessor, Philo, and against Sera Faer, the current leader of the Duelists. Artegal is wed through the faith to Sera Illiana, the Royal Almoner.

Edouard Ramos: *Elder Duelist.* A darkly handsome man whose shoulder-length hair is often tied into a pony tail. Edouard is but one of the three elders of the Duelists, but his passionate nature often makes him more prominent than Mark Trevayne or Allenya Ormand. Recently, Edouard was wounded in a duel with Armsman Roland, and then accused of the Armsman's murder soon afterward. Edouard was eventually cleared, but the entire experience left him tired and somber.

Evayne Harper: *Leader of the Rememberers.* An almost translucent woman, with pale hair, light blue eyes, and very fair skin. Her small stature is usually set off by the raw passion with which she speaks. Some consider Evayne dreamy, because of her obsession with the Great Life which she believes came before life in Castle Marrach. Evayne became the leader of the Rememberers after the disappearance of Tylus, a year

before the New Awakenings.

Doctor Getheht: *The Royal Necromancer.* A tall and thin man, whose hollowed cheekbones and gnarled fingers make him look like a corpse. Getheht usually hides down in the lower reaches of the Castle, but on occasion his apprentice, Lith, has been known to visit the Outer Bailey. Some whisper that Doctor Getheht is not considered proper company for the denizens of the Outer Bailey, let alone the court itself.



Doctor Getheht

Acolyte Isaria: *Seamstress and Member of Natura Balanus.* Since her awakening Isaria has been an active participant in the life of the Outer Bailey. Conselling many on matters of the Faith, she is also extremely influential in matters of clothing and style, holding prominence among the seamstresses and displaying the latest fashions during festivals and Outer Bailey events in formal shows which have been well-received.

Martel: *Member of the Duelists.* Awakened over a year ago at the start of the New Awakenings, Martel has quickly made a name for himself among the Duelists, forming one of the first new triads. He has experience his share of heartache and strife, including a very early duel with Victor Savary, the death of his beloved Viola, and, most recently, a duel to the death wherein he defeated Corporal Philo of the Winter Watch. Martel is a charming, plain-spoken Ser, who has stolen the hearts of more than a few Seras. He currently resides within the Inner Bailey, serving Prince Bertram, but remains a very active and influential member of the Outer Bailey.

Maugis d'Aygrement: *The Royal Wizard.* Sir Maugis is reputed to live in the Wizard's Tower just north of the Outer Bailey, but he has not been seen in many years, perhaps decades. Little is known about him. Various rumors claim that Sir Maguis is a demon, a simulacrum come to life, a being of pure magic, or a traveller from another world. Others suggest that Sir Maguis is only a man who understands the workings of the universe.

Master Orson: *The Royal Alchemist.* Said to be an old man with frazzled white hair that sticks up in all directions, but in truth the Royal Alchemist has yet to emerge into the Outer Bailey since the New Awakenings began. Older members of the Outer Bailey either contend that

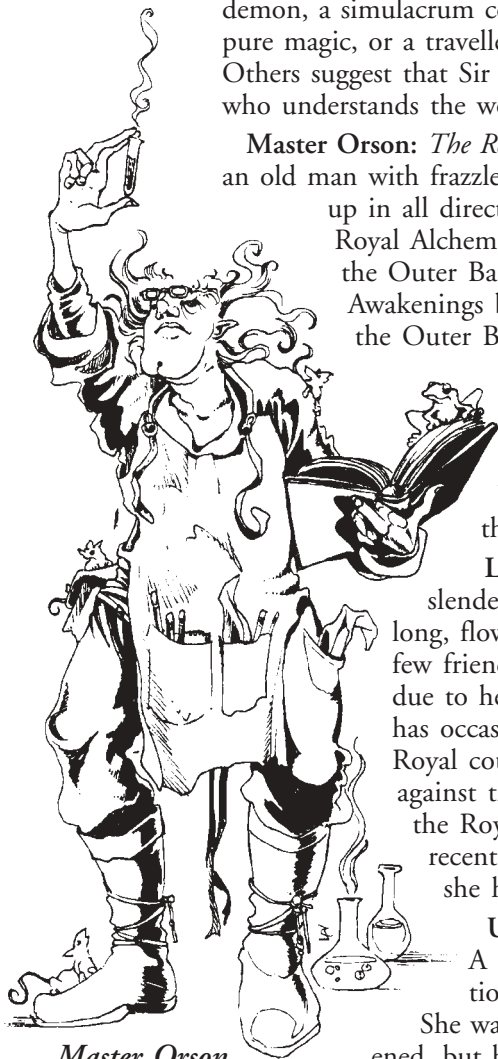
Orson is brilliant or a rude hermit; both rumors may be correct. The closed doors to Orson's laboratory are located just beyond the hallway that leads to the Guest Rooms.

Lady Serista: *The Royal Sorceress.* A slender woman, with milk-white skin and long, flowing black hair. She seems to have few friends in the Castle, perhaps partially due to her fierce temper. Rumors say: she has occasionally turned members of the Royal court into toads; she is plotting against the Queen; she is plotting against the Royal Wizard. She has been reclusive recently, but none who know her believe she has been idle.

Umichan: *Leader of the Battle Guild.* A Sera of intense and playful disposition, awakened within the past year. She was formerly a member of the Awakened, but has forsaken her old guild affiliations to head up the Battle Guild.



Lady Serista

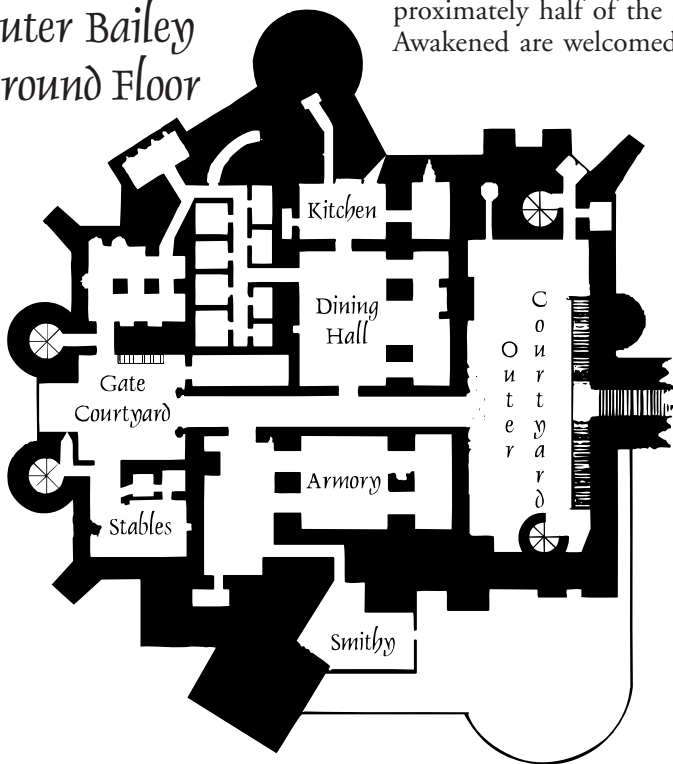


Master Orson

Important Locations

The Outer Bailey, located on the western side of Castle Marrach, makes up approximately half of the above-ground area of the Castle. It is here that the Newly Awakened are welcomed, and it is here that all of their needs are catered to.

Outer Bailey Ground Floor

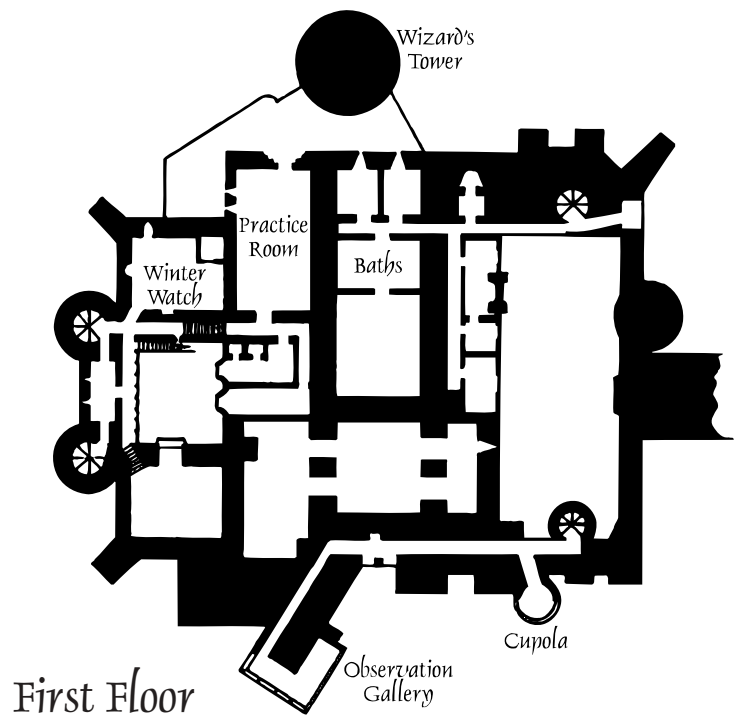


The Ground Floor: The ground floor of the Outer Bailey is where much of the social life of Castle Marrach is centered. The *Dining Hall* is not only a place for eating, but also a place for socialization of all types; a *Kitchen* and other service rooms are just to the north. The eastern end of the *Dining Hall*, with its fireplace and tables, is a frequent home to meetings, and is also the traditional place for the recitation of poetry. To the east of the *Outer Courtyard*, the *Great Bridge* leads to the Inner Bailey—reserved for those Honored Guests and others who have been welcomed to the Court of Queen Vivienne. To the west of the *Gate Courtyard*, past the ever-locked gates, is a great gap that can only be crossed if the enormous drawbridge is ever lowered. The quarters of the castle's servants, a wide terrace to the south, the *Stables*, the dog kennel, the *Armoury*, and a *Smithy* fill out the ground level.

The First Floor: For defensive and architectural reasons, the first level of the Outer Bailey is divided into three areas. The western portion of this level is outside of the main body of the Outer Bailey and can thus only be accessed by the stairs from the *Gate Courtyard* on the ground floor. The *Practice Room* is used by various martial disciplines and for many duels. The Winter Watch headquarters and the Dueling Society's room each lie near the Practice Room. The *Garden Society Room* is also located in this section of the castle.

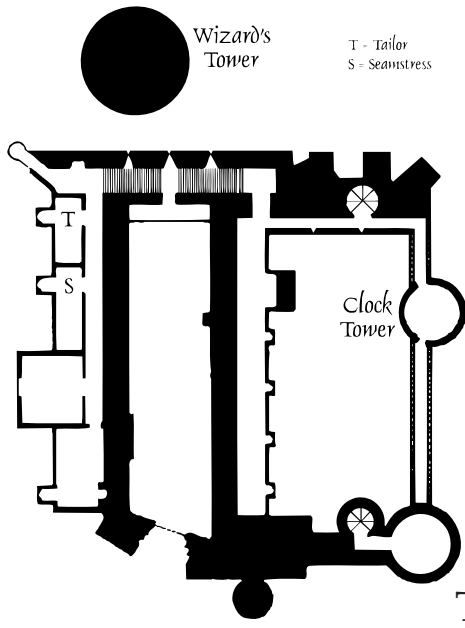
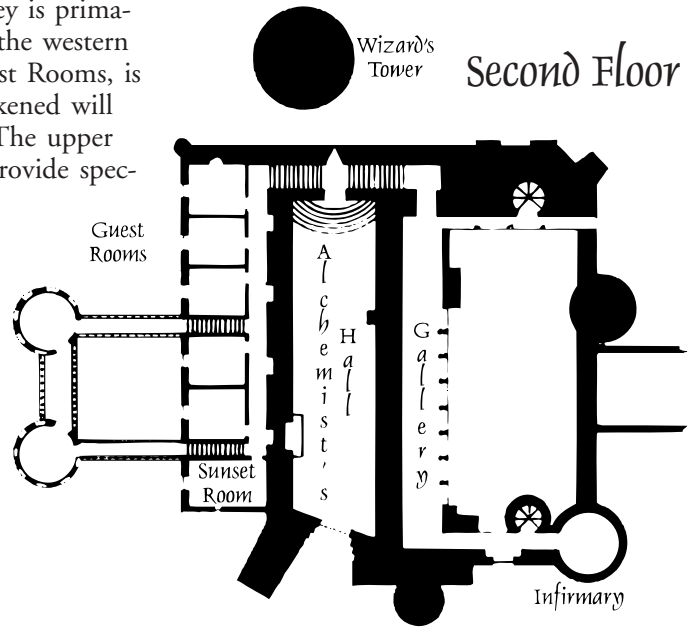
The eastern portion of the first level is accessible only via the northeastern spiral stair. Herein may be found the *Chamberlain's Office*; Lord Launfal appears at this room in accordance with a schedule posted in the hallway outside. The *Lecture Hall*, sometimes home to meetings of various groups, is just south of Lord Launfal's office. The Outer Bailey's *Baths* are also nearby.

On the southern side of the first level are a few rooms accessible only via the southeast stairwell. These include the *Cupola*, often used by practitioners of the Faith. An altar to Natura Balans is nearby, just off the hallway. At the end of the long passage is the *Observation Gallery*, which offers magnificent views of the castle and the surrounding scenery; recently it has been used by apprentices to the sorcerous arts for their lessons.



First Floor

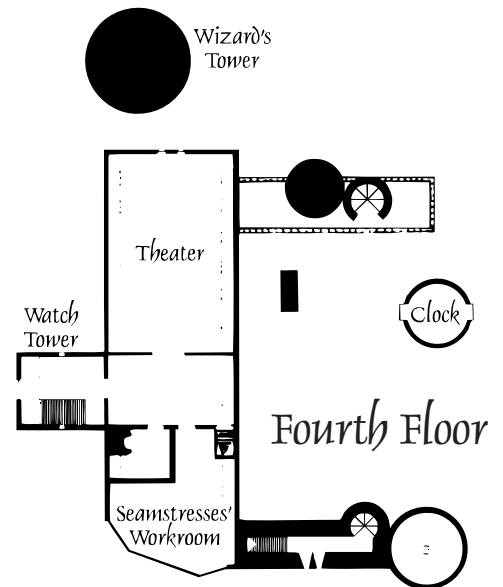
The Second Floor: The second level of the Outer Bailey is primarily notable for the *Guest Rooms* which are located along the western facade. The *Sunset Room*, located to the south of the Guest Rooms, is the headquarters of the Awakened guild; the Newly Awakened will find the members of the guild to be of great assistance. The upper battlements of the barbican, west of the Guest Rooms, provide spectacular views of the castle and the surrounding mountains. The *Portrait Gallery*, running between the two spiral stairs, portrays some of the more interesting members of Her Majesty's Court. The lower level of the Dove Tower, just past the southeastern stair, is now an *Infirmary*. The *Alchemist's Hall* takes up the central portion of this level; it is rarely visited, and the subject of many rumors.



The Third Floor: This level is small, for it consists of only a few rooms arranged about the upper portions of the Alchemist's Hall. Rooms set aside for the use of various groups are arranged under a steeply sloping roof on the west side, while the *Bowling Alley* lies along the east side. Along the battlements at the east side of the Outer Bailey is the *Clock Tower*, the lower level of which houses the offices of the Chroniclers. The upper floor of the Dove Tower, at the southeast corner of the Outer Bailey, currently houses the Players. Finally, the *Outer Bailey Tailor* and *Seamstress* sought out by the Newly Awakened are on this floor.

Third Floor

The Fourth Floor: Under a great peaked roof on this level is the *Theater*, used for dances and various performances. At the southern end of this level is the *Workroom* of the castle's seamstresses. A broad battlement extends along the northern edge of the Outer Bailey, accessible only through the northeastern spiral staircase. The base of the *Watch Tower* is set to the west; the stairs within run up several flights to a fortified platform with dizzying views in all directions.



Fourth Floor

Becoming an Honored Guest

The Inner Bailey is a place of fancy and fairie tale, and many Newly Awakened make it their goal to quickly be welcomed into this place. They should be warned: the Inner Bailey is not a place for everyone. Those awakened with a sense of honor, chivalry, decorum, and loyalty may well find the Inner Bailey to be a place of dreams, but there are many others who would prefer to stay in the Outer Bailey.

Those who would still like to join the Inner Bailey must demonstrate in themselves the attributes enjoyed by the Queen. They must show themselves romantic, honorable, and chivalrous. Some of the guilds of the Outer Bailey — among them the Duelists, the Winter Watch, and the Chroniclers — are well-known and respected by members of the Royal Court, and their members are more likely to gain the title of Honored Guests. Other Guests may rise to this status by their personal strivings to better Marrach, played out before the representatives of the Queen in the Outer Bailey.

Rising to the status of Honored Guest may be a difficult trial, but the Newly Awakened should be aware that it is possible, if they express their will to ascend through their actions.

THE INNER BAILEY

Members of the Court gossip until dawn. Ball-goers dance among the stars. The Queen and her consort listen to poetry and witness dramas written in their name. The scholars of the Collegium discuss their studies of engineering, medicine, and alchemy. This is the world of the Inner Bailey, a world removed from ordinary life, a world of faerie tale and fantasy.

To the Newly Awakened in Castle Marrach, the Inner Bailey is a great mystery, an unknown. The bridge that leads eastward is guarded; what is beyond the Great Bridge itself is unseen and unknowable. But, there are tales....

The late Dame Oriana was cast out from the Inner Bailey long ago, though she refused to speak of her disgrace. Launfal, Severin, Nadira, and others visit from the Inner Bailey when the mood suits them. The eldest of the Newly Awakened have been named Honored Guests, who can visit the Inner Bailey, or even courtiers, who make their homes there; others speak of the Winter Balls that once gave them entrance to that place.

But still, the Inner Bailey lies apart. There are many rumors but fewer facts. For many of the Newly Awakened the Inner Bailey is a goal to be aspired to, but not a reality for the current day.

The Royal Court

As society in the Outer Bailey centers around the Guilds, it is said that the society of the Inner Bailey centers around the Royal Court. Favour is the true currency here — the Favour of the Queen, of her consort Boreas, of the Prince Bertram, of the Lords and Ladies of the Court. With Favour comes position and prestige and power.

The hierarchy of the Court descends from the Queen, as all things do in Castle Marrach. Below her are the Princes and Princesses of the Court and below them the aristocrats — the lords and ladies. The chevaliers, ritters, and knights make up the fourth rank of the Royal Court. And finally there are the courtiers and the Honored Guests, who have been newly welcomed to the Queen's Court.

It has been reported that the Royal Court is also split into four parts. The Royal Household, led by the Lord Chamberlain Launfal, makes up the majority of the Court. Its most powerful members include the Royal Seneschal, the Royal Archivist, and the Dean of the Royal Collegium. Sir Boreas leads the Chancery, which arbitrates issues of justice. Sir Alrik is the acting leader of the the Royal Army, until a new Lord Marshall is named. The Royal Treasury is currently overseen by Prince Bertram.

Some say the structure of the Court is ancient and mostly unused. Some say that the individual factions constantly intrigue against each other. Some say the Court is nearly empty, and that its repopulation is the true purpose of the New Awakenings. There is still more speculation about the Royal Court than established fact; only as more of the Newly Awakened are accepted as Honored Guests will the truth become known.

The Royal Guilds

While most of the guilds of the Outer Bailey have the approval of the Lord Chamberlain Launfal, those of the Inner Bailey have been officially sanctioned by the Queen Herself. The guilds of the Inner Bailey are not quite as ubiquitous as those of the Outer Bailey, for there is other society at the Queen's court. Some say that Guilds of the Inner Bailey are mere auxiliaries for the Court, through which its members carry out additional plots and intrigues.

What follows is merely a listing of some of the guilds which have become known to members of the Outer Bailey.

Company of Players

Current Leaders: None

Prominent Members: Geograd, Mintle, Sansamor, Scaramouche

Whereas the Friends of the Muse entertain the Guests of Castle Marrach, the Company of Players is tasked with specifically creating dramas for the Queen. All of the members are said to be Royal Players, personally appointed by the Master of Entertainments. Little more is known about the organization.



The Knights of Marrach

Current Leaders: None

Prominent Members: Sir Alrik, Dame Catharsis, Sir Launfal

The Watchmen and the Duelists often speak of the knights of Castle Marrach. These are paragons of honor and nobility personally chosen by the Queen. There are known to be two societies of knights in the Inner Bailey, the Knights of the Stone, who emphasize feats of strength and dexterity, and the Knights of the Petal, who emphasize chivalry and courtesy.

The Queen selects the knights of Castle Marrach based upon grueling physical, mental, and moral tests. It is said that some candidates do not survive the examination process.

Current knights in Castle Marrach include Dames Petronille and Catharsis, Sirs Alrik, Bragi, Cyril, Gaudis, and Launfal, and Lord Sicard. Not all knights are members of the societies, as they are open only by invitation.



The Royal Collegium

Current Leader: Dean Mielyr

Prominent Members: Sir Bragi, Master Orson, Lady Serista, Apprentice Severin

Under the benefices of the Queen, a number of colleges of learning have been created, believed to include alchemy, the arts, engineering, languages, letters, medicine, religion, science, and sorcery. It is in the Royal Collegium that all of the members of the colleges of Castle Marrach come together. It is a highly respected institution, entrusted with both gathering and teaching knowledge.

Entry into the Royal Collegium is only offered to those who can pass a rigorous set of tests related to the discipline of their interest. Success offers the candidate an apprenticeship with the Master of the appropriate college.

Rules of Hierarchy

Though hierarchy is not sternly enforced in Castle Marrach — at least not in the Outer Bailey — it does exist and is an important social force. There are some who say, “Whenever you enter a room, always identify your superiors and your lessers.” Superiors in the Castle hierarchy should be respected and obeyed, particularly if a Guest ever has any hope of gaining access to the Inner Bailey.

Within the Outer Bailey, hierarchy is loose. Lord Chamberlain Launfal is the ultimate authority within the Outer Bailey, followed closely by Corporal Artegal, the leader of the Winter Watch (and a Newly Awakened). A few guilds should be offered particular respect in the Outer Bailey as well. The Winter Watch is the arm of justice in the Outer Bailey and an official division of the Royal Army. The Chroniclers and the Counsel should also be offered particular deference in the Outer Bailey because of their close ties with the Lord Chamberlain. When visiting the Outer Bailey, members of the Royal Court outrank most Guests, with the possible exception of Launfal, Artegal, and the guilds that they support.

The hierarchies within the Inner Bailey are much more strict — as well as more intricate and occasionally confusing. Complex structures exist within the Royal Household, the Chancery, the Royal Treasury, and the Royal Army. In addition, members of the Royal Court can possess one or more particular titles. Under the Queen are the Princes, then the aristocrats, then the knights, then the honored guests.

Obedience and deference to one's betters in the Inner Bailey can make or break a young court member's hopes for the future.

Rules of Favour

In Castle Marrach, Favour brings influence and with it power. If you want to gain Favour in the Castle there are simple (though occasionally changing) rules.

- Discover which people and guilds are in Favour.
- Gain the respect of those in Favour.
- Ignore those who are out of Favour.
- When you have gained enough Favour with someone of a low rank, try and gain the attention of someone of a higher rank.

The Royal Collegium seems almost entirely centered upon the Inner Bailey, though some of its members do interact with the Outer Bailey. Lady Serista, in particular, seeks her students from among the Newly Awakened. The apprentice doctor Severin has been known to reluctantly attend the occasional duel or teach the occasional class in chirurgy.

It is rumored that the colleges of the Royal Collegium are nearly empty.

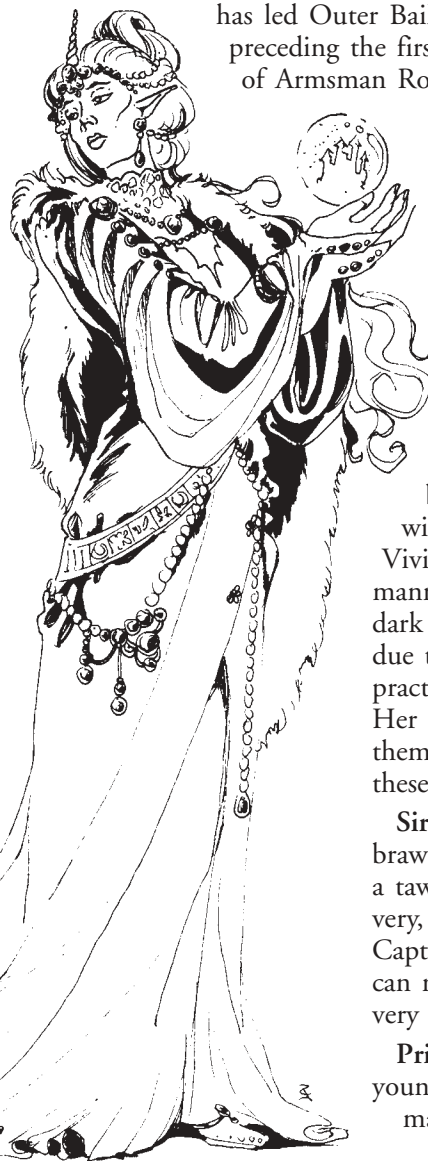
The Royal Guard

Current Leader: Sir Alrik

The safety of the Queen and the Royal Court is officially watched over by the Royal Guard. In practice they tend to watch over the Inner Bailey, leaving the protection of the Outer Bailey to the Winter Watch.

Membership in the Royal Guard is determined by interview with the Captain of the Guard. If applicants are accepted, they are offered commissions. New members are accepted as Yeomen.

The Guard is currently led by Sir Alrik, who at one time was a member of the Winter Watch, and is said to still retain ties with that organization. Although justice in the Outer Bailey is usually left to the Winter Watch, Sir Alrik has been known to intervene on occasion if he believes the Court or the Queen are in danger. Since the time of the New Awakenings he has led Outer Bailey investigations into the seditious poetry preceding the first Poets' Convocation, and into the murder of Armsman Roland.



Queen Vivienne

Notable Persons

Most of the important people in the Inner Bailey are members of Queen Vivienne's court. The following are but a few of the names who have come to the attention of the Outer Bailey.

Queen Vivienne. *Ruler of Castle Marrach.*

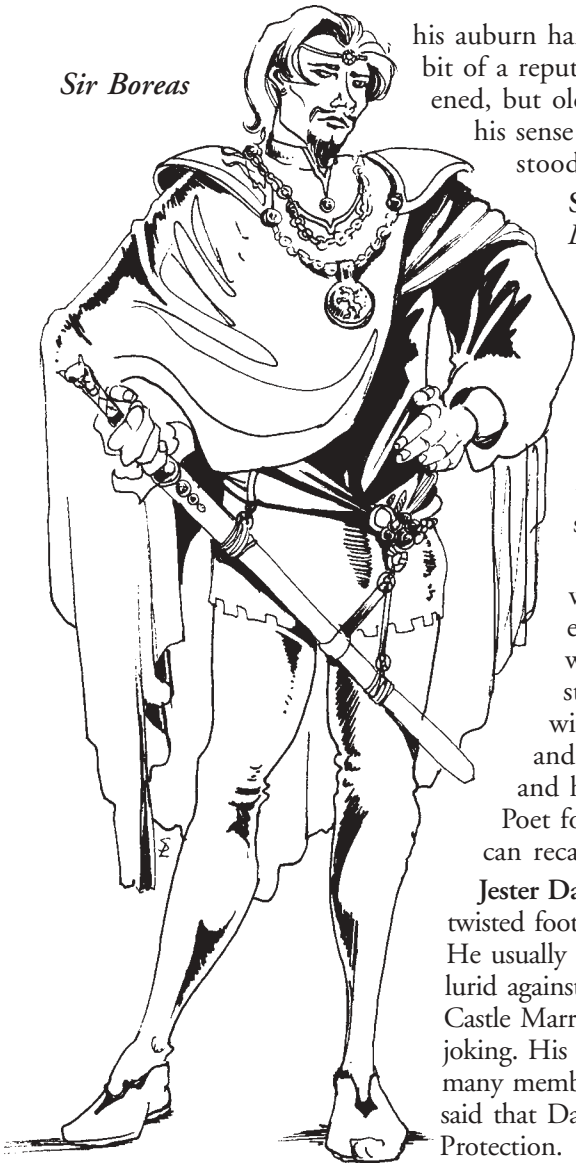
Called by some, though only behind her back, the Ice Queen. She is tall and elegant, with icy blue eyes and pale blonde hair.

Vivienne often remains aloof from the Court. All manner of gossip surrounds her: that she has dark dreams; that she is imprisoned in Marrach due to ancient debts; that she is a powerful practitioner of magic; and that she spies upon Her Court from secret passages, or lingers among them in a variety of disguises. Doubtless, most of these rumors are false.

Sir Alrik. *Captain of the Royal Guard.* A tall, brawny man with neatly braided blond hair and a tawny beard. Alrik is poised, self-confident, and very, very serious about his job. He has been the Captain of the Royal Guard for as long as most can remember, and in that time he has become very good at his position.

Prince Bertram. *Son of Sir Boreas.* A tall, robust young man who usually wears simple, but finely made clothing. His hazel eyes are unflinching;

Sir Boreas



his auburn hair often unkept. Prince Bertram has a bit of a reputation for cruelty to the Newly Awakened, but older members of the court claim that his sense of humor is complex and not understood.

Sir Boreas. *Consort to the Queen and Lord Chancellor.* A tall, thin man whose dark hair is streaked with gray. His closely trimmed mustache and goatee, along with his robes, cloaks, and chains of office, give Sir Boreas an air of dignity and propriety. Sir Boreas is renowned for the order that he maintains in the Castle and also for his skill at chess.

Sir Bragi. *Royal Poet.* An old man with snow-white hair and ice-blue eyes. Dressed in white cloak and white mantle, leaning on a steel-shod staff, he seems the embodiment of winter in the Castle. Bragi is a kind and courteous man, fond of romances and heroic epics. He has been the Royal Poet for as long as any in the Outer Bailey can recall.

Jester Dagonet. *Royal Jester.* A small man with a twisted foot, a hunched back, and an eye patch. He usually dressed in colorful garb which appears lurid against the snow and ice that settle upon Castle Marrach. He is a humorous man, always joking. His wit is quick and sometimes sharp, as many members of the Royal Court can attest. It is said that Dagonet has been extended the Queen's Protection.

Sir Gaudis. *Knight of the Petal.* A short, hirsute man with neat, dark hair, usually dressed in black and slate blue. Sir Gaudis is renowned for his courtesy and chivalry, and is one of the most approachable Knights of Marrach. He was present at the Winter Ball, and was one of the judges in the first Knight's Quest.

Lady Nadira. *The Royal Priestess.* A tall, brown-skinned woman with an open face and a wide smile. Though a member of the Inner Bailey, Nadira frequently visits the Outer Bailey to bring the words of the Faith to the Guests there. She is calm, centered, and focused, with a strong sense of right and wrong. She seeks to bring about these same characteristics in others through the Faith.

Apprentice Severin. *Apprentice to the Royal Chirurgeon.* A thin, neat man with an aquiline nose and a pencil-thin mustache. Severin's features give him the appearance of belligerence, and this is not a misleading impression. He is an unpleasant, arrogant man who holds his learnings above those around him. On occasion Severin has visited the Outer Bailey, either to tend to the wounded or offer lectures; he has rarely hidden his contempt while doing so.

Lord Sicard. *Royal Champion and Knight of the Stone.* A bold, handsome man whose ash-blond hair is usually neatly tied back. He dresses in gold, embroidered velvet doublets, with matching hose. Sicard is said by many to be the finest knight in Marrach.

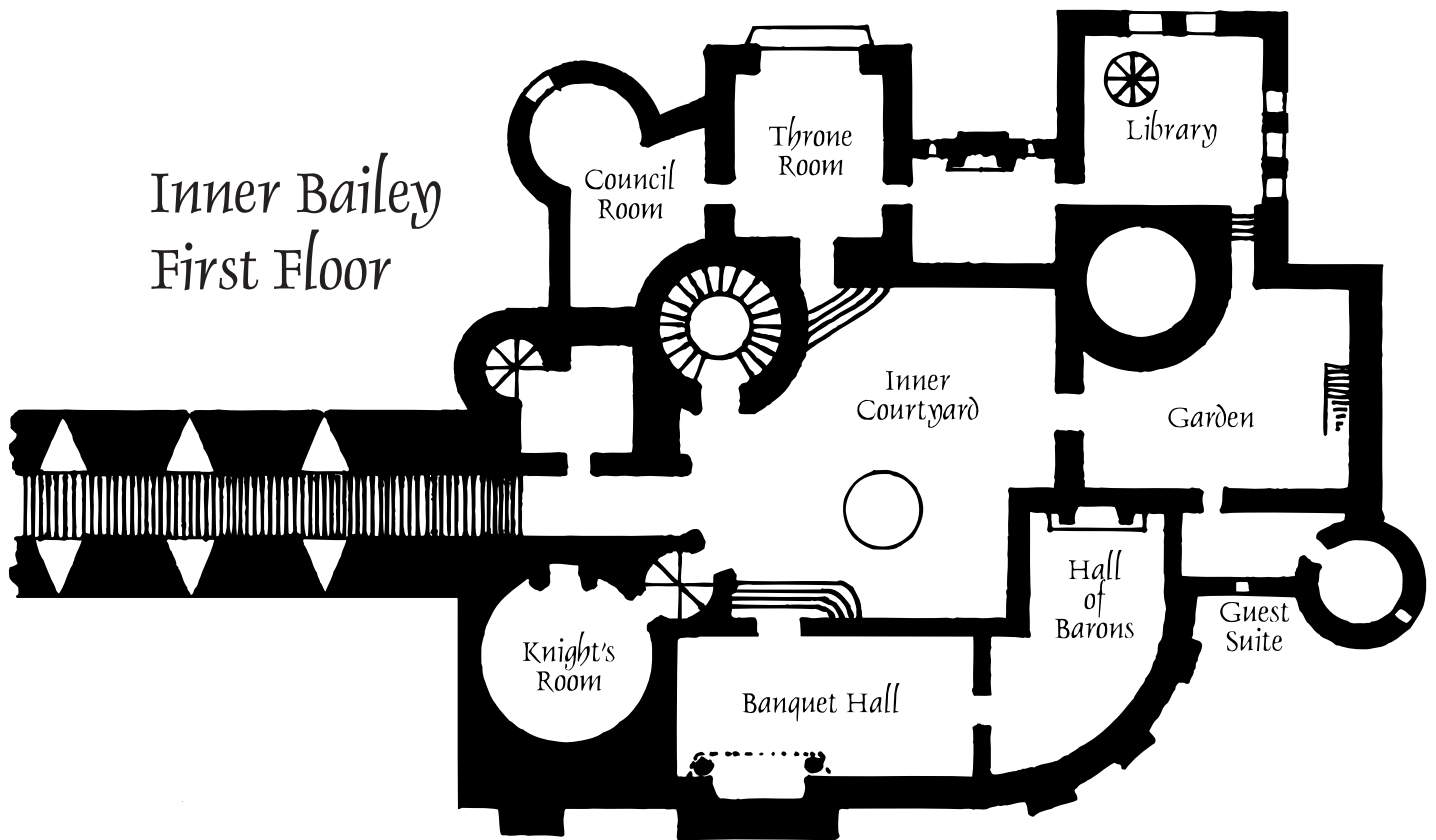
Rules of Chivalry

1. Thou shalt respect all weaknesses and shalt constitute thyself the defender of them.
2. Though shalt love the country in which thou wast Awakened.
3. Thou shalt not recoil before thine enemy.
4. Thou shalt make war against those who would threaten the Castle without cessation and without mercy.
5. Thou shalt perform scrupulously thy feudal duties to The Queen.
6. Thou shalt never lie and shalt remain faithful to thy pledged word.
7. Thou shalt be generous and give largesse to everyone.
8. Thou shalt be everywhere and always the champion of the Right and Good.

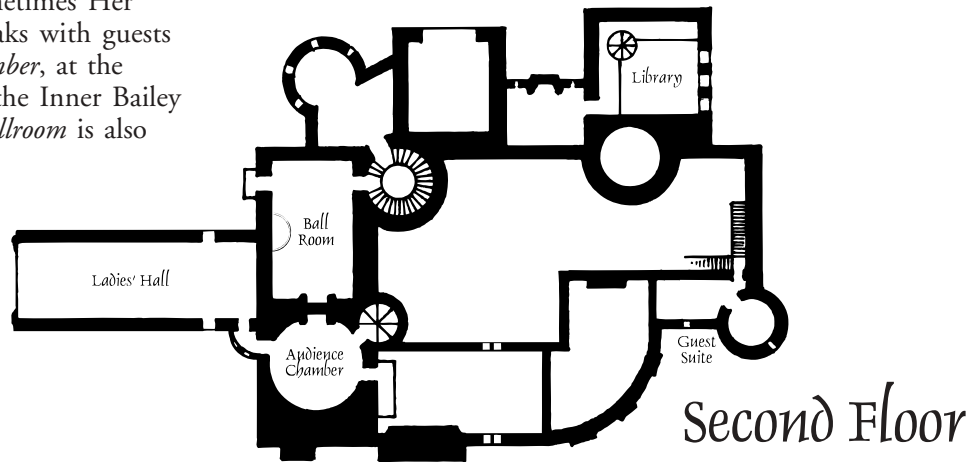
Important Locations

The Inner Bailey is the eastern half of the Castle. Normally, only the Honored Guests, courtiers, knights and nobles of the Queen's Court have free access to the Inner Bailey (in addition to the staff when going about their duties). The highest towers of the Inner Bailey rise somewhat higher than those of the Outer Bailey. Courtiers and other more favored members of the Court maintain elegant suites of rooms within the Inner Bailey.

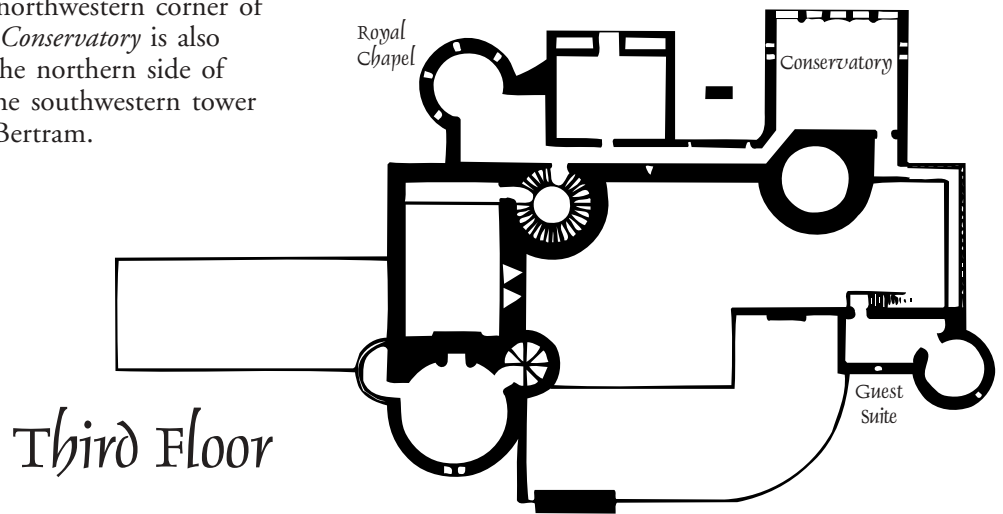
The First Floor: Connected to the Outer Bailey by the Great Bridge which spans a deep ravine between the two halves of the Castle, the first level of the Inner Bailey consists of tall structures arranged around two large, open areas. Located centrally is the *Inner Courtyard*; at the farthest eastern end of the castle is the *Royal Garden*. Along the southern side of this level are the *Banquet Hall* and the *Hall of Barons*, dedicated to honor, duty and chivalry. The *Library* is located at the northeastern corner of the castle here; centrally located along the northern side is the *Throne Room*, where the pomp and ceremony of the Royal Court is played out.



The Second Floor: The Lord Chamberlain, or sometimes Her Majesty Herself, speaks with guests at the *Audience Chamber*, at the southwest corner of the Inner Bailey on this level. The *Ballroom* is also located on this level.



The Third Floor: The *Royal Chapel*, a place of stained glass, flickering candles, and quiet devotions, is located at the northwestern corner of this level. The *Conservatory* is also located along the northern side of this level. In the southwestern tower dwells Prince Bertram.



The Fourth Floor and Higher: Only the Consort and Her Majesty reside on the higher levels of the Inner Bailey; each has a suite of rooms along the western side of the bailey. The central *Stair Tower* rises to a circular walkway about two hundred feet above the Inner Courtyard.

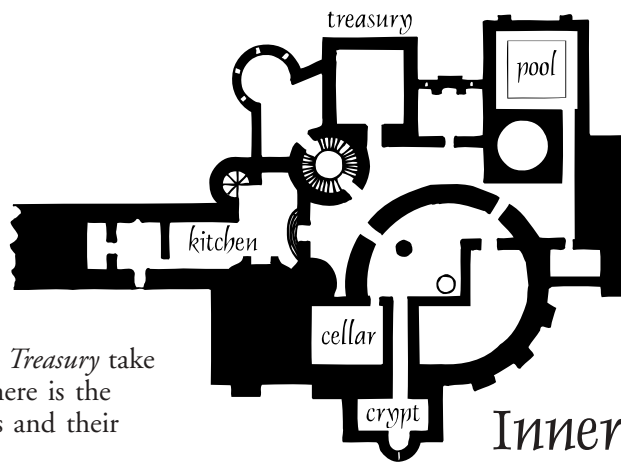
THE REALMS BELOW

Below the surface of Castle Marrach there lie dungeons, prisons, work shops, and the lairs of the Necromancer and the Sorceress. Some of these areas are well-known by many members of the Inner Bailey and Outer Bailey alike. However, there are also stories of what may live even further beneath, in the unknown Realms Below.

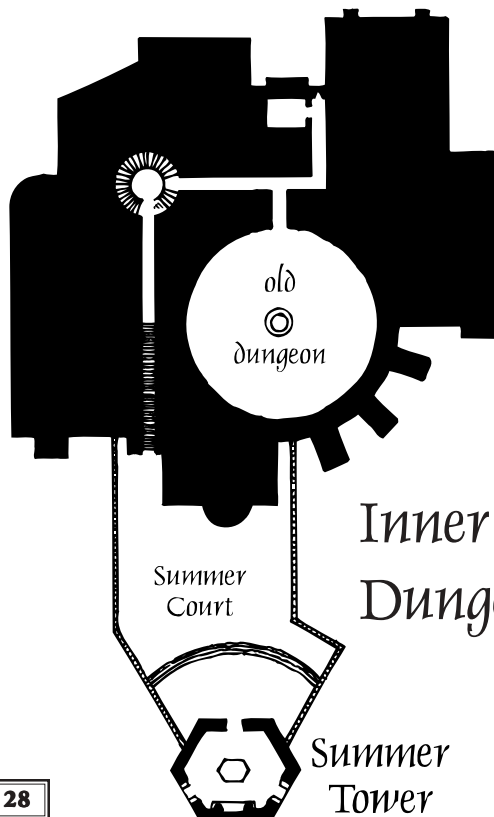
Below the Inner Bailey

The eastern half of Mount Ardan lies lower than the west, and as a result the *Great Bridge* connects the Ground Floor of the Outer Bailey to the First Floor of the Inner. The “Ground” Floor of the Inner Bailey is thus considered by many to be the first of the subterranean levels, and below it there lie other realms.

The Ground Floor: Although this is the ground floor of the Inner Bailey, it is lower than the ground level of the Outer regions. It houses, among its dim vaults and odd-shaped passages, the *Kitchen*, *Cellar*, *Pantry*, and other service areas. Several store rooms and the *Treasury* take up the middle of the level; also located here is the *Pool*, for the use of Inner Bailey residents and their guests.



Inner Bailey
Ground Floor



Inner Bailey
Dungeons

Summer
Tower

The Dungeons: The seldom-visited *Old Dungeon* is the oldest chamber of the Inner Bailey. Also on this level is a furnace room, which heats the water for the Pool on the level above. Jutting southwards from the Inner Bailey is the broad *Summer Court*, which runs out to the *Summer Tower*, inhabited by the Royal Sorceress. This area has an excellent view of the rest of Castle Marrach.

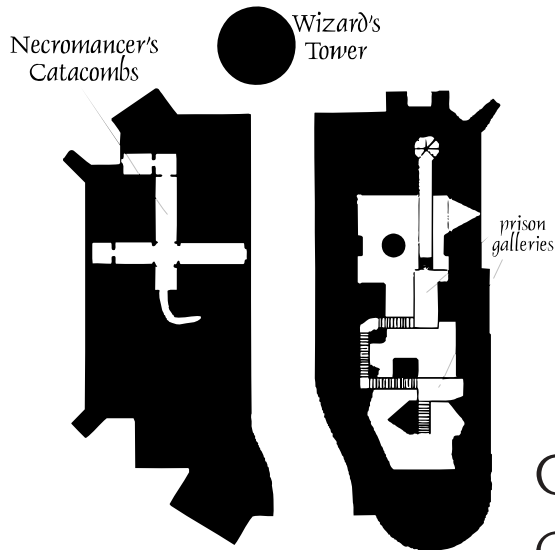
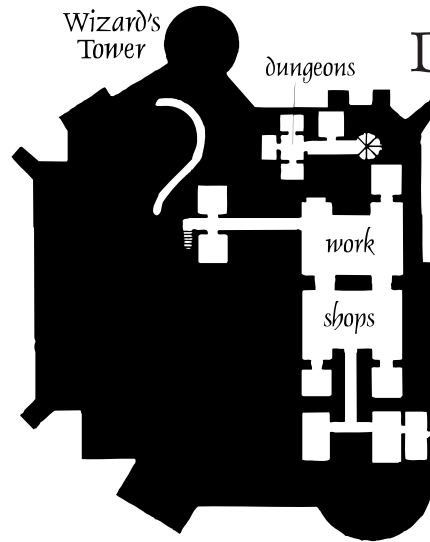
What Lies Beneath: It is known that secret passages exist within the Castle; and some apparently penetrate below the levels known to most residents. Long-forgotten chambers, rat-infested cracks and holes, mysterious caverns, or the haunted halls of evil beings may perforate Mount Ardan. Wise guests will shun these areas, however.

Below the Outer Bailey

The realms below the Outer Bailey are best known for the various dungeons and prisons carved into the ancient rock, though other uses are being found or discovered for them as the New Awakenings continue.

The Dungeons: At one corner of this level are the *Dungeons*, used by the Winter Watch to incarcerate various miscreants and scofflaws. One of the dungeon rooms contains an *Oubliette*, a deep, dark hole for the most obstreperous offenders. Most of this level, however, has been converted to less sinister pursuits, including the various *Work Shops* used by the castle staff and various guilds, to produce useful and decorative items.

Outer Bailey Dungeons

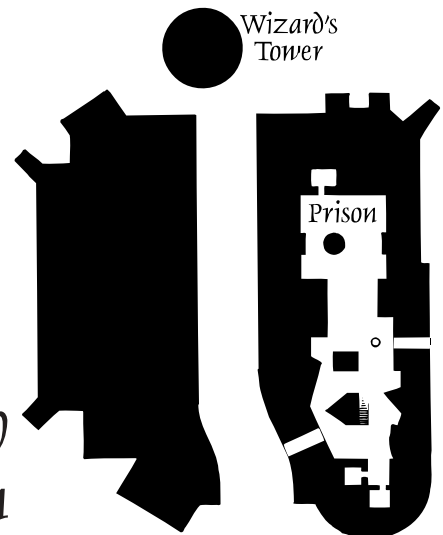


The Catacombs: These areas, deep in the foundations of the Outer Bailey, are grim and unwelcoming. Few persons enjoy their visits here. A great vaulted chasm runs through the foundations here; to the west of it are the *Catacombs* wherein the Royal Necromancer works his arts. On the eastern side of the chasm is the upper part of the vast *Prison*—shown here are the iron-spiked galleries and stairs which lead down to the Prison floor.

Outer Bailey Catacombs

The Prison: Here is the cruel and cold *Prison*, with a pair of unwelcoming cells at its southern end; serious felons are left to regret their crimes in these dank chambers. Rusting chains, thick iron grilles, and instruments of torment also give visitors reason to regret their journey. In the central area, the Torturer and Executioner plies his peculiar trade. The uses of the northern end of the Prison are unknown.

Outer Bailey Prison



OOO and IC

In a roleplaying game, particularly one where you can't physically see the other players, it's always important to remember the boundaries between in-character (IC) and out-of-character (OOO) actions. Your Role might do something mean to another character IC. Your Role might act IC in ways that you never would; she might espouse radically different views or portray very different emotions. IC you might enter into a major conflict with another character.

That's all great. It's good storytelling and good roleplaying.

Just remember that things done in the game IC are exactly that — in-character — and not necessarily representative of a player's OOO views, beliefs, or emotions. If you ever want to check and make sure a player isn't taking an IC conflict personally — or if you personally feel like an IC conflict is hitting too close to home — talk to the other player.

Inside Castle Marrach, you can use the command *ooo* to send an out-of-character message. Just type *ooo* and then a message in quotes. It's a way to make sure that everyone is on the same page and is using the same boundary mark between IC and OOO actions and conflicts.

INTRODUCTION TO STORYPLAYING

Castle Marrach *isn't* like most games you've played. It isn't *just* about making your Role more influential, or finding a neat new magic item, or searching out monsters and slaying them. Instead, Castle Marrach is a StoryPlaying game. It invites you to interact with other players in a cooperative and social way, creating plots and resolving conflicts. But, as we'll see, that's not the whole picture: seeking success and meeting friends (and enemies) are important elements of StoryPlaying as well.

Playing Roles

Though the idea of cooperative StoryPlaying may sound intimidating, it's very easy to get started and become a Guest in Castle Marrach. All you have to do is assume a Role — a person with a name, a personality, and a physical description. Many people enjoy roleplaying for the opportunity to become someone completely unlike themselves — someone stronger, or wiser, or more truthful, or more deceptive. Others prefer to play Roles very much like themselves, in order to experience how they might behave in extraordinary circumstances. **Playing Castle Marrach** (pgs. 30-36) offers some additional suggestions on how to choose your Role.

Being true to your Role (or playing in character) is a very important part of enjoying Castle Marrach. While you yourself may be petrified of rats, if you're playing the Role of someone who's demonstrated acute bravery, she had better not scream and head for high ground when a giant rodent begins terrifying the Outer Bailey. In addition, as a player you have much wider access to knowledge than your Role does — via this book, postings to the Forums, and the personal Web pages of Castle Marrach characters. You should try to keep such out-of-Role information from seeping into your StoryPlaying.

Playing a Role is about being a different person, about rising above some of the mundane concerns of your own life. Enjoy it! It's one of the true pleasures of participating in a StoryPlaying experience.

Telling Stories

Unlike many other roleplaying games, Castle Marrach focuses on StoryTelling — creating and playing out stories in cooperation with other players. In many respects, Castle Marrach is more like improvisational theater than a game. There are no clear-cut goals that players need to achieve in order to win. A story might have any number of outcomes, depending upon actions of the players who become involved. The challenge comes in creating a compelling drama that brings your Role to life.

Sometimes you will achieve success in your goals, but sometimes you may instead meet failure. In seeking to become an Honored Guest, attempting to find magic within yourself, or competing with another player for a rare object, you may find that you are defeated, perhaps after months of work. This is part of StoryTelling as well, for adversity brings with it character growth. When participating in stories, you should always consider how your Role might be changed, for good or for ill.

Initially you will have the opportunity to become involved in many of the stories already taking place in the Castle. However, you are also encouraged to create your own stories, either individually or with the cooperation of other players. Has a conflict erupted between your Role and another character, that you'd like to see more fully played out? Has your Role discovered a lost memory that might point to a mystery from her past? Is your Role interested in staging a play or leading a lecture? This is your chance to be the hero of your own story — or the villain.

Online StoryPlotters will often be able to provide some support for your stories, by offering guidance with details, rounding up additional players, and creating special objects and settings.

Seeking Success

Though Castle Marrach is about roleplaying and cooperative storytelling, that isn't the end-all and be-all. Many players will be interested in advancing their characters, and there *is* room for that within Castle Marrach. Players will be able to rise through the ranks of various guilds, becoming leaders or notable members. Some will create guilds of their own, to espouse their particular ideas. If players are able to gain sufficient Favour to be allowed into the Inner Bailey as an Honored Guest, new vistas open. The Royal Guard, the Orders of Knighthood, and the Royal Collegium offer positions for some of the most esteemed residents of Castle Marrach. Some residents will gain the special Favour of the Queen and her consort, Lord Chancellor Boreas.

And that's to say nothing of the catacombs beneath the Castle, where a different type of Favour may be found. They have been closed for decades, all but impenetrable, but whispered rumors say that one day they may open again... to a select few.

Meeting Friends

Castle Marrach is a multiplayer game open to the entire Internet, and thus it has developed a community. When you're playing Castle Marrach, you'll be doing more than just telling stories, playing roles, and seeking out success. You'll also be meeting real people, interested, just as you are, in interactive fiction. Castle Marrach isn't just a StoryPlaying game, it's a *multiplayer* StoryPlaying game.

And *that* is where much of the enjoyment lies.

The Welcome Room

Within Castle Marrach you'll occasionally want to use the *ooc* command to ensure that everyone knows what's in-character and what's not. It should be used with care, though, because it can be distracting to the game if you use this command to engage in general out-of-character discussions, about how your life is going, what your favorite sports teams are doing, or any other general topics.

However, Skotos is trying to create a community that is larger than any individual game, and thus it has created the Welcome Room for this type of out-of-character discussion.

To enter the Welcome Room, go to the "Our Games" page, and click on the appropriate "Play Now" button, or choose the "Chat Room" link that appears on some sidebars, or go directly to:

<http://welcome.skotos.net>

This will open a window into a new virtual environment. The same commands you're used to in Marrach will work here.

Marrach players tend to hang out in the "Court of Castle Marrach" which is south, then east of the entry hall. Some players maintain links to both Castle Marrach and the Welcome Room at the same time, so that they can engage in OOC conversations while at the same time telling stories in Marrach.

Characterization

As with appearance, to properly characterize your Role you just need to choose a few personality traits. If you chose any adjectives when you were describing your character (see “Creating a Character”, right), you’re already partway there. Is your character angry, mad, nice, honest, disloyal, or something else? A few decisions will help outline your character in broad strokes.

Once you’ve made these decisions, how do you convey your character’s personality to others? There are three methods: appearance, dialogue, and action.

Appearance is the simplest characterization method. You’ll have made some decisions in the Start Story. In the game, you can choose clothing and equipment appropriate for your Role’s personality. Does he wear plain clothing or ostentatious outfits? Does he wear a sword or carry scrolls? These answers will define who you are to other characters.

Dialogue is the heart of the Castle Marrach game. What style of conversation fits your Role? A simple person would use short, simple words. A well-educated Role might use overly verbose language when communicating. A pompous persona might pontificate with high complexity of language — even when she doesn’t know what she’s talking about. Dialogue can convey emotions, background, attitude, and social upbringing.

Action is the last method of characterization, and also the most powerful. What you do in your Role speaks volumes. Is your Role manipulative, convincing others to do his dirty work for him? Is she a coward, liable to flee at the first sign of danger? Is he weak-willed, always agreeing to go along with others? Is she the type of person who reveals secrets entrusted to her or the type of person who seconds a friend in a duel — even when the friend is clearly in the wrong? These actions will all say distinctively different things about your Role. In addition, you can use adverbs to clearly characterize your character’s actions; choose a few distinctive adverbs and use them regularly.

PLAYING CASTLE MARRACH

Once you’ve created an account and read over some of the basic Marrach documentation, you’ll probably be ready to actually start playing the game. In order to do this you’ll need to create a character—or a Role as it’s sometimes called in this guide, since you’re truly playing a part in an interactive drama.

Creating a Character

There’s a lot of thought that goes into creating a character: name, appearance, personality, and goals, just for a start. Some of this will develop as you create your character and begin playing Castle Marrach, so don’t worry if it’s not all at the tip of your fingers when you start. What you *should* try and do is come up with a general concept for your character, something that will help you make all of those other decisions as you create your character and play the game.

Try and come up with two words that describe the character you want to play. A couple of descriptive adjectives, or an adjective and a noun, or a pair of nouns would all work fine. Here’s a number of examples: *stubborn & stern* or *quiet & timid* (pairs of adjectives); *scholar & spy* or *anarchist & warrior* (pairs of nouns); and *angry poet* or *happy gossip* (adjective & noun).

When you’re trying to think of this broad description of your character, try and keep in mind the general themes of Castle Marrach: *chivalry*, *fantasy*, *intrigue*, *mystery*, and *romance*. Because Castle Marrach is so heavily focused on StoryTelling, out-of-theme characters probably won’t work.

Running the Start Story

Once you’ve come up with a few words to describe your character, you’re ready to go ahead and create him or her. Log in to Castle Marrach at <http://www.skotos.net/games/marrach/> click “Play Now,” then click on the link to “Create a Character.” The Castle Marrach Start Story should appear in your web browser.



The Castle Marrach Start Story is a web-based story which describes some of the basic background of your character and gives you a chance to fill out his or her physical characteristics. It's a totally different look (and interface) from the actual Castle Marrach game, which you'll be meeting in a bit. So, when you're running through these pages, be aware that the rest of the game will be different.

One of the first things you'll be asked to do is select a name for your character. While not strictly a historical setting, Castle Marrach does strive for a certain historical sensibility, so try and select a name appropriate for the Middle Ages (or the Renaissance). See also "Choosing Names", pg. 6.

Once you've selected your name, the Start Story will take you through a long list of physical characteristics. You'll want to choose your general build, your skin tone, your hair color and your eye color, but beyond that don't feel like you have to make many more selections. In literature, characters tend to be defined by just a few stand-out characteristics: a square jaw, large shoulders, dainty hands, and freckled skin being just a few examples. Make a few choices from the rest of the physical characteristics, but leave most of them as "Ordinary" and you'll have a character that's notable without being a mess.

During the course of your character's creation, you'll recall a single memory from your past life. You'll have a chance to return to this after you've entered the game proper.

When you're all done, the Necromantic apprentice Lith will tell you a rumor and wheel you up to your room. You'll have one last chance to look over your character before you officially create him or her... and then you'll be ready to enter Castle Marrach.

Starting the Game

Once you've created your character, you'll be returned to your main Marrach portal page. You should see your character name to the left of the screen with an underline below it. To begin the game, just click your character's name. The first time you play Castle Marrach the startup will be a little slow because you'll have to load our Castle Marrach client. On a slow modem, it might take up to five minutes. Read through this manual a bit more, and eventually the text input and output screens will appear in the center of the client. (Note: In the future, the game will load much more quickly, because the Marrach client will already be saved in your Web browser's memory.)

When you enter your game you'll find yourself in your private Guest Room, faced by the rather daunting, empty input bar. The following sections suggest *what* you should do to become involved in the Castle Marrach game. The next section, "Using the Parser," will explain *how* to do these things.

Getting Equipped

Castle Marrach isn't, in general, a game about accumulating *stuff* (though there are some opportunities, as noted below). Rather, it's a game about taking part in plots and engaging in cooperative StoryTelling. Nonetheless, when you begin the game you'll see that you're wearing only the linen wraps that you awakened in. Thus, your first priority will probably be to find some appropriate clothing.

The maps of the Outer Bailey on pgs. 18-19 detail the locations of the Tailor and the Seamstress. If you poke your head out of your Guest Room you'll see that you're on the second floor of the Outer Bailey, just west of the Alchemist's Hall. The helpful Awakened may be dwelling in the Sunset Room, just south of you. Otherwise, clothes are only a floor away.

Conflict in Castle Marrach

Conflict drives stories. It's an axiom that's been taught by storytellers for centuries... and it's true. Without conflict a story is static. There's no opportunity for change, and thus no doubt. You can have socialization without conflict; you can play roles; but you can't tell stories.

In a game about socialization and cooperation, like Castle Marrach, there's the tendency to be nice... to go along with what your online friends might want to do without raising any fuss.

Don't do it.

Be willing to disagree with other characters. Be willing to do things that might be detrimental to other characters. If you're creating plots of your own, be willing to create plots that will force characters to make difficult choices. Try and take a step back and figure out what your *Role* would do in a given situation. You might be great friends with everyone in Castle Marrach, but your Role probably isn't. Roleplay that honestly.

And, if you do, you'll be rewarded (as will all the other players) with plotlines and stories that are honest, emotional, and moving. By allowing for real conflicts, you'll allow for real change, and so the Castle will be a more dynamic, more exciting, more lifelike place.

StoryTellers

Castle Marrach is a game run almost entirely by the same community that plays it. A variety of privileged users, called StoryTellers, work together to tell the story of Castle Marrach and make sure that it is a fun place to be. Different StoryTellers, including StoryPlotters, StoryCoders, Veteran Players, and StoryGuides, undertake different tasks in Castle Marrach.

StoryPlotters are generally the coordinators of Castle Marrach. They take on the most Favoured Roles in the Castle and work to coordinate the biggest stories.

StoryCoders work in conjunction with the StoryPlotters, helping creating the interactive objects in Castle Marrach.

Veteran Players work under the guidance of StoryPlotters, taking on specific NPC Roles within the Castle, such as leaders of guilds and members of the Queen's court.

Finally *StoryGuides*, working under the guidance of the Lead StoryPlotter, help answer questions and solve problems within Castle Marrach.

Castle Marrach has a large community and thus there are almost always StoryTellers of some sort on line, to help with various IC problems.

OOO problems such as billing questions, client problems, and issues that can't be resolved by StoryGuides may be sent directly to the Skotos Customer Experience team. They often appear in Castle Marrach as StoryHosts and also can be sent e-mail at ce@skotos.net.

You'll want to head out of your room and north and east around the Alchemist's Hall. Take the passage that leads to the northeast stairs. Go up one flight and head back west, once more going north, this time around the upper reaches of the Alchemist's Hall. On the west side of the level a long passage runs south. The Tailor is present in the first room along this passage, the Seamstress in the second.

The tailor and the seamstress will be able to provide for all of your normal clothing needs. While journeying the Castle you'll also meet a few people who can meet basic needs. The Castle is rife with couriers who can provide you with scrolls and will also carry messages. In the Kitchen, on the ground floor, you can find cooks who will provide all manner of culinary necessity.

Meeting People

Once you've gotten clothed you'll probably want to find other Guests so that you can start learning about the history, the intrigues, and the plots of the Castle. The best place to do this is in the Dining Hall or the Dining Hall East. Take either eastern stairway all the way down to the ground floor, then emerge into the Outer Court Yard. People sometimes meet here, so don't just run through. Walking west will take you into the Great Hallway. The double doorways leading into the Dining Hall lie just north of the Great Hallway. Guests tend to congregate near the bar in the main Dining Hall or socialize in front of the fireplace to the east.

When you meet other Guests, introduce yourself and tell people that you're Newly Awakened. No doubt, they'll begin to tell you about their guilds and the stories that they're involved in almost at once. If you come in and find that the other Guests are already busy with a scene, watch quietly for a while. You'll no doubt learn more about the Castle and the current happenings.

Joining Guilds

After you're clothed and have talked with a few other Guests, you'll start becoming comfortable with Castle Marrach. At this point, you'll want to start diving more deeply into the plots, intrigues, and stories that bring the Castle to life. The best way to do this is to join one or more guilds.

You should examine the list of Outer Bailey guilds that appears on pgs. 8-15 and see which appeal to you. Also, ask about new guilds when talking to fellow Guests. The Newly Awakened have already created a number of new guilds within the Castle, and others are constantly appearing. Once you've found one (or a few) guilds that interest you, you'll want to investigate joining them.

Most guilds have regular meetings, many of which are listed on the Castle Marrach calendars, mentioned in **More Information** (pg. 45). Attend the meetings of the guilds that interest you. Talk with the members. Get a sense of the true nature of the guild and whether it will appeal to you. When you're ready, ask what is required to be admitted to the guild... and be aware that some guilds have arduous entry processes.

When you're done, you'll have gained a new set of friends for your character, and you'll also be well positioned to take part in any plots your guild may be associated with.

Recalling Memories

In wandering around the Castle, you'll probably have come to the determination that your memory is not coming back, beyond that one moment of the past that you managed to grab ahold of while you were being wheeled

up to your room. Some new players make it their goal to try and discover more about their memories and what might have become of them. The Rememberers is a guild that tries to help people in this task, although rumor says that they might not be well respected among the nobility of the Court.

Playing Plots

As you become more deeply involved in the world of Castle Marrach you'll see that the heart of the game is truly taking part in plots and telling stories. Things are *constantly* going on in Castle Marrach, via plots that are being created by StoryTellers and fellow players. You'll be given the opportunity to investigate wrongdoings, research ancient mysteries, and engage in politics and intrigue.

For your first few days in Castle Marrach, you'll probably want to lay low, to see how the game is played. But, once you understand the nature of Castle Marrach plots, feel free to dive into them wholeheartedly. Take dynamic roles in plots; extend and expand upon storylines; and make yourself the center of events. Castle Marrach is truly a creative game, an experiment in cooperative storytelling. Take advantage of it.

And, when you've enjoyed the game for a month or so, and you're an old veteran in the Castle, you'll probably be ready to take the next step: crafting your own stories. Want to reveal your character's history, to create a rivalry between your Role and another character, to reveal a small secret of your guild? You can do so by creating your own stories in Castle Marrach. And, if you need help with props, or you need to have a plot checked against the plots of the overall Castle, you can talk with the various StoryTellers, who are working to unify the stories told in Castle Marrach.

In-Game Roles

StoryTellers take on the Roles of various elders in the Castle, from the Queen to the occasional serving maid. These are the older, more well-known members of the Castle, often used to drive Castle plots.

The Assist Command

If you have questions or problems, or need help advancing a plot, you can contact the Online Hosts via the *assist* command. Just type *assist* then detail your problem in "quotes". If no one is online, the Hosts will get back to you when they log on.

Continuing the Game

Joining a guild is the easiest way to get started in Castle Marrach. As you continue playing the game, however, you'll see that it's not the only route to effective StoryPlaying. There are many creative possibilities in Castle Marrach, some associated with guilds, and others not.

Creating Art

Guests in Castle Marrach have the ability to create art. The most common artistic expression is writing, be it poetic or prose, fantastic or historical. Books and scrolls are widely available for the creation and distribution of poems, stories, and non-fiction.

Since the New Awakenings, Guests have also begun to show interest in the other arts. Lessons have begun in crafting and dancing. Interest in the fine arts, such as sculpture, drawing, and painting, have also begun to wax.

There are a number of artistic guilds in the Outer Bailey that support these endeavors. The Friends of the Muse and the Poets' Brotherhood and the oldest and most well-known, but the artistic guilds founded by the Newly Awakened have begun to proliferate as well.

Reporting Problems

Minor problems in Castle Marrach should be reported with the *bug* and *typo* commands. However, if you're having a larger technical problem with the game that's genuinely impacting your enjoyment of the game, please use the *assist* command or send mail to ce@skotos.net.

We'll need the following information:

- Username and character.
- Date and time.
- The specific symptoms you're experiencing, including any error messages.

If this is a client-related problem, please also tell us:

- What version & what OS you're running.
- What version & what browser you're running.

Submitting Artwork

If you have a character portrait that was drawn by someone "in-character", and the portrait is period, and you own the copyright (either because you drew the image, or someone drew it for you and gave you permission to use it online), you can submit it to Skotos for inclusion in the game. We'll host it on our server, and give you an in-game item that will pop up the portrait when you look at it.

Send these graphics to ce@skotos.net. Make sure that you say that you are the artist, or that you have the permission of the artist, and that you give us permission to use the artwork in the game as Participatory Content per Skotos' TOS. Finally, give us your player name and the character name you'd like the sketch to be "signed" by, as the in-character artist.

Rules of Dueling

Formal dueling must follow certain rules laid out by the Queen's Capitulary.

- Formal approval from the Queen, the Chancellor, or the Chamberlain is required.
- The consent of both parties is required.
- A delay of a day is required.
- Seconds to the duel must be appointed.
- Seconds must make an attempt at reconciliation.
- Seconds must arrange the conditions of the duel.

Attacks in Dueling

The modern schools of dueling use five main attacking styles. The two most basic, thrust and cut, the more complex offenses of a feint, and the combinations of lunge and slip.

The thrust or jab is the most basic attack form in the inventory of a new duelist. It consists simply of a quick extension of the blade of the sword, generally from either a guard low or guard high position. Tis one of the fastest attacks, but also one of the attacks that most leaves the duelist open to counter attack, unless he can recover quickly.

The next most basic attack is the long cut or slash. Tis a slower attack than the thrust, but with more power behind the sword, and thus requiring a greater exertion to parry. The attack also results in a more solid defensive posture because of the more compact body positioning when executing the maneuver. Also, because of the ability of a sword to cut along its entire edge, and the ease with which it can be swung, tis possible to lash out in this way from many more positions than the more contained thrust. Thus while off balance, this is the maneuver of choice.

— From *Combat, Theory & Practice*
by Ser Martel

Dueling for Honor

While combat and battle are not a major part of life in Castle Marrach, from time-to-time it's inevitable that a conflict will lead to a physical confrontation. The Queen frowns upon brawling and other such uncouth behavior, but she does offer one outlet for physical conflict: dueling. This honorable, formal combat is built around the Dueling Code.

Formal dueling in Castle Marrach is more than just a quick means to determine the resolution of a conflict. It is a formal activity wherein certain rules must be carefully followed (see sidebar); ignoring these formalities — or engaging in formal duels frivolously — can result in the loss of Favour and honor.

Formal duels in the Outer Bailey tend to be carried out in the Practice Room, to the west of the first floor. The Battle Guild, the Duelist's Society, and the Winter Watch are among the guilds that lead practices there, allowing duelists to improve their skills.

Duels rarely result in death, though injuries are likely. The potential loss of honor and Favour can have an even more lasting effect.

Gaining Favour

There is no money in Castle Marrach. The true coin of the realm is Favour, particularly in the Inner Bailey. Favour is a way of ascertaining which of the Castle elders trust and like your character. It can be gained by completing tasks, impressing nobles, or by being generally popular among the guests. It can be lost by associating with the wrong guilds or persons, or engaging in insulting or outrageous acts (although some elders may approve of these behaviors as well). A minimal level of Favour will gain a Newly Awakened the title of Honored Guest, with access to public parts of the Inner Bailey. Greater levels of Favour may grant Guests special priveleges, and will inspire trust in Castle elders.

Accumulating Items

Most items are freely available in Castle Marrach — easily gotten from the tailors, seamstresses, cooks, and couriers. There is no true economy. However, guests have been known to seek out certain rare items.

Swords are probably the most sought-after commodity. They are available in the Outer Bailey, but only to members of martial organizations whose charter has been approved by the Lord Chamberlain. Guests seeking swords have traditionally joined either the Duelists or the Winter Watch. It should be noted that the Queen's Capitulary makes the carrying of a sword by an unauthorized person a misdemeanor: "If any person, not yet a courtier, or not serving in Her Majesty's Royal Army, shall wear a sword about in public, let the weapon be confiscated, and let them be exposed for no more than two days in the stocks, or suffer no more than three days imprisonment. But common subjects who have been given swords by courtiers may wear them in public; however, the courtier who provided the weapon may be held responsible for the behaviour of the common citizen. Also, members of any society with a charter so permitting may also wear weapons. Common subjects using swords in areas customary or appropriate for fencing practice shall not be condemned under this law."

Other accessories of value include rare jewelry, hand-altered clothing, exotic food and drink, and other treasures. Belt pouches have also been in great demand since the New Awakenings. As Guests gain in Favour, they will find many of these items will become available to them.

Learning Skills

When you awaken in Castle Marrach you are bereft not only of memories, but also of the experiences of whatever life might have come before. The skills that you might have once known are largely gone. You will soon learn that there are exceptions—some skills remain with you, usually related to your scant memories. You also have certain minimal abilities in common tasks; everyone can duel, to an extent, and can speak the common tongue.

As you abide in Marrach you will doubtless want to increase your skills and learn new ones. There are many teachers in the Castle, each able to instruct students in certain topics. However, many of the best teachers guard their time jealously. In order to gain instruction from them, you may need to do them favors, go on quests, or instruct them in equally high-level skills.

As you continue to learn skills you will eventually become one of the better practitioners of those specific arts which interest you. At this time you may decide to learn to teach, so that you may take on students of your own.

Crafting Items

Some Guests will desire to take on the role of skilled craftspeople, no longer just acquiring items, but creating and modifying goods for use by the denizens of Castle Marrach. Newly Awakened Guests with such a desire would do well to seek out experienced craftspeople and see how they might gain their Favor, and thus training in their skills. Certain elders of the Castle also possess books which offer novice training in various crafts.

Although they cannot create totally new items, the artisans of Castle Marrach can take the plain items offered by Castle servants and make them beautiful. Craft professions include bookbinders, carpenters, cobblers, dyers, embossers, embroiderers, engravers, glovers, hatters, tailors, and weaponsmiths. Related professions include hairdressers and tattooists.

Meeting Goals

As you become more embroiled in the plots of the Castle, you'll learn more about the Castle's societies, and the stories that underlie Marrach. As you do so, you'll be able to set new goals for your Role, and perhaps you'll be able to develop your plots around these goals as well. Possibilities include:

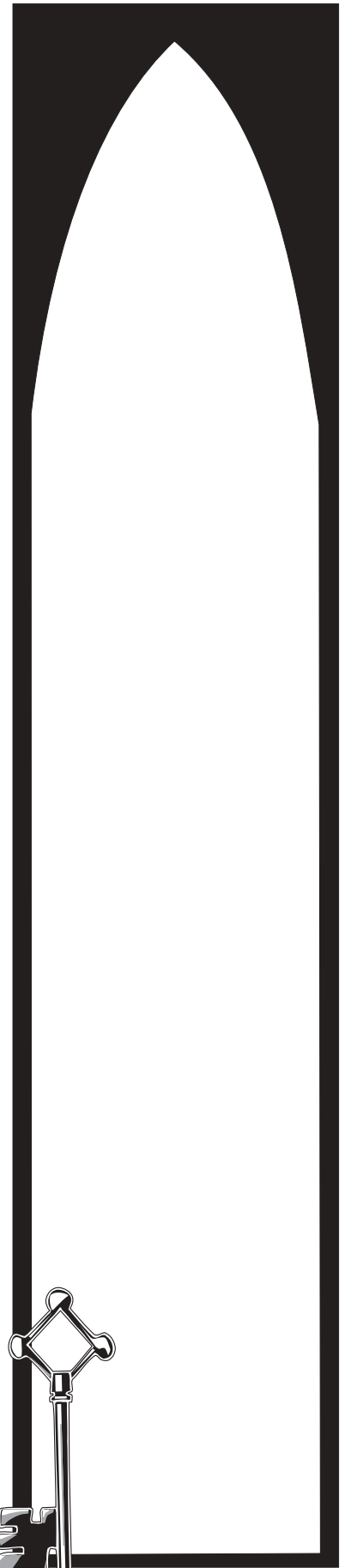
- Become a member of the guild of your choice and rise to prominence within it.
- Create a new guild with the backing of the Chamberlain.
- Become an artist, duelist, or crafter of note.
- Gain the trust of an elder in the Castle or seek their downfall.
- Discover true friends or find true love.
- Become an Honored Guest with access to the Inner Bailey.
- Gain admittance to one of the royal guilds or become a knight.
- Gain appointment to a high position in the Court.
- Discover the secret of the New Awakenings or a way out of the Castle.

Some goals might be accomplished in days, while others might take months or years to complete. The Castle is staid in its old ways, but with the Newly Awakened comes new and dynamic action that has not been seen in ages.

Dying

Few people pursue dying as a goal, but it can happen in Castle Marrach.

Castle Marrach is primarily a consensual environment, and thus your Role can't die without taking an action that places him in danger — such as entering a duel or accepting poisoned wine from a supposedly trustworthy court member. However, avoiding all dangerous situations might leave you without honor and without friends. Of course, there is also the traditional wisdom which holds that dying is, for some, just another beginning....



Common Client Problems

As a new player, it's possible that you might have problems the first time you try and load our client. Here's two situations where we know our clients will not work:

- **Behind Firewalls or Proxies.** If you are behind a firewall, which is frequently the case at businesses, our client will not be able to talk to the Castle Marrach game. Try and play from a different location, or talk to your system administrator about configuring your firewall or proxy to allow you to play.
- **On Macs Using IE.** If you're using Internet Explorer on a Macintosh our client will not run because of problems with IE's Java. Use Netscape Navigator instead, downloading from www.netscape.com if you don't already have Navigator installed.
- **Loading Speed.** It can take a while for a client to load. If it fails the first time, it can help to close all browser windows and try reloading a second time.

If these solutions don't resolve your client problems, please consult our most up-to-date FAQ at the Skotos web site or contact ce@skotos.net.

USING THE PARSER

Now you're ready to immerse yourself in the mysteries, intrigues, plots, and stories of Castle Marrach. The question is: how? As was mentioned in **Playing Castle Marrach** (pgs. 30-35), the first thing you need to do is click on your character's name on your Marrach Portal Page. That will bring up the Marrach client with a blue screen in the middle. Depending on the speed of your modem, it might take up to five minutes to load the client the first time. After that, it'll be automatically saved on your machine and you'll always be able to log into Castle Marrach quickly.

Once the client loads, you'll find yourself sitting in your Guest Room, staring at an empty input bar that is waiting for commands.

Parsers and Imperatives

The parser is the part of the Castle Marrach game that figures out *what you mean* when you type in a command. It expects commands to be delivered to it as imperatives (in real life, words like "Stop!" or "Heel!"). You're telling your Role what to do. There's no need to include a pronoun (like "you" or "I").

Commands should be simple, singular thoughts. A complex command might involve a verb, an adverb, a preposition, an adjective, and a noun (*bow gracefully to tall guard*), but not much more. Here's a few examples of the type of simple command that Castle Marrach can understand:

- > go north
- > smile happily at queen
- > slyly wink to third guard

More complex commands may confuse the parser. Here are a few imperatives that don't currently work in Castle Marrach:

- > look around the cavern and see what's interesting
- > squint to make out more details in the darkness
- > wait for my eyes to adjust to the dark
- > look up to see where I fell from

The following sections detail the main categories of commands in Castle Marrach. There's a much more complete online tutorial which can be found at <http://www.skotos.net/games/marrach/Tutorial.html> (or just click the "Tutorial" button on the main Marrach page).

Help

There's a wide variety of additional documentation available on Castle Marrach. See **More Information** (p.45) for some of those available out of game. In-game, you can always use the *help* command to access more information.

> help

Thank you for asking for help. There are a variety of help resources available.

There are help files available on:

- * help basics - help for the new player
- * help concepts - help on general concepts
- * help topics - list of all help topics

* help [command] - help on a specific command

In addition, the following help related commands may be useful:

* tip - gives you a new tip from the tips database

* assist "[message]" - requests personal assistance from any available storyhost

help concepts will list out a huge amount of additional information on various systems and themes in Castle Marrach. Also of great importance to new players is the *tip* command, which runs through a basic set of information which will help you get around the Castle for the first time.

> tip

TIP: The "tip" command can be typed repeatedly to read through an initial set of information. Each time you type it, you will learn a little bit more about how to issue commands and where to go in Castle Marrach. Type "tip" (without the quotes) again for information on other help resources.

Finally, if you ever get really stuck, you can use the *assist* command. This will send a message to online StoryTellers. There are frequently a variety of StoryTellers available online to help.

> assist "I've fallen and I can't get up."

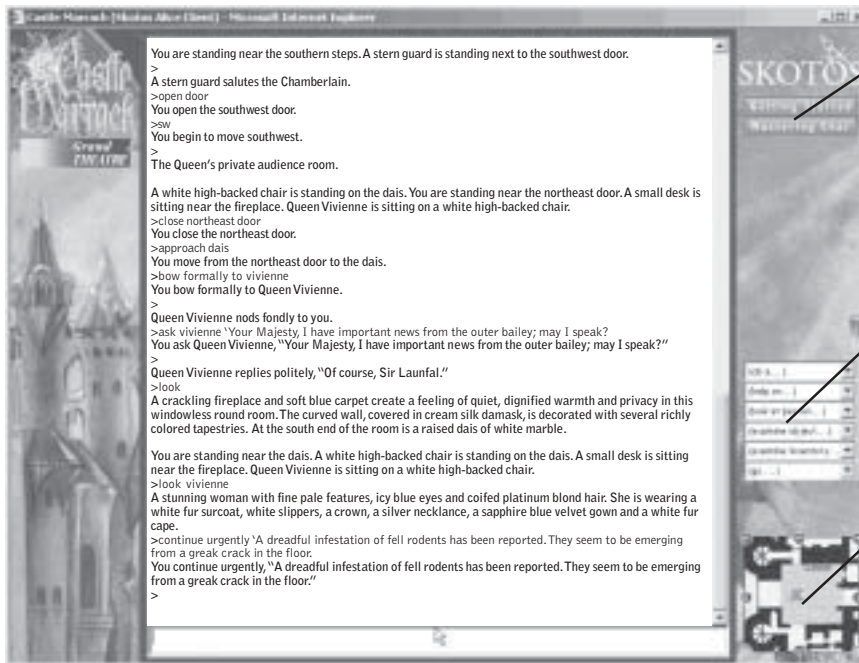
Your message has been sent to online StoryTellers

Movement

There are variety of commands for moving about the Castle. To move from room to room, type the name of a direction (north, south, southwest, up, down, etc. or simply n, s, sw, u, d, etc.). Alternatively, you can choose to *enter* or *go* through an exit that appears in a room (i.e., the large door, the dark hallway, the outer courtyard, etc.).

> enter dark hallway

You enter the dark hallway to the north.



Dynamic Client Features

The Help Buttons

Click these for more basic information on getting around in *Castle Marrach*.

Pop-up Menus

Select these to access basic commands and look at standard information.

The Map

Look here for your close surroundings. Click here to view your current region. Click on arrows to move through exits.

Common Commands

The following lists a number of commands commonly used in Castle Marrach. Help files are available on most of the action verbs. There are many, many more social verbs and adverbs. If you want to use a word, try it and see if it works.

Action Verbs: accept, advance, address, allow, alter, approach, ask, consent, cut, deny, dodge, down, drink, drop, duel, east, eat, enter, examine, exits, feint, forget, get, give, go, guard, inventory, learn, leave, look, north, offer, place, put, recall, refuse, remember, remove, rest, retire, sign, skills, south, surrender, take, teach, throw, thrust, up, wear, west, wield, write.

Social Verbs: announce, apologize, applaud, ask, bow, comment, continue, crouch, cry, curse, curtesy, exclaim, finish, frown, gasp, grin, gulp, hug, kiss, kneel, laugh, lie, mumble, nod, ooc, point, pout, proclaim, question, reply, recite, respond, say, scream, shiver, shout, sigh, sip, sit, slap, smile, smirk, sneer, snort, stand, state, tell, thank, wave, whisper, whistle, wink, wonder, yelp.

Adverbs: abashedly, acidly, angrily, arrogantly, awkwardly, casually, curtly, dismissively, dreamily, fondly, gracefully, grandly, haughtily, humbly, impatiently, ironically, loudly, knowingly, nervously, playfully, proudly, prudently, quietly, sadly, sagely, sharply, silently, slowly, slyly, softly, sweetly, tearfully, thoughtfully, truthfully, warily, zealously, zestfully, zestily.

Prepositions: at, before, below, beneath, by, in, near, on, to, under.

System Verbs: assist, bug, help, idea, tip, typo.

> go outer courtyard

You enter the outer courtyard.

You can also move around inside of a room. You do this by approaching objects (such as the fireplace, the round table, or even another player).

> approach wall

You approach the wall around the yard.

Instead of just using the approach command, you can also use commands that combine a verb, a preposition, and an object, such as *stand by fireplace* or *sit on chair* or *lie under table*.

> sit on wall

You sit on the wall around the yard.

> look at wall

The wall winds around the entire courtyard. You are sitting on the wall around the yard.

When you stand near objects, it becomes more obvious which people and things you're interacting with. In addition, it'll be easier for you to hear things said by people in your proximity, and harder for people outside of your proximity to hear you.

See *help movement* and *help proximity* for more information.

Perception

When you enter a room, you will typically get a very brief description of the locale:

> east

The Royal Garden, a glittering white wonderland.

You can get more information with the *look* or *examine* commands. The *examine* command tends to offer the most information, but it takes more time and can be seen by other players.

> look

Raw earth underfoot, dusted with softly crunching snow. The twisting shapes of barren trees; their naked branches, covered in glittering crystals of ice, reach toward the open sky overhead. Dark bark frosted in white. The royal garden sparkles with the magical brightness of wintery silence. It is surrounded by stone walls, but the western wall dividing the garden from the courtyard is only about ten feet high, made of bricks, with a wooden trellis arching over the garden entrance. In the northwest corner is the rounded wall of a cistern tower. A flight of stairs against the eastern wall leads up.

> examine

You begin to examine your surroundings.

The royal garden sparkles with the magical brightness of wintery silence. It is surrounded by stone walls, which rise for a hundred

feet or more before ending. The western wall is the exception, being a brick wall a mere ten feet high, just tall enough to divide the garden from the courtyard. In the center of that wall is an open space where a wooden trellis arches over the garden entrance. All around the garden, tall trees rise from the snow-covered ground, their dark trunks and bare, gnarled branches glittering with frost and icicles. In the northwest corner is the rounded wall of a cistern tower. A flight of stairs against the eastern wall leads up to the second level. Iron lampposts stand in the northeast and southwest corners of the garden, the gold of their quiet flames finding a reflection in the white sparkle of snow that covers the ground. There is a semicircular marble bench in front of the southwest lamppost. In the north wall, a narrow passage leads indoors, with an oak door just inside the entrance. Another door, painted white, is set into the south wall. A thin cobblestone path winds from the garden entrance to that south door.

You can also use the *look* and *examine* commands to get description of specific items that you see within rooms.

> look at lanterns

You look at the iron-framed lanterns; one pair is mounted near each end of the passage, the third pair in the middle. They cast a dim light in the passage.

> examine lanterns

The lanterns are mounted ten feet off the floor, in pairs facing each other along the passageway. One pair is mounted ten feet from each end of the passage; the third pair is mounted mid-passage. Each is an iron-framed glass box a bit under a foot square, mounted on a short, thick arm protruding from the wall. Within each lantern is a fat candle, burning dimly.

Note that it can be considered impolite to examine people, and that everyone will see when you begin an examination. See *help perception* for more information.

Communication with Players

Hundreds of commands can be used to *say* things in Castle Marrach. You can *state*, *question*, *mumble*, or *shout*. Use the command that best describes your Role's emotions. After the verb, put what you want to say in quotation marks:

> announce "Welcome to Castle Marrach"

You announce, "Welcome to Castle Marrach."

> say "I think you'll like it here!"

You say "I think you'll like it here!"

You can add an object or an adverb to any communication verb.

> whisper to Dagonet "Thank you."

You whisper to Dagonet, "Thank you."

> say softly "Your limerick was most inspiring."

You say softly, "Your limerick was most inspiring."

Recalling Memories

You may be interested in recovering that single memory that you remembered during the Start Story. You can do this with the *recall* command.

> recall

You vaguely remember a scene from the past... It is a lovely scrap of cloth, dark blue, heavy and rich. Such a find, pulled from the alley behind a great town house, is a rare treasure. Panting with eagerness, you pull it this way and that, tearing pieces apart with nails and teeth — and then, chuckling with pleasure, you wrap the strips tightly around gnarled, calloused feet. So good it is, you think, to have shoes again!

You may also store new memories with the *remember* command.

> remember "Some soup is meant to be served cold."

Memory added, use recall to remember it.

Finally, you can use the *forget* verb to remove memories. Beware, because you will forget every single memory with the words that you select:

> forget "soup"

Memories forgotten: 1

See *help memory* for more information.

Other Advanced Commands

The Castle Marrach game system recognizes a large number of other verbs that allow you to perform a variety of different actions. In most cases, you can modify the verb by indicating an object or adding an adverb or both. For example:

> **bow**

You bow.

> **bow to the Queen**

You bow to the Queen.

> **bow haughtily to the Queen**

You bow haughtily to the Queen.

Verbs can also be used to express a stance, such as standing, sitting, crouching, kneeling, and so forth. If you use one of these commands, your Role's pose will be shown to anyone who looks at you.

> **approach Queen**

You move from the entry hall to the Queen.

> **kneel**

You kneel.

> **examine me**

You are kneeling by the Queen.

See *help gesture* and *help pose* for more information.

Finally, you can also attach spoken evocations to many gestures, like smile, frown, and wink. This allows you to speak while engaging in another activity.

> **smile "Hello, my friend."**

You smile, "Hello, my friend."

See *help communication* for more information.

Communication with CNPCs

Computer NPCs (or CNPCs) wander around the Castle trying to help you with basic tasks. You'll very quickly meet the seamstress and the tailor. Later on, you'll interact with couriers and cooks as well. You can't use standard communication verbs to speak with the CNPCs. Instead, you use specific verbs that instruct them to help you out.

Most CNPCs can give you things. Type *ask* followed by the name of a CNPC to get a list of items, then use the *ask* command again to actually request an item.

> **ask tailor**

The tailor can give you cloaks, pants, shirts, boots, sandals, caps, vests, belts and tunics.

> **ask tailor for cap**

A tailor gives a green cap to you.

The couriers can not only give you scrolls, but they can also deliver scrolls to other players, provided that you've addressed, written, and signed the scroll.

> **ask courier for scroll**

A tall courier gives a scroll to you.

> **address scroll to "launfal"**

You address your scroll to Launfal.

> **write on scroll "Hallo!"**

You write on your scroll.

> **sign scroll "Me!"**

You sign your scroll.

> **read scroll**

It is addressed to Launfal. It says:

Hallo!

It is signed "Me!", by Hambin.

> **give scroll to courier**

A tall courier takes a scroll from you.

See *help cnpcs* and *help courier* for more information.

Skill Advancement

In Castle Marrach you can accumulate a variety of your skills. Your current skills can be viewed with the *skills* command:

```
> skills
---- Dueling ----
Advance: Apprentice
Cut: Senior Apprentice
Dodge: Novice
Guard: Senior Apprentice
Recover: Apprentice
Rest: Novice
Retire: Apprentice
Thrust: Senior Apprentice
```

Everyone will have dueling skills to start with, but any other skills, including languages and crafts, will depend upon your scant memories.

In order for a skill to be taught, a student and a teacher must come together in the same locale. The teacher must be more experienced in the desired skill than the student and must also have the teaching skill. He must want to teach the student too, which is not always the case with the most experienced teachers.

Teachers may be reluctant to teach skills because of the fact that skills are a genuine commodity in Castle Marrach. A very experienced teacher will usually not teach a skill to a high level without something substantial being offered in return. A teacher may determine how experienced a student is by using the *assess* command.

> assess hresh for eastern

You try to assess Hresh. This requires his consent.

Hresh allows you to assess him.
Hresh is a Novice in eastern.

Most teachers will be happy to teach a Novice. Once students wish to advance beyond Apprenticeship, however, the search for teachers will become more difficult.

Either the teacher or the student may initiate a lesson. Students requesting assistance can use the *study* command; teachers can use the *teach* command. Teaching is entirely consensual in Marrach. The teacher must agree to teach, and the student must agree to be taught.

> study eastern with launfal

You ask Launfal if he can help you improve your eastern skill.

> teach eastern to launfal

You are not skilled enough to be teaching Launfal that.

The student and teacher must spend half an hour together, in the same room, in order to complete a lesson (time is allowed for a few minutes of linkdeath or other net problems). At the end of that half an hour the student and teacher will be notified whether the student learned anything that day.

Skill Design & Mechanics

The Castle Marrach skill system has been designed to accommodate the realities of an ancient, social Castle. Because Castle Marrach is primarily a game of socialization the skill system reflects and encourages that style of gameplay. Almost all skills are taught by other players. To learn a skill you must remain with a teacher, conversing and socializing with him during the time period in which you're studying. Because the Castle is ancient, filled with timeless residents, skill gain is low. Don't expect to gain the highest skill levels overnight; some grand masters have trained for centuries.

Your odds of learning a skill in Castle Marrach are based upon a minimum of four values: how bad you are at the skill; how good your teacher is at the skill; how much better your teacher is than you at the skill; and how good your teacher is at teaching. A Novice at Teaching who is a Grand Master at Dueling Thrusts won't be able to help you much, nor will a Grand Master at Teaching who is only a Novice at Dueling Thrusts. Your chance of success when learning a skill varies from 10-100%.

Because your chance at improving your skill is partially based upon how bad you are at a skill, it gets harder to improve the better you get. It might take between a day and a week for a dedicated student with no skill in basket-weaving to become a Novice. For a Novice to become a Grand Master might take a year or longer of dedicated study *if the student can find willing teachers*.

Even if you fail to improve your skill, you will gain a little bit of experience, which will improve your chance of learning the skill in the future. This experience can be seen with the *skills* command. You will usually go up in a skill through random inspiration before you gain enough experience to improve your skill. But, if you're having a run of bad luck then your experience will come into play.

Teachers improve the longer they teach, but it is a slow road for them. On average a teacher improves only 1% of the time, and more slowly if he is not teaching full classes, meaning it might take months to gain a single skill level in Teaching.

Other Skills

The majority of the skills in Castle Marrach fall into one of two categories: alteration skills and duelist skills. However, there are other skills within Castle Marrach. Among them are magical skills learned by the sorceress' apprentice, healing skills learned by the medical students, and languages and chess skills, which can be learned by anyone.

You can always see the current status of your lessons with the "study" or "teach" command.

> study

You are currently studying your eastern skill with Launfal, with about 26 minutes left to go.

> teach

You are currently teaching 1 student:
Hergin has about 25 minutes left to go.

A student will learn the quickest is he is poor at the skill he is studying, if his teacher is good at the skill being taught, if his teacher is considerably better than him, and if his teacher is also good at teaching. A teacher will improve at teaching the more he teaches, but he will learn much slower than his students do.

If a student fails to improve in a skill he may not study any skills until the next day (24 hours after he started studying). If a student succeeds at improving in a skill, he may not study any skills until the next day, and he may not train the improved skill again for a week.

If you wish to become a teacher yourself, you must learn the teaching skill. The skill may not be taught, so you must seek out a book about teaching to become a Novice in the skill. Afterward you will slowly improve in teaching as you teach students your skills. You will be able to teach more students as your skill increases.

> read teaching book

You read about teaching until you feel you are a Novice in the skill.

Other books may exist which allow you to become Novices in other skills.

Altering Objects

The alteration skills are treated just like any other skills in Castle Marrach. You can see your skill levels with the *skills* command:

Skill Ranks

Most skills in Castle Marrach are named with the following ranks:

1. Novice
2. Apprentice
3. Senior Apprentice
4. Fellowcraft
5. Journeyman
6. Artisan
7. Senior Artisan
8. Master
9. Master Adept
10. Grand Master

> skills

---- Artisans: ----

Dyer: Artisan

---- Clothiers: ----

Glover: Apprentice

Tailor: Fellowcraft

---- Illustrators: ----

Embroiderer: Fellowcraft

Once you've found trainers and learned any alteration skills, you'll be able to alter objects. The first thing you must do is get plain items of the type that you want to alter. Clothing is generally available from the seamstress and the tailor. If you need more exotic clothing, or plain books or weapons, you should ask your teacher to requisition them for you.

Each type of item has certain traits that can be modified by certain skills. For example: a dyer can change the color of a tunic; an embroiderer can add a symbol to the clothing; and a tailor can modify the fit or the material. The following chart lists the various alteration skills of Castle Marrach, along with related verbs, traits, and objects.

Alteration or Craft?

The alteration system in Castle Marrach is fairly limited. It can only be used to alter plain items in certain specific ways. However the alteration system does, and will continue to, allow character to create tens of thousands of unique items. The functionality of the alteration system is really just a subset of what will eventually be offered as a crafting system. With a complete crafting system you'll be able to not just alter existing items, but also create totally new items from ingredients, using tools. We're not quite sure where the complete crafting system will fit into Castle Marrach once its developed, since the alteration system is already in place, but we're considering it as a possibility for an alchemy system or something else equally fun.

| <u>Craft</u> | <u>Verb</u> | <u>Traits</u> | <u>Objects</u> |
|--------------|------------------|---------------|------------------|
| Bookbinder | <i>bind</i> | binding | books |
| Carpenter | <i>build</i> | design, wood | furniture |
| Cobbler | <i>cobble</i> | fit, material | footwear |
| Dyer | <i>dye</i> | color | most objects |
| Embosser | <i>emboss</i> | symbol | books |
| Embroiderer | <i>embroider</i> | symbol | all clothing |
| Engraver | <i>engrave</i> | symbol | jewelry, weapons |
| Glover | <i>alter</i> | fit, material | handwear |
| Hairstylist | <i>style</i> | haircolor, | people |
| | | hairstyle, | |
| | | hairtype | |
| Hatter | <i>alter</i> | hairlength | headwear |
| | | fit, material | |
| Jeweler | <i>adorn</i> | design, metal | jewelery |
| | | shape, stone | |
| Jeweler | <i>adorn</i> | stone | weapons only |
| Tailor | <i>tailor</i> | fit, material | most clothing |
| Tattooist | <i>tattoo</i> | symbol | people |
| Weaponsmith | <i>forge</i> | design, metal | weapons |
| Woodcarver | <i>carve</i> | symbol | furniture |
| Woodstainer | <i>stain</i> | stain | furniture |

You can always get a list of alterable traits in an item, along with values that those traits can be set by using the appropriate verb on an object.

> dye my plain tunic

As a Journeyman Dyer, you have enough skill to perform the following alterations upon the tunic:

Color [none] (35 choices): none natural brown grey ochre olive beige tan russet ivory white auburn red mustard sage ebony sable saffron green sepia ecru pumpkin black orange pink cream blue purple burgundy crimson apricot lemon puce lime plum

To dye this item, use the syntax: dye tunic "[trait] [value]". (Don't forget the quotes!) Example: dye tunic "color brown"

>

The higher your level in a skill, the more options you'll have when altering an object. A novice dyer might only be able to dye things brown, while a journeyman dyer can create plum dye, and a grandmaster dyer can make the

fabled cerulean dye. The current value of each trait is listed in brackets following the trait. If the value of a trait is "none" then any skilled artisan will be able to modify that trait. However, if the trait has already been altered once, you may only alter it again if you are a Master.

As is noted in the example above, you must use the following syntax to actually alter an item:

```
> [verb] [item] "[trait] [value]"
```

Note that both the trait and the value must appear inside of quotes.

The following example show what a dyer, embroiderer, and tailor can do once he has acquired a plain tunic:

```
> dye my plain tunic "color auburn"
```

Employing your skill as a Journeyman Dyer, you alter the color of the tunic to "auburn".

```
> tailor my auburn tunic "material tweed"
```

Employing your skill as a Fellowcraft Tailor, you alter the material of the tunic to "tweed".

With a final flourish, you apply your professional Mark to the tunic.

```
> tailor my auburn tunic "fit conservative"
```

Employing your skill as a Fellowcraft Tailor, you alter the fit of the tunic to "conservative".

```
> embroider my auburn tunic "symbol smileyface"
```

Employing your skill as a Fellowcraft Embroiderer, you alter the symbol of the tunic to "smileyface".

```
> look at my tunic
```

An auburn tweed tunic, embroidered with a smileyface.

```
> examine my tunic
```

You begin to examine Hambin's auburn tweed tunic.

An auburn tweed tunic, conservatively fitted. It is embroidered with a smileyface. You note the professional mark of Fellowcraft Tailor Hambin.

It should be noted that a crafter's professional mark is placed on an object whenever a Fellowcraft of better does a major alteration.

MORE INFORMATION

A wide variety of additional information on Castle Marrach and other Skotos games is available on the Web.

Castle Marrach Resources

The Main Castle Marrach Page

<http://www.skotos.net/games/marrach/>

The main Castle Marrach page is a portal that keeps you up to date with all the latest happenings in the Castle. The latest news and the next upcoming events are noted here, along with articles and forums of specific interest to Marrach players. This page also contains the main entrance to Castle Marrach as well as the forms required to sign up for the game. Finally, you can also find links to a number of help files, tutorials, and other related information, a few of which are noted below.

The Castle Marrach Player's Guide

<http://www.skotos.net/games/marrach/PlayersGuide.html>

A copy of this player's guide can be found, in PDF format, at our Web site, possibly featuring new links and updates.

The Castle Marrach Tutorial

<http://www.skotos.net/games/marrach/Tutorial.html>

This tutorial, which teaches you how to use the Castle Marrach parser, is much more comprehensive than the information found in this book. Even if you've played a text-dominant game before, take a look at this tutorial for the information on dueling, consent, and movement.

Fan Pages

Fan Pages

<http://www.skotos.net/games/marrach/PlayerSites.shtml>

Links to dozens of pages created by our fans, including general information for beginners, official pages for several Castle guilds, the online homes for scores of Marrach characters, and drawings of Castle Marrach and its denizens.

The Localhost TWiki

<http://www.localhost.com/twiki/bin/view>

This site contains collaborative material related to numerous guilds in Castle Marrach. Ask your guild leader for access to an existing guild at this web site or contact StoryCoder Aziel if you'd like to create space to promote discussion of a guild not currently located here.

Castle Marrach Calendar

<http://www.localendar.com/public/Marrach>

At this site our players maintain a list of upcoming events in Castle Marrach, including regular meetings and special gatherings.

Castle Marrach Graphics

<http://www.skotos.net/games/marrach/Graphics.html>

A few small buttons that you can add to your Castle Marrach fan pages, to link into the game itself. Also contains links to desktop graphics that can be used on your PC.

Other Skotos Resources

The Bazaar

<http://www.skotos.net/bazaar/>

T-shirts, stickers, and mouse pads related to Skotos Tech and Castle Marrach.

The Games Page

<http://www.skotos.net/games/>

An overview of all the Skotos games, including current projects and upcoming releases.

Skotos Articles

<http://www.skotos.net/articles/>

Skotos maintains an ever-increasing library of original articles and columns related to online gaming, storytelling, and the Skotos games. Highlights include: "Trials, Triumphs, and Trivialities", a weekly column about building games that offers a behind-the-scenes look at Skotos; "The Mummer's Dance", a biweekly discussion of player issues; "Biting the Hand", Jessica Mulligan's infamous industry column; "In the Trenches", the trials and triumphs of one of Skotos' external designers; and "The Elements of Good StoryTelling", a series on writing fiction.

The Skotos FAQ

<http://www.skotos.net/help/GeneralFAQ.html>

This Frequently Asked Question (FAQ) list contains information on technical, social, and billing issues.

The Marrach FAQ

<http://www.skotos.net/help/MarrachFAQ.html>

A broad overview of Castle Marrach.

The Skotos Forums

<http://forum.skotos.net/>

A set of Castle Marrach forums support Marrachian players, including topics for bugs, general discussion, and in-character conversions. Other forums offer spaces for discussions of general Skotos issues, general StoryPlayer issues, and Skotos articles.

Hopping Mad

An Outer Bailey Scene

It is early evening, in the Dining Hall, at the conclusion of the first Poets' Convocation following the New Awakenings. Despite earlier threats against the Queen, the Convocation has been a magnificent event. Sir Bragi now prepares for his toast as you watch expectantly.

Maria says loudly, "Sers and seras, may I introduce Sir Bragi, the Queen's own Royal Poet, who we are honored to have among us."

Maria says proudly to Sir Bragi, "A fine bottle of wine was delivered just before your arrival, which I believe will be fitting for your traditional toast."

Sir Bragi replies, "Quite fitting. Would all the poets please take a glass?"

Sir Bragi says to thirty people, "It is tradition from the first of these gatherings to offer a toast to the Queen and her glory."

Maria gives glasses of wine to Sir Bragi, Arrion, Punzel, Elea, Iuri, Pikewaddle, Watchman Philo, and Rhian.

Sir Bragi smiles and continues, "It is to be drunk in one gulp to signify your respect for her."

Sir Bragi finishes, "Afterward, I shall give you my composition of 'The Black Night', a bit of the history of the castle itself."

Sir Bragi glances at Prince Bertram and says, "If it pleases you, Sire?"

Prince Bertram sighs, "Of course."

Sir Bragi says, "To Her Majesty's glory. May she always shine!"

Sir Bragi drinks a glass of wine and the glass dissipates into a soft mist.

Punzel, Pikewaddle, Watchman Philo, Rhian, Iuri, Arrion, and Elea drink their glasses of wine. Their glasses dissipate into soft mists.

Sir Bragi says, "hrnnnk urp I reekcroak hrnnnkreekcroak reek," and blinks.

Elea speaks softly, "urpnrr. urphrnnnkurphrnnnk."

Punzel says, "deephrrnnnkdeepdeep urphrnnnkhrnnnk!"

Sir Bragi says, "nrrreenrrree croak? reekreenrr!"

Prince Bertram glances at Sir Alrik.

Maria and Lord Chamberlain Launfal gasp.

Elea asks, "nrrree?"

Punzel exclaims, "reenrr I reek deephrnnnkreek!"

You casually glance at Corporal Petris.

A general uproar begins to rise in the room.

Prince Bertram angrily says to Maria, "What is this?"

Maria glances worriedly at Sir Bragi.

Maria exclaims, "I ... I ... I don't know what!"

Prince Bertram says to Lord Chamberlain Launfal, "What is going on, Launfal?"

Sir Bragi says, "reereekcroakdeep!"

Maria exclaims, "Someone must have cursed the wine!"

Prince Bertram stands up near the royal throne.

Lord Chamberlain Launfal says curtly, "Your Highness, I regret this has happened in your presence."

Maria calls, "Somebody do something!"

Watchman Philo tells Gideon, "nrrhrnnnkreeurp."

Punzel weeps.

Sir Bragi says sadly, "reekcroaknrr? reenrrurphrnnnk."

Gideon says, "I believe it was a serving girl who brought Sera Maria the wine, though I cannot recall her name..."

Pikewaddle faints.

Saurus says, "A courier brought Maria the wine. I remember it!"

Prince Bertram says, "Foul sorcery is afoot! Alrik, escort me from here!"

Sir Alrik tells Corporal Petris acidly, "I thought you had found those who wished to spoil this day," then nods to Prince Bertram.

Lord Chamberlain Launfal, Prince Bertram, and Sir Alrik leave through the double door to the south.

Maria sits down on the dais, says "I ... I ... I," and then sobs.

Maria asks tearfully, "Whatever shall we do?"

Sir Bragi says, "nrrdeep? hrnnnkcroakcroakree..."

Maria exclaims to Sir Bragi, "Oh, Sir! I hope you will forgive me! I hold myself responsible."

Maria says, "I'll never be admitted to the Court now," and cries.

Lucas says softly, "If I may ask, where did the glasses come from? They disappeared quite conveniently."

Watchman Philo tells Maria, "nrrdeepcroakdeep nrrnrr."

Chronos says to Watchman Philo, "Can you understand me?"

Gwen enters the room from the double door to the south.

Gwen curtsies and asks, "Ma'am? Sera Maria?"

Maria glances at Gwen and asks, "Yes?"

Gwen says, "Ma'am, I ... I have something for you ... 'Twas given to me by one of the couriers..."

Maria asks acidly, "Another bottle of wine?"

Gwen offers a scroll to Maria.

Gwen says, "Funny though Ma'am, I've not met him before ... and I know most the couriers."

Pikewaddle mutters, "reedeeep deepdeepcroak croaknrrreenrr."

Maria glances at her scroll.

Gilliam says, "What does the scroll say, Sera Maria?"

Saurus nods at Gilliam, "Yes, perhaps it would be best if you read it to us."

Maria gasps loudly.

Elea says, "reecroakcroakurp reekdeephrnnnkreek reek urphrnnnkhrnnnk!"

Andrew exclaims, "Please read it!"

Maria says nervously, "It begins:"

Maria recites, "Nice Queen, Ice Queen, You fled from our goad. / Ice Queen, Nice Queen, You'd have croaked like a toad. / But while you're away, the Cats & Rats will play. / We'll spoil this day, reveal your poets as clay."

Corporal Petris curses silently.

Maria recites, "We are not unkind or overly cruel. / There's a solution to the troubles that we've brewed. / The trouble that ales you will not be solved by fops. / Becoming a toad will not fail you if you think about hops."

Maria frowns, "What nonsense!"

Martel shouts, "Beer!"

You smile knowingly.

A general quest begins for beer, to cure the Royal Poet Bragi and the other poets of the convocation.

Foolish Words

A Inner Bailey Scene

It is early evening. A number of Guests, yourself included, have assembled to hear Sir Bragi, the Royal Poet, recite his new poem before dinner. Bragi has just finished his poem, to well-earned praise and applause.

You say to Bragi, "Sir Bragi, won't you honor us with another poem?"

Bragi gestures self-deprecatingly and says, "Alas, I regret not. I am an old man, as you well know, and my voice tires easily."

Gaudis says, "Perhaps a taste of wine will encourage you, Sir! Give me but a moment and I'll have some Claret brought..."

Gaudis summons a servant.

Dagonet says, "For a taste of the Queen's Claret, I'll sing you a song, Sir Gaudis!"

Alacia rolls her eyes; "No one wants to hear one of your fatuous tunes, Fool."

Dagonet says to Alacia. "What's that, milady? Surely you do not refer to the ballad I wrote in your honor, to commemorate the occasion of our wedding!"

Dagonet winks broadly at Alacia.

You say, "Wedding?"

Alacia reddens.

Dagonet says, "Ah yes, a most glorious day, indeed. Let me see if I can recall the tune, it captures the event most perfectly..."

Dagonet begins to hum.

Alacia says furiously, "How dare you! You know full well the Queen has forbidden any to sing that song!"

Dagonet sings, "Forbade, forebode, forgive, forborne. Does no one have a bone for the poor fool?"

Alacia clenches her fists angrily.

Bragi pats Alacia's shoulder consolingly and says, "There now, my dear. He means you no harm."

Dagonet cackles.

Bragi turns to Dagonet and says, "Come, good Fool. Let me lean on you as we go to the Banquet Hall. I need strong arms to help me make my way these days."

Dagonet hops to Bragi's side and says, "I am at your service, my lord. But if it strong-arms you truly need, it is Sir Gaudis you should seek. For if the ladies in truth do speak, that one has a fair physique."

Gaudis preens.

Dagonet continues, "But so they whisper in the night, that his other charms are very slight!"

Gaudis frowns.

Bragi says sternly, "Enough, Fool. You've done your work well enough here tonight. Come along."

Dagonet says, "Well and merry, my master always said. Always leave them wanting more."

Bragi exits.

Dagonet exit.

Alacia sighs indignantly.

You say, "Forgive me, my lady, but did Sir Dagonet speak truly? Were you and he truly wed?"

Alacia purses her lips and turns away.

Gaudis says, "Come now, milady. It is no use pretending it did not happen. It was not a true marriage, you must understand. 'Twas only a game, part of the Fool's Day festivities. Our friend Dagonet was made King for the day, and as every king must have a queen..."

Alacia says bitterly, "Aye. And I was the victim of that cruel joke, chosen by none other than Her Majesty. Though what I did to deserve such a punishment is beyond my understanding."

Gaudis says, "But to be chosen Fool's Queen is a great honor!"

Alacia says, "It is no honor to have my reputation besmirched by that foul hunchback. You've heard his song, Sir Gaudis, and his claims to have bedded me. And because he is the Queen's pet, I can do nothing to defend myself!"

You proclaim, "My lady, if you are in need of a champion, I would gladly offer myself."

Gaudis holds up his hand. "Stay. You don't know what you offer. The Fool is under the Queen's Protection. It is forbidden to challenge him for any cause."

You sputter disbelievingly, "What? Do you mean to say that the Fool can say what he wishes, even lie outright, without fear of retribution? How can that be permitted? Why, he just insulted you yourself, Sir Gaudis, and you do nothing to avenge yourself?"

Gaudis shakes his head firmly and says, "It is forbidden."

Gaudis says, "I suggest we make our way to dinner."

Gaudis stands and heads toward the door.

Alacia eyes you speculatively.

You say, "This is outrageous."

Alacia slowly says, "Yes, truly..."

Gaudis exits.

Alacia leans close to you and whispers, "...but accidents are not forbidden, are they?"

You swallow nervously and say, "Milady?"

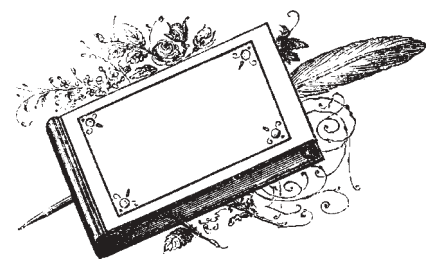
Alacia shrugs her shoulders lightly.

Alacia says, "There are many types of accidents, you know. Many are unfortunate, to be sure, while others are quite ... happy. In fact, there are some accidents for which I would be quite grateful."

Alacia turns toward the door and says, "I don't think I'll be dining here tonight. Good evening to you."

Alacia exits.

You make your way to dinner, though you find you have little appetite as you ponder the benefits—and risks—of pursuing the course of action that has just been suggested to you.





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