

Strife at the Duke's Court

An unscripted murder mystery

Moderator – make the pages from the following sections (*How to play, The Setting, Cast of characters*) available to all players *well before* the game

How to play

This is an *unscripted* murder mystery. Other than the characters and some documents, nothing is pre-determined. Everything is up for grabs. Not only is the murderer not pre-determined, but it's possible that there won't even be a murder. It all depends on how you choose to act.

There is a structure and some basic rules to make the game work, but the Golden Rule is that you should act as much in the spirit of the game, the background and your character as you can. If you do that, most other things should follow. This does make the game relatively high effort – you can't just read from a script – but it should make it more fun.

The basic structure

1. Each character has one or two Goals (provided in their Character Briefing) that they must try to achieve at the end of the game
2. There are two main "Discussion Rounds" of the game and then a "Declaration Phase".
3. Before each Discussion Round, some extra information will be revealed to certain players, which may change their plans or strategies.
4. During each Discussion Round, you have freeform conversations *in character* with the other players. Your character briefing and any other information you've been given should give some pretty strong pointers. You gossip, negotiate, trade, threaten, cajole, etc, as appropriate. Some of these conversations you'll want to have in public – others you'll want to find a quiet space where you can talk *tete-a-tete* (though of course, other characters may not want to respect your privacy).
5. Before the Declaration Phase, each character submits their Declaration Card to the Moderator. Your Declaration Card is made up (a) up to one Decisive Action, which is one of MURDER, GUARD or INVESTIGATE followed by a name, and (b) a declaration, which can be any statement that they want the whole group to know – this can be a declaration of support for a particular plan or an accusation (e.g. of adultery, heresy or treachery). A person who is Guarded twice cannot be murdered; a person who is Investigated twice cannot murder. Otherwise, anyone who is named *once* as a murder victim is killed. The declaration of anyone who is not killed becomes public. The moderator then resolves each declaration and its implications (any accusation that is backed by evidence or witnesses stands – i.e. no accusation invented without substance does), which may include further deaths.
6. If there has been a murder, there is a mini-round of 5 minutes during which everyone who is alive can confer on who they believe is the murdered. After this, anyone can make a final accusation. The accusations will then be discussed around the table, after which there is a vote - guilty or not guilty - on each nomination. Anyone found guilty of murder by simple majority vote is deemed to be executed.
7. Each player then reveals their goals and whether they have achieved them. The Moderator may judge who has "won", though it will probably be more fun for the players to debate this among themselves.

Basic rules

1. Every character should act in keeping with the background material and events at all times
2. Every character should act as though they value their own lives, unless otherwise stated
3. Every character can assume “normal” family loyalties, unless otherwise stated or events clearly strain loyalties – i.e. all other things equal, characters should act in the interests of wives/husbands/children
4. If you need to break character – e.g. if you have a question about the rules or materials – tell the Moderator

General guidance

1. Wear a name badge is very helpful!
2. The more you can get into character the better. The game will work best if you don't focus *too* relentlessly on winning, but on living your character. For example, it's strongly encouraged for you to improvise questions and conversations that are not directly related to your goals, subject to the Golden Rule, of course.
3. *Information* is the main currency of the game. It is foolish to hoard it unthinkingly – you may find that the time during which it is valuable passes – but you should use it sparingly and be extremely cautious who you share it with. Mistakes could cost you your life. In general, you will not want to share secrets unless it explicitly advances one of your listed goals or if it buys you more information in return. You may sometimes want to indicate that you *have* information, but not reveal what it is.
4. Alliances are key. The game is designed so that no character can achieve their goals alone. Equally, though, breaking alliances may also be key for some of you...

The setting – a fictionalised *ancien regime* France

It is early 18th century France and we are at the Court of one of the leading Dukes of the land.

At this time, the King of France is an absolute monarch, though he rules over a kingdom brutally divided on the issue of religion. The King is a hardline Catholic, but a substantial minority of his subjects – including a number of the nobility – are Protestant believers. Tension between the two communities has reached new heights, with violence increasingly common.

This has only emboldened hardliners on both sides, with powerful voices around the king encouraging him to outlaw Protestantism entirely – which in turn has stoked the previously unthinkable idea among leading Protestants that revolution may be the only path to safety.

This is a France dominated by great feudal lords, like the Duke. Serfdom still holds in many regions and all political power lies with the aristocracy and the Church. The ruling class is widely seen as corrupt, debauched and licentious. There is a growing reform movement in some elite circles that wishes to root out immorality in the nation's rulers. Many, though, question the sincerity of this group: are they motivated by purity of spirit or is this just a useful stick with which to beat their enemies?

Tonight the Duke is holding a feast to celebrate the birthday of his cousin, the Comtesse – now a member of the royal family, as the wife of the king's brother, the Comte. The Feast should be a joyful occasion, but there is tension in the air. The guests are all orthodox Catholics, like the Duke, but in the paranoid climate of the moment, it's easy to see Protestant revolutionaries around every corner, not to mention some more mundane family strife...

Cast of characters

Below is the list of guests for the feast, along with their public reputations. Each player will receive more detailed information in their private briefing pack.

The Duke - *Feudal lord of this region. A figure of stability and peace for over a generation, despite the religious strife engulfing the kingdom. A friend to the king and the Church, though a consistent opponent of extremism. A loving husband to the Duchess, his wife of three decades, and a doting father to the Marchioness.*

The Duchess - *Stately, elegant wife of the Duke. Moderate, stable, establishment figure. The perfect counterpart to her husband. Patron of the arts and sciences (including personal Patron to the Scholar), benefactress of many religious causes, including many chapels and shrines in the region.*

The Marchioness - *Extremely pious and conservative daughter of the Duke and Duchess. A devout Catholic who detests corruption, heresy and moral failure. She longs for a world in which duty to God, Church and King is the order of the day. She has a close relationship, with the Confessor, who is her spiritual guide.*

The Comte - *Younger brother of the King and, in his youth, very much the playboy prince – less serious, less religious, less ambitious than the heir apparent. He has settled down in middle age – other than marrying the much younger Comtesse – and has now become the picture of aristocratic respectability. Impeccably orthodox, albeit much more moderate than his brother. He spent a year as Ambassador to England and, on his return, now spends most of his time hunting and administering his estates. He is visiting his old friend the Duke.*

The Comtesse - *A surprising choice of bride for the Comte – much younger than he, a sophisticated Parisienne with a reputation for wild living. Nevertheless, she is seen to have calmed down since marrying the Comte and has settled into her new role of dutiful wife and patron of the Church and the arts. She is the cousin of the Duke on his mother's side, though the two are not close.*

The Cardinal - *Elderly stalwart of the Catholic establishment. Close friend of the King, confidant of the Pope. Has built his career on rooting out heresy and is now the most senior member of the Inquisition in France. He is concerned that there has been a serious infiltration of Protestantism in the region and is determined to stamp it out.*

The Steward – *Intelligent and capable child of a butcher turned loyal servant to the Duke - a rare commoner in a Court of noblemen. The Duke's right hand and fixer – the Duke's priorities are his priorities.*

The Duke's Confessor - *Monk and confessor to the Ducal family for the last five years. Close personal confidant to all three family members. Extreme Catholic zealot noted for his preaching against heresy and his determination to uncover Protestant conspiracies.*

The Scholar – *The Scholar is a renowned academic at the University of Paris, a "natural philosopher" and student of mathematics, celebrated for demonstrating that there is no contradiction between Catholic orthodoxy and the "new learning". The Duchess is her patron.*

Moderator – *before each round, give each player the documents from this pack that are labelled with their character name and the relevant round number.*

Important: Check carefully that you are distributing to the right character and for the right round. Do not distribute in advance of playing.

The CARDINAL – Round 1

My Lord Cardinal,

I write in haste to warn you that there is more chatter than ever in the networks of subversives we are monitoring in Paris and beyond. The details are hazy, but it seems that a plot that threatens the King directly is underway. Corruption may have risen even to the highest levels of society.

I know no more at this time, but will write if I discover anything else.

I have the honour to be your most obedient servant,

M

The DUKE – Round 1

My dear Duke,

I write in haste to warn you that there is more chatter than ever in the networks of subversives we are monitoring in Paris and beyond. The details are hazy, but it seems that at least one rebel – perhaps a Protestant – will be in attendance at your Feast this morning.

I know no more at this time, but will write if I discover anything else.

I have the honour to be your most obedient servant,

M

The COMTESSE – Round 1

My dear Client,

I write in response to your letter concerning the unusual laws of inheritance of this region.

I am pleased to be able to answer both your questions in the affirmative:

First, it is true that in this duchy, the first born legitimate child, whether male or female, will inherit absolutely. A woman may become the feudal lord (or rather lady) just as surely as a man.

Second, it is true that if a male property holder dies without issue, the most senior legitimate heir, whether male or female, of his parents would become the heir.

In this case, if the Duke were to die without issue (though I believe he has a daughter, does he not?), the Comtesse would become the heir, as she is the only remaining descendant of his parents, through her mother, the Duke's sister.

Please accept my compliments. I have the honour to be your obedient servant.

M. Robespierre
Attorney-at-law

The COMTESSE – Round 2

My dear friend,

I write in haste. I am delighted to learn that you are one of our fellow believers. We are, alas, few and far between.

Fortunately, we have devised a passphrase to allow us to identify each other when we cannot speak openly.

Use it as follows:

If you wish to determine whether someone is a fellow Protestant, ask a question that includes the name of a tree somehow. If the other answers in a phrase that includes the name of a flower, you can trust them; they are on our side. Similarly, if you are asked a question of this type, be sure to reply accordingly.

You can choose any tree and any flower, so that we do not make ourselves too conspicuous.

Godspeed!

J

The COMTE – Round 2

My Dear Comte,

It pains me to be the bearer of ill tidings, but I feel duty bound to keep you from ignorance on a matter that touches so closely your person and dignity.

Your wife, the Comtesse, is conducting an illicit liaison with another man.

I have incontrovertible proof, for I have seen with my own eyes a letter addressed to her, and in her possession, that declares love, recounts their intimate rendezvous, and describes many other things too hideous to mention! It is, alas, signed anonymously, so I cannot tell you which villain is disgracing her so, though I will endeavour to discover it.

I know that many in the Court will say such a fall was inevitable for one of her reputation and history, but I would not stoop to such discourtesy. I only offer my condolences. I wish you every happiness and hope that you find a way to end matters quietly and without bringing any further shame on your illustrious family.

I have the honour to be your obedient servant,

A Friend

The SCHOLAR – Round 1

My Dear Scholar,

Far be it from me to gossip, but on my recent visit to the town I learned of a titbit of information that I thought you would enjoy, given your upcoming engagement at Court.

Did you know that the Duke himself, that apparent bastion of family values, is conducting an illicit affair? I do not know who the unfortunate lady is (perhaps a further nugget for my next visit), but I understand that this is an open secret among the domestic staff at Court. Apparently three times now unfamiliar female undergarments have appeared in the Duke's private chambers – and let us say that they are of a style that certainly does not belong to the pompous old Duchess...

What's more, I hear that one of the servants even walked in on the Duke in flagrante and was paid off to keep quiet and disappear – which she did, without ever telling anyone who the other party was, if she saw at all.

I suspect he may be able to keep the whole thing under wraps – and let us hope for his sake that he does. It would quite ruin his reputation, not least with the king, if this was to become public knowledge at Court. I'm sure he'd do almost anything to keep this secret buried.

I must go, but I thought you might enjoy the Feast more with that morsel to chew on!

Your friend,
A

The SCHOLAR – Round 2

My Dear Scholar,

I write in haste. I now feel most terrible that I sent that previous letter. Had I known the dangers I was exposing you to, I surely would have kept quiet. I am fearful to commit too much to paper, but let me merely say: stay safe!

There are dangerous forces at work in Court and people there, powerful people, who would prefer simply to eliminate inconvenient persons than to find a more peaceful way to resolve their troubles.

I thought it just idle gossip, but you bear a secret for which people will kill.

You must find some sort of insurance policy, some reason why you cannot simply be made to disappear. Above all, ensure that you are not the only person with this information. If removing you gets rid of the information forever, you are in grave danger. Much safer if you can credibly tell anyone who threatens you – and you know who I mean – that the story will come to light if anything happens to you.

Again, I am sorry. Please stay safe.

A

The MARCHIONESS – Round 2

You find this letter pushed under your door, though
it is not addressed to you

My Darling Duchess,

How sweet it is to be loved by you after so long
admiring you from afar!

I can think of nothing else. During Mass I think of
your face; at Confession I think of our most
intimate moments; in my office, every time the
floorboards outside creak I pray that it is you,
come to steal a kiss.

Don't leave me waiting, my love. Come to my
rooms again as soon as you may; I hope tonight.

With love and sinful thoughts,

Your Lord Cardinal

The MARCHIONESS – Round 2

Beware the Steward. She is not what she seems.
Warn your father.

I can say no more – I write in haste,

A friend

The CARDINAL – Round 1

My Lord Cardinal,

Having reflected on our recent conversations, I have concluded that you are right. The whole country will be reduced to ruin if we do not crack down on the rebellious Protestants with an iron fist. Indeed, I have decided to go further: we must rid all of France's aristocracy of sin, corruption and immorality.

I have enclosed a proclamation to this effect, which I trust you will enforce. I understand that you are due to dine with the Duke and my brother this evening. I ask that you read the proclamation aloud at the very start of proceedings so that all will know my mind and, I hope, we can begin to restore France to true Christian purity.

Your king and fellow servant of God,

Louis

The CARDINAL – Round 1 (document enclosed with the letter)

His Majesty, Louis, Most Christian King of the French and Loyal Servant of God hereby proclaims:

It is noted that of late wickedness has crept into the holy kingdom of France that, left untouched, threatens to undermine the very peace and integrity of the kingdom.

It is clear that this wickedness bears two masks above all others. First, that of the Protestant heresy, an accursed splinter from our most Holy and beloved Catholic Church. Second, that of adultery and infidelity, even in the very highest ranks of the nobility.

Let it therefore be known that these two sins - Protestantism and adultery - are now accounted crimes against France, punishable by death as a traitor.

There shall be no clemency or reprieve; my words shall command all my subjects, without distinction by class or rank. God Save The King!

The CARDINAL – Round 2

My Lord Cardinal,

I have been considering carefully our last conversation. It is indeed difficult to find a suitable person for delicate work of this type. Very often even our most zealous clergy draw the line at some of the activities that we may require in extremis in defence of the Holy Church.

However, I believe I may have found an answer, right under your nose. I am told that the Duke employs a certain Steward, an ambitious character of low-born origin and few moral qualms. And I am further told that she will have few scruples in carrying out even the most unpleasant orders, provided that the price is right.

Do with this what you will, but please endeavour to keep me out of it, as always.

I have the honour to be your servant,

M

The STEWARD – Round 2

My Dear Steward,

You asked for information that might allow you to be more useful at Court. I believe I may have stumbled into something valuable.

I have learned from one of my connections in Paris that there is a growing Protestant cell operating in secret at the Court. I have not been able to uncover their identities, but I have, almost as good, learned the secret passphrase that the plotters use to identify each other. I copy the below from a letter I intercepted:

“If you wish to determine whether someone is a fellow Protestant, ask a question that includes the name of a flower somehow. If the other answers in a phrase that includes the name of a flower, you can trust them; they are on our side. Similarly, if you are asked a question of this type, be sure to reply accordingly. You may choose any flower; your fellow believers will be on the lookout.”

I hope this proves valuable. I can imagine that there are many powerful people who would pay well for the identities of heretics in their midst.

As ever,

M

The DUCHESS – Round 1

My dear Duchess,

I hope all at Court is well. Life in the country is slow as ever, though we do get the occasional titbit of gossip to keep us entertained.

In fact, I did hear an interesting rumour the other day and thought of you. We had some soldiers passing through the village and their Colonel mentioned something about a mutual friend – my Lord Cardinal – that quite caught me by surprise.

It's hard to imagine anyone in the kingdom more secure than the Cardinal (he's so close to His Majesty, after all) but apparently there is a mounting plot from powerful forces to bring him down. According to the Colonel, his enemies have finally had enough of him and will find some pretext to cause his ruin.

Amazingly, it seems he may have made it quite easy for them. For all his public lectures on morality, apparently the Cardinal struggles to keep himself quite as pure as his sermons - the Colonel heard that he was conducting a secret affair with a noblewoman!

It hardly seems likely, but out here in the sticks we have to gossip about something to keep us busy.

I must go, but do send our very best wishes to the Duke and Marchioness.

With love,
J

The DUCHESS – Round 2

My Lady,

I hesitate to write on such a delicate matter, but I thought you would prefer to know, all things considered. I came across the enclosed at Court and was rather disturbed by its implications. I will leave its interpretation to you.

With my best wishes,

A Friend

The DUCHESS – Round 2 (document enclosed with letter)

My dear Client,

I write in response to your letter concerning the unusual laws of inheritance of this region. I am pleased to be able to answer both your questions in the affirmative:

First, it is true that in this duchy, the first born legitimate child, whether male or female, will inherit absolutely. A woman may become the feudal lord (or rather lady) just as surely as a man.

Second, it is true that if a male property holder dies without issue, the most senior legitimate heir, whether male or female, of his parents would become the heir.

In this case, if the Duke were to die without issue (though I believe he has a daughter, does he not?), the Comtesse would become the heir, as she is the only remaining descendant of his parents, through her mother, the Duke's sister.

I have the honour to be your obedient servant.

M. Robespierre
Attorney-at-law

Moderator – *give each character their relevant pages from this pack.*
Important: Do not allow any player to see the pages for any other character!

DUKE

Public briefing

Public: Feudal lord of this region. A figure of stability and peace for several decades, despite the religious strife engulfing the kingdom. A friend to the king and the Church, though a consistent opponent of extremism. A loving husband to his wife of three decades and a doting father.

Private briefing

You prize order and peace above all else. You fear revolution is brewing, particularly because of religious strife and the King's hardline views, which you worry are only making things worse and could take the country into full-on civil war.

You're never rash, so will be slow to act, but you're not afraid to be decisive to preserve the peace of the realm. The morning of the feast you receive intelligence from one of your spies that at least one revolutionary will be in attendance. Unfortunately, your spy doesn't know who...

At home, you have deep affection for your wife, but you have been having an affair with the young and seductive Comtesse for the last few months, which you must keep a secret to protect the family name and avoid giving your enemies ammunition.

Despite your infidelity, you're proud and protective of your family. You place a great deal of trust in your wife's judgement and you're unlikely to take decisive action unless you believe you have her support. You're also fiercely proud of your aristocratic bloodline; you have no doubt that a strong monarchy, supported by a hereditary nobility, is the right model for France – and you can't stand commoners who get ideas above their station. That's one of the reasons why having an unmarried daughter, the Marchioness, as your heir makes you nervous. If only you could find a strong and suitable husband for her.

You see murder as beneath you, particularly if you have to commit violence personally (hardly a noble thing to do...) or take a personal physical risk. Nevertheless, if pushed to the absolute limit, you are willing to kill.

Goals

1. Prevent revolution and root out traitors.
2. Hide your affair with the Comtesse

Your relationships

Duchess	Your wife of 35 years; you love her deeply (despite your affairs) and are highly protective of her. You should seek her advice on any major decision you have to make.
Marchioness	Your daughter and heir. You love her deeply, though you find her religiosity off putting and irritating. If you see her making ostentatious displays of religion, you should remind her that this is a feast and it can wait until Sunday. What you'd really like is to find her a husband who is worthy of her. That would put your mind at rest about the succession – after all, women aren't born to rule!

Comte	Your old friend and drinking buddy. You're slightly amused by his turn to respectability in middle age – a far cry from his playboy youth. Although your friendship is long and deep, you've always thought of him as a bit of a frivolous character. You should gently make fun of him in your conversations and remind him of your drinking days.
Comtesse	The Comte's wife and your mistress. You do not love her, but you are rather infatuated. Of course, your affair must remain a complete secret, so you should treat her with an almost cold formality in your public interactions and make sure you are not discovered alone with her.
Cardinal	You have known the Cardinal for decades, but you have never grown truly close. If anything, you are a little afraid of him. You've found the best way to deal with him if you end up in conversation is to make common cause with him on the threat posed by rebels and heretics – and to loudly proclaim your own loyalty to the king and Church.
Confessor	Your trusted spiritual advisor. You take great comfort in his total loyalty to the Church, though his extreme views and utter hatred of Protestants do frighten you a little. Nevertheless, you should seek his advice on any moral or spiritual matters and ask him for any tips he's received about Protestant infiltrators.
Scholar	A noted scholar from the University who you have not met before, but you know is a favourite of your wife's. You're suspicious of intellectuals and see universities as nests of potential rebels. If you end up in conversation with her, you should ask her how many of her colleagues are Protestants.
Steward	Your highly capable "fixer". He has proven highly trustworthy and able to make problems, big or small, go away. You do worry, though, that he is getting a bit big for her boots, which is highly irritating. He is a commoner after all. Perhaps inviting him to this feast was a mistake – he might get ideas above her station. You should probably take the opportunity to remind him of her common roots and take her down a peg or two, ideally in public.

CONFESSOR

Public briefing

Monk and confessor to the Ducal family for the last five years. Close personal confidant to all three family members. Extreme Catholic zealot noted for his preaching against heresy and his determination to uncover Protestant conspiracies.

Private briefing

Your apparent Catholic zealotry is a deep disguise for a similarly extreme Protestant faith – you're a Protestant sleeper agent, if you will. You are motivated above all by seeing this region become Protestant. There are two potential ways to do this: you'll either need to find some leverage to persuade the Duke to convert to Protestantism (you know he cares about stability above all else, so perhaps the potential that this would reduce extremism? Or by persuading the Duchess to intercede? You know he trusts her implicitly) or else finding a potential successor to put on the Ducal throne.

You are extremely close to the Duchess and the Marchioness, who trust you implicitly. You should make use of this to discover more about the changing alliances and information at court.

You know there is at least one other covert Protestant at the feast, though you don't now know who. You do, though, have the advantage that you and they will both know a Protestant passphrase that covert Protestants in the region use to identify each other. It's fairly simple: one of you asks a question that includes the name of a tree and the other answers in a phrase that includes the name of a flower. You can choose any tree and any flower so that it's not too obvious and you should be fairly safe to trust anyone who knows this passphrase. The only challenge is that you'll have to use this very liberally to be sure to find your fellow believers...

You are willing to murder if it is the best way to achieve your (God-given) goals, though you will not take reckless risks

Goals

1. Ensure a Protestant ends up as feudal lord of the region – either by converting the Duke or ensuring his successor is a Protestant

Relationship table

Duchess	You've built a close relationship with the Duchess and she sees you as her primary spiritual guide. Her views carry a lot of weight with the Duke, so it would be very valuable to have her as an ally. She seems stressed and preoccupied at the moment, so it might be worth trying to get some time alone with her and ask what is on her mind.
Marchioness	The Marchioness's Catholic extremism makes you sick and you can't stand her over-the-top piety. Nevertheless, your relationship with her is an important part of maintaining your cover – you hear her confession every day. She relies on you for spiritual advice and confession, which she takes extremely seriously – so this should

	make it easy to get her to share information, particularly if you ladle on the spiritual guilt.
Comte	You don't know the Comte, but from what you've heard he doesn't sound a likely ally. Nevertheless, he would be a powerful one, so it's worth trying to find out more about what he wants. Perhaps a good start would be to ask after his brother, the King, who you met once.
Comtesse	You've not met the Comtesse, but – as someone experienced in deep cover – you have the sense that she has something to hide. Why did she marry the Comte – a second son past his prime? It might be worth trying to find out.
Cardinal	The great nemesis of the Protestant underground and the cause of the untimely deaths of many friends and colleagues. You hate him (and his downfall would be sweet indeed), though it's crucial that you keep up your cover story. If you end up in conversation with him, best to emphasise your absolute determination to root out heresy and immorality.
Duke	Your patron and the key to your plans. Your success entirely depends on your ability to convert him to Protestantism – or get rid of him by whatever means necessary in favour of someone who will. You know he seeks stability at all costs, so your best chance may be if you can convince him that converting will somehow reduce the chance of Civil War. An indirect approach may be best – especially if he comes to you for advice.
Scholar	You've heard of the Scholar but not met her before. She is likely to be very cautious around you, given your reputation – Catholic extremists are not known for their love of scientists! Nevertheless, given her position she may be a good source of intelligence, so find a way to discover what she knows.
Steward	You've worked in the same household as the Steward for several years, but you've not become close. Your opinion is that he is not motivated by any strong beliefs, but is utterly ruthless and self-interested – which might make him a useful tool if you can find something valuable to trade with him.

COMTESSE

Public briefing

A surprising choice of bride for the Comte – much younger than he, a sophisticated Parisienne with a reputation for wild living. Nevertheless, she is seen to have calmed down since marrying the Comte and has settled into her new role of dutiful wife and patron of the Church and the arts. She is the cousin of the Duke on his mother's side, though the two are not close.

Private briefing

You are ambitious, much more so than people realise. Already cousin of the Duke and wife of the Comte (the King's brother), you aspire to much more. You're also a sincere but secret Protestant.

You're aware that, despite his apolitical reputation, your husband has designs on his brother's throne and will be looking to get the Duke's support tonight (and to keep the Cardinal from finding out). You sympathise, but you're worried the plan is too risky (particularly as he's pleaded with you not to get involved). It is treason, after all. That said, for someone of your ambition, becoming queen would be ideal, but if that's too dangerous or unlikely, becoming Duchess would be an excellent outcome – and there may be ways to get there.

You are having an affair with the Duke (yes, your cousin – ick), but any political goals were initially secondary – you are simply bored of your older husband. But you've come to suspect that, owing to a quirk of regional law, as the Duke's cousin you are second in line to the Duchy, after the Marchioness. Not coincidentally, you have developed a deep dislike for her. The Marchioness has a pious reputation, but you suspect that there may be more to her than meets the eye... or at least you hope you might find some dirt to work with.

You are averse to violence and will not murder unless it is strictly necessary to save your own life. That's not to say that you'll be too fastidious if your plans involve some "collateral damage", but you're not going to do the dirty work directly.

Goals

1. Secure the best position possible for yourself
2. Promote Protestant interests

Relationship table

Duchess	You've known the Duchess for many years and always found her irritatingly dull and conventional. Now that you're having an affair with the Duke, you can't help but despise her – and won't be able to avoid needling her and perhaps even dropping subtle hints about your conquest in front of her.
Marchioness	You can't stand the Marchioness. Her holier-than-thou attitude – plus her status as heir apparent to a position of real power – infuriate you. You won't be able to stop yourself being rude to her, though you know where to draw the line to avoid a scene.

Comte	You feel real affection for your husband, despite the age gap. You're impressed and surprised to find that he harbours real ambition – but can't help but worry that his plan is too risky and he lacks the ruthlessness to pull it off. Of course, you'll do what you can to help him, but won't be afraid to save your own skin if it looks like it's all going wrong.
Confessor	You don't know the Confessor, but his reputation precedes him: an arch-Catholic and confidant to the Marchioness and Duchess. You'll need to be very careful, but equally you may be able to get useful information from him on your enemies, if you can somehow get him on side. After all, most men are taken with your charms.
Cardinal	You know the Cardinal. He's the head of the Inquisition in France, so as a closet Protestant, you don't want to attract too much of his attention. That said, he's likely to be a major blocker to your either becoming Duchess or Queen, so anything you can do to neutralise him is probably to your advantage. There are rumours that despite his age and position, he fancies himself as a Casanova, so you may be able to use this to your advantage.
Duke	Your cousin and lover. You like him and respect him, but you're certainly not in love with him and you won't be afraid to use him to promote your own interests. It's obviously important that no one suspects you're having an affair, so you won't want to be seen to be spending too much time alone with him.
Scholar	You don't know the Scholar, but you admire her achievements. It's hard to see what she could do to help your cause, but equally as one of the few guests with a finger on the pulse in the outside world, she may have useful information.
Steward	You know the Steward is very close to the Duke, so you'll need to be wary – he is one of the few people who might know about your affair. His reputation is that he is not motivated by any strong beliefs, but is utterly ruthless and self-interested – which might make him a useful tool if him can find something valuable to trade with her, but equally could make him a dangerous enemy if you can't find common ground.

COMTE

Public briefing

Younger brother of the King and, in your youth, very much the playboy prince – less serious, less religious, less ambitious than the heir apparent. You have settled down in middle age – other than marrying the much younger Comtesse – and have now become the picture of aristocratic respectability. Impeccably orthodox, albeit much more moderate than your brother. You spent a year as Ambassador to England and, on your return, now spend most of your time hunting and administering your estates. You are visiting your old friend the Duke.

Private briefing

You are far more engaged in politics – and far more ambitious – than people realise. You wish to be king, not just from ambition, but because you fear your brother's extremism in religious affairs may lead to civil war. You believe a (hopefully bloodless) coup may be the only way to prevent it. However, this is a highly risky strategy that will need powerful allies if it is to succeed. You need a public declaration of support from the Duke and for the Cardinal to remain neutral (at minimum), to have a chance. If you were to become king, you'd be a true moderate, at least by the standards of the day: Catholic, but not a zealot; an absolute monarch, but willing to listen to advice from your noble peers; and conservative, but open to gradual reform.

You are infatuated with your young and glamorous wife and are terrified of her leaving you (which, amongst other things, would spoil your political ambitions) or getting mixed up in court politics that she doesn't understand. Your wife is aware of your political plans, but you have pleaded with her not to get involved.

You are not inclined to violence, but you would murder *in extremis* to achieve one of your major goals – though you would be unlikely to take any personal physical risk

Goals

1. Secure backing from the Duke for your coup against your brother and neutralise the Cardinal
2. Protect your wife from court intrigue

Relationship table

Duchess	You have a have a friendly but not truly warm relationship with the Duchess, who you've always found a bit stiff. That said, it might be time to make a real effort with her – you know that she is one of the Duke's most important advisors, so if you want his support, you probably need hers too. It's hard to know what she would want in return though, so worth spending some time with her.
Marchioness	You've always had a soft spot for the Marchioness, even if lately her ostentatious piety can be a little too much sometimes. You're not really sure whether she has any influence over her father, but if so, she could be useful – though she's unlikely to share your moderate views.
Comtesse	Your young and glamorous wife. You adore her. You told her about your plans to take the throne, but wish you hadn't. She's far too innocent to play court

	<p>politics properly and you worry she could put herself at real risk. Intrigue can be a ruthless business and you're determined to protect her. Equally, in your more paranoid moments you sometimes worry about her leaving you – surely she could be with any man? So you'll want to keep a close eye on her and any man who seems to want to get time alone with her.</p>
Confessor	<p>A very dangerous opponent – a Catholic zealot with the ear of the Duke. If the Duke turns to her for advice, she's unlikely to back you over your more hardline brother, the king. Nevertheless, you probably need to spend some time with him to find out if there's any way to get him onside – or at least keep him from scuppering your plans.</p>
Cardinal	<p>You've known the Cardinal for decades – an old friend of your brothers and a bastion of religious and political conservatism in France. He's probably the biggest obstacle in your way, so you'll need to find some way to neutralise him, disgrace him or, much less likely, get him on side. Surely even this stalwart of the Inquisition has some weakness? You'll want to be unfailingly respectful and polite, but keep an eye out for anyone he seems to be spending a lot of time with.</p>
Duke	<p>An old friend and your wife's cousin. You have real affection for him and think there's a decent chance you can get him on board with your plans if you can persuade him that, while <i>technically</i> treason, it may be the only way to keep France from Civil War. After all, you know he values stability and peace at all costs. The only challenge, of course, is that you spent the formative years of your friendship mainly getting drunk and chasing ladies-in-waiting, so you'll need to work hard to get him on board with the idea of your new incarnation as political heavyweight.</p>
Scholar	<p>You don't know the Scholar, though you've always found academics rather dull. It's hard to see what she could do to help your cause, but equally as one of the few guests with a finger on the pulse in the outside world, she may have useful information.</p>
Steward	<p>You know the Steward is trusted by the Duke, so may be able to be helpful. Alongside, the Duchess and the Confessor, he's one of the people he may ask for advice. His reputation is that he is not motivated by any strong beliefs, but is utterly ruthless and self-interested – which might make him a useful tool if you can find something valuable to trade with him, but equally could make her a dangerous enemy if you can't find common ground. That said, he is a commoner so, knowing the Duke, it's hard to imagine him having that much influence – and it's important to you to maintain your dignity as a nobleman.</p>

SCHOLAR

Public briefing

The Scholar is a renowned academic at the University of Paris, a “natural philosopher” and student of mathematics, celebrated for demonstrating that there is no contradiction between Catholic orthodoxy and the “new learning”. The Duchess is her patron.

Private briefing

You have made no public pronouncements on religion and so are assumed to be an orthodox Catholic (as the University requires). In fact, you are an ardent Protestant with a deep-seated hatred of the Catholic hierarchy – above all the Cardinal, who as a young priest in the Inquisition, condemned your mother to death. You seek to bring down the Cardinal, but know this will require heavy political cover – public declarations against him from both the Duke and the Comte, neither of whom share your religious views. They might be persuaded or manipulated into acting against him if you can find some shared interests. Equally, there may be some other way to engineer his disgrace – though it’s hard to imagine what weaknesses the Head of the Inquisition would have.

You’re one of the few outsiders from the Court at the Feast tonight – other than the Duchess, you barely know anyone. That’s something of an advantage, in that you have no enemies (yet), but you will have to invest a lot of time getting to know the other guests and their motivations early on. You can always talk about your research – you’re an expert on pi and other irrational numbers – but be careful not to make it sound like anything vaguely magic (which is, of course, outlawed on pain of death). You’re probably going to end up making a lot of small-talk, so you made want to invent some Parisian gossip. These provincial types will swallow it whole, whatever you say.

If you’re lucky, you’ll find some allies. It’s quite likely there are other covert Protestants in attendance. You don’t know who, of course, but you and they will both know a Protestant passphrase that covert Protestants in the region use to identify each other. It’s fairly simple: one of you asks a question that includes the name of a tree and the other answers in a phrase that includes the name of a flower. You can choose any tree and any flower so that it’s not too obvious and you should be fairly safe to trust anyone who knows this passphrase. The only challenge is that you’ll have to use this very liberally to be sure to find your fellow believers...

You will not murder unless your life is directly at risk otherwise – though obviously you wouldn’t be sad to see the Cardinal meet his demise by another’s hands or another means.

Goals

1. Bring down the Cardinal
2. Promote Protestant interests

Relationship table

Duchess	Your patron and the reason you’re here. It’s very important that you keep her friendly – she’s your main source of income and provides respectable cover that means that the authorities haven’t asked you too many difficult questions. Make sure you spend some time with her and check that she’s happy with your work. It’s hard to imagine she’s a natural ally against the Cardinal, who she’ll have known for many years, but at least you’re
---------	--

	starting with a closer relationship than with the other guests.
Marchioness	You don't know the Marchioness, though her reputation for piety precedes her. She's unlikely to harbour a grudge against the Cardinal, but you can't afford to miss any potential support – especially as you need her father the Duke's favour. It's worth starting a conversation and perhaps exaggerating your own religious fervour to get her onside.
Comtesse	You know the Comtesse has a reputation for excess and glamour – hardly your favoured style of friend. On the other hand, she has the ear of at least one of the men whose support you need – the Comte – and is the cousin of the other. If she's anything like the young women of her type in Paris, you know how to manipulate them: just tell her what she wants to hear. If you end up in conversation, make sure you flatter her.
Confessor	A very dangerous opponent – a Catholic zealot with the ear of the Duke. If the Duke turns to her for advice, she's unlikely to come down against the Cardinal. Nevertheless, you probably need to spend some time with him to find out if there's any way to get him onside – or at least keep him from scuppering your plans. Perhaps feed him stories about the growing influence of hardline Catholicism in the university?
Cardinal	Your arch-enemy, though he doesn't know it, of course. Your mother is just one of hundreds of his victims. You need to find a way to bring him down, but it's crucial that he never suspects it. Best to stay out of his way, but if you do end up talking to him, be sure to make ostentatious shows of piety and orthodoxy.
Duke	You need him onside if you're to defeat the Cardinal, but you barely know him. If you could find some leverage against him or something to trade with him, you get the sense that he's not a particularly strong man, so this should be your top priority. Probably best to avoid him, except for small talk, until you have a proper plan.
Comte	The other key supporter you'll need to bring on board. As with the Duke, he's unlikely to make any decisive move unless you have real leverage. Perhaps there's some secret from his playboy past you can use against him?
Steward	You know nothing about the Steward, other than that he's a commoner in a Court of nobles. It's hard to say whether he's a likely ally, though she does have the ear of the Duke, you understand, so definitely worth spending time with.

MARCHIONESS

Public briefing

Extremely pious and conservative daughter of the Duke and Duchess. A devout Catholic who detests corruption, heresy and moral failure. She longs for a world in which duty to God, Church and King is the order of the day. She has a close relationship, with the Confessor, who is her spiritual guide.

Private briefing

Your orthodoxy and piety are quite sincere and the quest for purity is the dominant motivation in your life.

You've just received reliable information that the Comtesse – whom you dislike intensely anyway – is having an affair, but you don't know with whom. You took it upon herself to write to Comte (anonymously) but you've just found out that a forgetful servant failed to send the letter until just now. It's therefore likely that the Comte does not yet know, but will do soon.

You've also heard from a friend at Court that the King is about to issue a proclamation making adultery among the aristocracy a criminal offence punishable by death. You heartily approve; the Court is full of corruption and immorality and you long to see it stamped out! However, accusations of adultery are inadmissible without evidence of *both* parties, so you are determined to discover the identity of the Comtesse's lover in order to be able to denounce her. Your two closest advisors, the Confessor (who you always turn to for spiritual advice) and the Steward (who has often provided you with information and more practical support) are your best starting points.

You are your father's heir and owing to a quirk of local law, technically no marriage is needed: you will inherit the Duchy and rule in your own right. That said, both you and your father are keen for you to marry if the right match can be found – though of course you have very high standards.

You will not murder, though you have no problem being the agent of another's downfall through the law. You are generally averse to conflict, so will prefer not to confront others directly, other than close family. You are averse to lying, which you believe is immoral, though you will withhold information if necessary to achieve a greater end or avoid a greater sin.

Goals

1. Uncover the identity of the Comtesse's lover
2. Root out immorality in the Court and defend the interests of true Catholicism

Relationship table

Duchess	Your mother, who you love and respect deeply, and one of the most important figures in your life. You feel fortunate to have such an upright role model, though you can't help but that notice that she is sometimes over-tolerant of some of the casual immorality of the court. You're close enough that you can chide her for it; it's almost your duty, really, as a Christian daughter.
Scholar	You've not met the Scholar before and you're a little suspicious of academics – there's far too strong a connection between science and heresy. You hope she's not bringing dangerous ideas to Court (exactly the sort of

	thing your mother the Duchess might overlook in her liberal tolerance), so you may want to probe her a little.
Comtesse	The Comtesse disgusts you – a woman with a reputation for wanton living and who apparently has little time for Mass. The idea of her defiling the Court with adultery enrages you. Discovering the identity of her lover and bringing her down is your top priority. You won't want to spend a lot of time with her, but if you get stuck in conversation with her, you won't feel the need to be polite.
Confessor	Your spiritual mentor and guide. She hears your confession every day and has been a major spiritual influence in your life. You trust her implicitly and won't want to make any major decisions or face any crisis without seeking her advice.
Cardinal	You don't have a close personal relationship with the Cardinal, but you have known him for many years and admire his long and devout service to the Church. His role as Head of the Inquisition in France should make him a natural ally in rooting out immorality in the Court. You'll want to make clear to him early in the evening that you are at his and the Church's service, in case you can be of aid. A close collaboration will serve you well, so check in with him regularly.
Duke	Your father, who you love dearly. Like your mother, he can be a little less than rigorous in his attitudes to others' conduct, but you respect him deeply nevertheless, as is a daughter's Biblical duty. You have a warm relationship and feel comfortable confiding in him. If you can persuade him to take a more hardline view towards religious unorthodoxy and personal immorality at Court, that will be a major step forward.
Comte	You've always had a warm relationship with the Comte, an old friend of your father the Duke – though you were very surprised and disappointed in him when his marriage to the very inappropriate Comtesse was announced. Discovering that she was cheating on him has given you an opening to bring her down and you hope this might open up a pathway to spiritual renewal for him. Of course, telling an older man to his face that his wife is unfaithful is highly embarrassing and perhaps inappropriate, which is why you wrote to him anonymously. It's annoying that he won't have received the letter yet, but it's probably best to wait until he's got it – though no harm in dropping hints in conversation.
Steward	Your father's trusted servant who has become a confidant to you. He is a little uncouth for your tastes (what can you expect from a commoner?), but nevertheless has proven himself to be a valuable ally and a useful source of support and information. You're a little worried about his spiritual wellbeing and won't hesitate to tell him so – it's for his own good. You'll want to talk to him a lot, as he's your most likely source of information and a useful advisor if you need to make any difficult decisions.

CARDINAL

Public briefing

Elderly stalwart of the Catholic establishment. Close friend of the King, confidant of the Pope. Has built his career on rooting out heresy and is now the most senior member of the Inquisition in France. He is concerned that there has been a serious infiltration of Protestantism in the region and is determined to stamp it out.

Private briefing

You are the very model of a great prince of the Church: grand, cold, forbidding, arrogant and condescending. Your host may bear the title of Duke, but from your perspective there's no doubt that you are the preeminent attendee tonight

Despite your public person, privately you have always struggled to maintain the same level of holiness in his personal conduct. Your faith is sincere – you are a Catholic through and through, of course – but you have a weakness for women, including most recently the Duchess herself, who you have seduced.

Just before the Feast you receive a proclamation from the King which he asks you to read aloud at the beginning of the celebrations. It states that in order to root out corruption and immorality in Court, Protestantism and adultery among the aristocracy – including the highest officials of the Church, like you – will now be crimes punishable by death.

You immediately realise that your fate is tied to that of the Duchess, so you have to ensure she stays on side. You are fond of her, but equally you see pragmatically that nothing can be done other than to ensure no one finds out. You worry that she has become more attached to him than she is to her, which could cause you problems.

You're in a tricky position, because – of course – you couldn't be happier about the first part of the proclamation. You've been pushing the king to ban Protestantism outright for many years and you would love nothing better than to root out the closet Protestants in Court and have them dealt with, permanently. That remains your main goal. But now the same proclamation that gives you authority to do that puts you in grave danger.

You have no qualms about using extreme measures to achieve your goals, though you would generally prefer to use your legal powers – or to act through a pawn – than to take a personal or physical risk yourself.

Goals

1. Destroy evidence of your affair with the Duchess
2. Identify and eliminate Protestants and any other threats to the King

Relationship table

Duchess	You've known the Duchess since the early days of her marriage, but only began the affair with her recently. You are fond of her, but you can't let what amounted a few moments of lust destroy your career. No one should suspect you, but to be on the safe side, you'll want to keep a distance from her and try not to be seen alone with her. Treating her with formal politeness is probably your best path forwards.
Scholar	You've never heard of the Scholar and generally have little time for academics. You tend to see the

	University as a den of heresy, so you'll want to ask her a few questions and see if she knows anything about Protestant cells in and around Court. No need to be too polite.
Comtesse	You've had your eye on the Comtesse since the day she arrived at Court. She's exactly the kind of woman you find yourself falling for, so you won't be able to resist some gentle flirting – and, of course, if it looks like she may share your intentions, so much the better. Of course, a man in your position must appear beyond reproach, so you'll want to find time alone with her.
Confessor	You don't know the Confessor well, though her reputation for zealotry precedes her. You approve, of course (at least when it comes to religious matters – if she has a similarly hardline approach to adultery, you'll need to make sure you hide any suggestion of impropriety from her), though you can't help but find such earnest intensity in one so young slightly amusing. She could be a useful ally, so you'll want to find out if she has any valuable information. If she gets overexcited, you'll need to remind her in no uncertain terms that she is a junior nun and you are one of the greatest princes of the Church.
Marchioness	You've always been fond of the Marchioness, who you've known since she was a little girl. You admire her dedication to the faith. She may be a useful source of information if there are secret Protestants at the Court, so be sure to enlist her aid as early as possible in the evening. She's sure to be in awe of such a senior churchman. A close collaboration will serve you well, so check in with her regularly.
Duke	You've known the Duke for decades. You like him, but you've always slightly despised him – he's weak and irresolute. You don't think he is nearly thorough enough in pursuing heretics in the region and you're not afraid to tell him.
Comte	Another noble who you've known for decades – and another you can't help but think is a bit of a fool. Just when he seemed to be over his playboy years, he marries a much younger woman (Why marry when an affair would do?). You can't help but think that it's by God's grace that it's his brother and not he who is king; the Comte is far too frivolous to rule. France would surely have been plunged into civil war had they been born in the opposite order.
Steward	You don't know much about him, other than that he's a commoner who serves the Duke. Frankly, it's a little embarrassing that someone so low born would be invited to such a feast. Hopefully you won't have to talk to him, but if you do, no need to hide your feelings.

STEWARD

Public briefing

Intelligent and capable child of a butcher turned loyal servant to the Duke - a rare commoner in a Court of noblemen. The Duke's right hand and fixer – the Duke's priorities are his priorities.

Private briefing

You are wildly ambitious and without ideological motivation or personal loyalty – all you want is to achieve personal advancement. You're nominally a Catholic, though you don't really believe anything much and certainly you're not inspired by any religious beliefs.

You are deeply hung up on your common origins and desperate to secure elevation to the nobility. Three people can do this: The Duke, The Comte and the Cardinal, simply by making a public declaration in your favour at the end of the evening.

You will give any of these – or more than one! – what they want in order to secure your promotion. You are aware that the Duke trusts you, but he also sees you as a commoner through and through. He's made a few dismissive comments in the past that make you realise that, however much he trusts you, he'll always see you as beneath him. Nevertheless, he's likely the surest route to the nobility if you can find some leverage. Equally, if you can deliver an undercover Protestant to the Cardinal, this may be enough to secure your promotion.

Unfortunately, you have little leverage over any of these three, so your first order of business is to secure valuable information that you can use.

You are willing to kill to secure your goals, but you will not recklessly sacrifice your gains – so you won't kill if you put yourself at great risk.

Goals

1. Secure elevation to the nobility
2. Find out as much gossip as early as possible – it will help you achieve your main goal

Relationship table

Duchess	Your master's wife. You've worked in her household for many years. She can't elevate you directly, but you know she's very influential with the Duke and perhaps a little less of a snob than some people at Court, so it may be worth seeing if she can help.
Scholar	You don't know the Scholar – an outsider from the University. It's hard to see how she could be valuable to you, unless she has useful intelligence from the outside world.
Comtesse	The wife of the Comte and so potentially a useful tool, as she likely has influence over him. You'll need to find something to trade. – or to use as leverage against her – and then she could be very valuable.

Confessor	The Confessor slightly gives you the creeps – anyone that religious must be hiding something? She seems unlikely to be valuable, but she's influential with the Duke, so worth keeping on the right side of her
Marchioness	The Duke's daughter. She's rather fond of you, for some reason, and tends to ask your advice on many topics. You may be able to use this to your advantage, both because she's likely to let slip any valuable information she has and because she likely has some influence over her father. She is a bit of a snob though, so you probably don't want to be <i>too</i> direct about your aims.
Duke	Your master of many years. On the one hand, you owe your career and progress so far to him – on the other, he ought to have promoted you to the nobility by now. It's not unusual for a man of your influence and importance to be made a baron. You are beginning to resent him a little. You're willing to find alternative paths to the aristocracy, but surely after so many years of service, the Duke is still the surest route. Perhaps you just need to be more direct about what you want?
Comte	Another potential path to elevation – the Comte has it in his power to help you. But you don't really know him, so you'll have to do some work to find a way to influence or pressure him. Perhaps through his wife?
Cardinal	Your third option for a promotion, though you don't know him at all and he has a reputation for cold arrogance. That said, at least it's clear what he wants: if you can uncover a Protestant spy or help him crush a plot, he can probably be persuaded to support you. You probably will need to be very clear about what you expect on his side of the bargain though. People like that are all too used to getting something for nothing.

DUCHESS

Public Briefing

Stately, elegant wife of the Duke. Moderate, stable, establishment figure. The perfect counterpart to her husband. Patron of the arts and sciences (including personal Patron to the Scholar), benefactress of many religious causes, including many chapels and shrines in the county.

Private briefing

Despite a lifetime of religious orthodoxy (which you maintain) and loyalty to your husband (ditto), you have found yourself in middle age conducting an extra-marital affair with the Cardinal, an old family friend. You are surprised at yourself that you have allowed something so reckless to happen, but the affair has revitalised you. You feel younger and alive.

You now find your loyalties torn and are determined to do everything you can to try to serve and protect both men in your life, particularly as each faces political pressures. Equally you know that your current romantic situation is unsustainable but cannot see an easy way out...

You will not kill and feel a horror at violence.

Goals

1. Protect your family from the consequences of the affair and other threats
2. Protect the Cardinal from the consequences of the affair and other threats

Relationship table

Cardinal	An old family friend and now, rather to your surprise, your lover. You feel it's very unlike you, but you find yourself quite smitten. You want to keep seeing him – nothing else has made you feel so young and alive for many years. But equally, what can you do? You're aware that the affair puts him in terrible danger and you're determined to ensure that it doesn't cause him to come to harm. You can't draw too much attention, of course, but you'll want to try to find time alone with him as often as you can.
Scholar	The Scholar has an extraordinary mind and you're proud to be her patron. She's your guest tonight and she doesn't know anyone else at the Feast, so you really should spend some time introducing her to the other guests and making sure she's not alone. You know the rumours that the University is a den of Protestants, so you'll want to make sure she isn't tainted by association, especially given the current climate of religious tension. Rumours could be very dangerous.
Comtesse	Your husband's cousin and the Comte's wife. You've never liked her much and were very surprised when her marriage to the Comte was announced. She hardly seems like a good match. She's also a bit of a gossip, so is exactly the sort

	of person you need to keep rumours of your infidelity from. Of course, all said, in public you need to treat her warmly like the old friend and family member she is.
Confessor	Your primary spiritual advisor and a trusted confidant. You'll turn to her for any major matter you need advice on - though of course that was a lot easier before one of those was infidelity. You know that she will treat the confidentiality of Confession as sacred, but it's still very embarrassing, given just how zealous and devout she is.
Marchioness	Your daughter, who you love dearly - though you do find the depth of her religious commitment a little scary. You really don't want her to find out about her affair. She'd still defend and protect you, of course - or at least you hope she would. She does seem to become more extreme by the day. Try to spend time with her and see if you can persuade her to tone it down just a little.
Duke	Your husband of thirty years. You have huge admiration and respect for him - and when you think about how your infidelity would devastate him, you're filled with guilt and shame. You do love him; it's just that your marriage has grown so passionless. You'll want to spend lots of time with him tonight and show him plenty of affection. He relies on you for moral support and advice and you know he's facing a lot of pressures. Doubtless half the guests will want something from him too, so you may need to act as gatekeeper.
Comte	An old friend of your husband and yours. You feel a great deal of affection for him, even if you can't approve of his marriage to the Comtesse. You were probably a little too vocal in making known your disapproval at the time of their engagement, so you'll certainly need to keep your own, much greater, indiscretion from him, lest he feels the need to get his own back.
Steward	Your husband's most senior servant and one of the members of the household you trust the most. He lacks some of the manners of other members of the Court (something your husband and daughter have less tolerance for) but you think he's very impressive to have risen from such low birth. He'll certainly have her finger on the pulse of Court gossip, so you'll want to check in with her regularly to see whether any rumours about you are in the air.

Moderator – *give each character one of these templates after Discussion Round 2*

DECLARATION CARD

Your name:

Your declaration(s):

Your Decisive Action (max ONE of Murder, Guard and Investigate only, followed by the name of a character – e.g. “Murder Duke”, “Guard Duchess”):