

Introduction

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Blurb

The roleplaying game of intrigue and betrayal in the court of King Louis XV. As minor nobles of lesser families, players contend in witty repartee with the residents of the Palace of Versailles in hopes of winning their confidences or swaying them to their causes. Tarot cards determine the success or failure of every verbal encounter.

Setting

Welcome to the Palace of Versailles, the seat of court intrigue and predominant fashion centre for all of Europe. Marvel at the lace finery, the Chinese silks, the floral and pastel patterns. The sheer extravagance and luxury advertising that this, is what nobility is all about. The King has taken a new mistress of extraordinary intelligence and skill, the great wooer of women, Giacomo Casanova wanders the lands causing joy for many and hatred for husbands. A war in Austria has everyone's attention.

Forget your grandiose visions of endless antechambers and gilded salons. As a novice courtier you'll be assigned—if you're lucky—to a nasty little attic with barely enough room to cut a curtsy. In the remoter reaches of the godforsaken garrets of Versailles, duchesses have been known to waste away slowly from starvation, completely forgotten, and obscure princesses to die of cold on long winter nights. Meanwhile, you'll find yourself bereft of useful employment—every possible government position has already been assigned to someone else, almost always based on heredity. (The royal valets de chambre are all members of the Bontemps family; royal mole catchers are always Liards.) Don't give up hope, though—social eminence can still be yours, provided you push the right buttons.

- **Sycophancy Will Get You Everywhere** — There are many ways for you to insinuate yourself into the king's good graces. An impoverished widow, Madame de Maintenon, once agreed to take discreet charge of raising Louis XIV's illegitimate children; she ended up becoming the king's mistress and, eventually, his wife. Barring such luck, you can at least take advantage of every possible opportunity to fawn. For instance, when the king's dinner passes you on its way from the kitchen to his table, you are expected to sweep the floor with the plume of your hat and declaim, quietly but with reverence, *La viande du Roi*.
- **See and Be Seen** — At Versailles, every royal event—births, deaths, even autopsies—is gawked at by throngs of courtiers. If you're very lucky, you'll be one of those who crowd the king's bedroom each morning to watch him wake up, get dressed, put on his shoes, and be shaved. Same thing at bedtime (each night, as a single mark of favour, the king chooses a courtier to hold the candle while he undresses). At meals, you should stare raptly at each bite that the King takes; sometimes he even dines in public, which means that any decently dressed citizen may queue up to file through the dining room and glimpse him chewing. His descendant Louis XVI drew popular acclaim—not enough, alas!—for his ability to knock the top off a soft-boiled egg with a single stroke of his fork (a feat that, in retrospect, seems eerily to foreshadow the final few

seconds of his existence).

- **Niceties** — If you don't want to plunge precipitately from your exalted social perch, you'll have to master the intricate etiquette of the court. It's far from self-evident. For example, you'll commit a grave faux pas if you knock at a door—you're expected, rather, to scratch, using the little finger of your left hand, whose nail you've grown long for that express purpose. The matter of who may sit in whose presence, and in what sort of chair, is a never-ending source of friction: When the duc de Lorraine claimed the right to seat himself in an armchair in front of the king's sister-in-law, it led to an international incident.

From Adam Goodheart's [How to Succeed at Versailles](#).

How will you be remembered at court? What impact will you have on the politics of France? How can you make lots and lots and lots of money? In these decadent times, nobility is beginning to take second place to currency. Everything can be bought and sold. The courtiers will respect the rich over some poor titled peer.

What you need

Things you will need to play:- 1 GM 1+ Players Two decks of Tarot cards, preferably the 18th century Marseilles deck. One deck for the players, and one deck for the GM.

- You can print out your own copy on this [page](#)

A number of counters to represent Favours and Reputation. About 20 per player should be more than enough. Preferably wooden or metal coins. Writing gear Character sheets

Credits and Biography

Many thanks to these people for their online and printed resources that have been ruthlessly exploited:-

- K. Watson — Research librarian, University of Canberra.
- Economic and Social conditions in France during the Eighteenth Century by Henri S+re translated by Edwin H. Zedel, 1927 — available as online pdf here - <http://socserv2.mcmaster.ca/~econ/ugcm/3ll3/see/18thCentury.pdf>
- Wikipedia — <http://en.wikipedia.org>
- Heraldica — <http://www.heraldica.org>
- The History of Costume by Braun & Schneider - c.1861-1880 — available as online here - <http://www.siue.edu/COSTUMES/history.html>
- The French Army: History, Organization — <http://napoleonistyka.atspace.com/>
- Travels in France and Italy During the years 1787 1788 and 1789 by Arthur Young
- An Introduction to Eighteenth Century France by John Lough, M.A., Ph.D. 1962
- Calendrier des spectacles sous l'Ancien R+gime — <http://foires.net/cal/cal.shtml>
- Transportation Cost by Iver P. Cooper

I have not been able to incorporate the complete history of the 18th century in France, and some simplifications and shortcuts of the social structure have been made to facilitate a roleplaying game (in other words, don't base any history homework on this game). But if you would like to know more

or incorporate further details, I highly recommend the above quoted links. This game was written for the <http://www.game-chef.com/> [Game Chef contest of 2007](#). The text is printed in Baskerville, an eighteenth-century font created by John Baskerville (1706–1775).

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