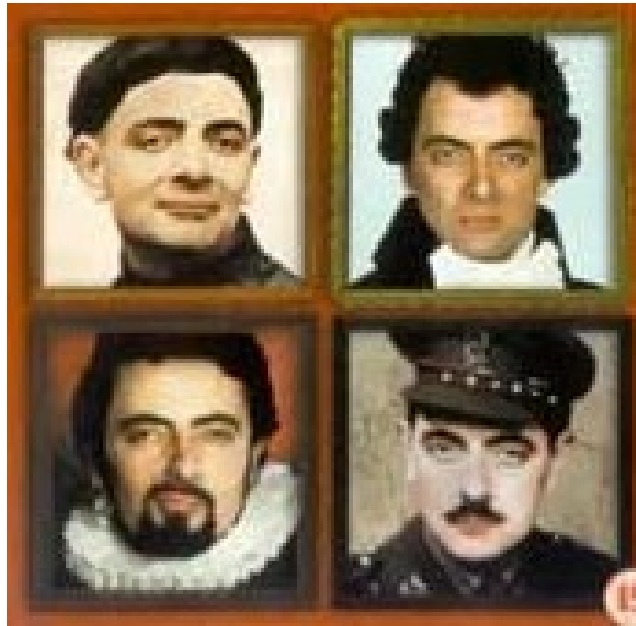


Bastards and Bloodlines



A game of strategy and gaining fame, inspired by "The Black Adder"

*Alternatively, a game about scheming, greed, abuse, humiliation, and
overall bastardry*

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Part I. On Being a Bastard

"We few, we happy few, we band of ruthless bastards."

- Edmund, the Black Adder (Black Adder I)



Face it, you're a bastard. A devious, scheming rat-bastard. The sooner you admit this, the sooner you'll get this game.

You don't have friends here. There are only three kinds of people. First, there's you. You're the most important person in the game. Sure, you're a rat-bastard, but everyone knows this already. Second, there are other bastards just as vicious as you. The world's full of 'em. You gotta watch out for these bastards. They'll screw you over and laugh about it. Believe me -- get them before they get you. Third are all of the other poor dumb bastards standing in the way. They're constantly getting ripped off. Constantly. You'd actually feel sorry for these schmucks, if you weren't such a bastard.

That's the way the world works -- screw over or be screwed.

Like any other bastard, you're out to make a name for yourself. That's what this game's all about -- glory, fame, power, whatever you want to call it. As Kissinger once said, "Power is the ultimate aphrodisiac." He was a smart Harvard bastard, and he wasn't bullshitting.

Let's call it Fame, that's what you're after. That's what all of the greedy bastards on TV are after these days. Besides, Glory sounds too dignified for our purposes, and Power sounds like fuckin' He-Man.

So you play this game by winning Fame. Become more famous than everybody else. Become more famous than Jesus and the Beatles. Do whatever it takes. And if your grandkids don't appreciate what you did for them, spend all your money on drugs and hookers. Or give it to Greenpeace. Or bury it in cans in the desert. I don't give a shit. Either way, let the little ungrateful bastards earn it for themselves.

Yep, you have future generations to worry about. After all, you'd have to be a real pitiful bastard to be this famous and not get laid. Even Tony Montana, a coked-up bastard if there ever was one, spelled it out for us: "First you get the money, then you get the power, then you get the women." Look at the Blackadders. Now there was a pack of rat-bastards, through and through.

There was that queer medieval guy, that Elizabethan guy, that vicious butler, that lazy captain. Heartless bastards, every one of 'em. Funny looking, too. And they all got laid.

So, remember, there's a family name to live up to. Do your part, and with any luck, there'll be fewer bastards for your descendants to contend with.

But don't count on it.

OK, seriously

Alright, if you're one of those uptight bastards (and you wouldn't be playing if you weren't some kind of bastard), here's a button-down description of the game:



Bastards and Bloodlines is a fast-paced roleplaying game inspired by the "Black Adder" TV series. Each player character (PC) is out to earn fame, through a combination of plans and plots directed towards other player characters and society at large. Interaction among player characters is explicitly encouraged through the game's design. Gameplay is multi-generational, with each player representing a family line, and creating new characters in different historical periods. Each historical period proceeds in rounds, moderated by a Game Master (GM). *Bastards and Bloodlines* is designed for face-to-face play as well as play-by-post over email or Internet groups. Thus, emphasis is placed on simple character creation and quick task resolution. Character Cards are available in the file "bastards-bloodlines-cards."

Acknowledgments

The impetus for *Bastards and Bloodlines* was provided by a post by Schatten on www.rpg.net. He suggested the title "Black Adder: the Rat-Bastarding", which I still like. The general structure of this game was also chewed over by posters to the Yahoo group historicalrpgs, particularly Paul Elliott (Mithras).



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"Still worshipping God? Last thing I heard He started worshipping ME!"
- Lord Flash Heart (*Black Adder II*)

Part II. The First Generation :: Creating the Mother of all Bastards

*"Now what we need ... is a real
bastard."
- Sir Wilfred Death (Black Adder I)*



Gameplay occurs as a succession of Historical Periods, which are divided into Rounds. During each Historical Period, you play a bastard, I mean "character", that you create using the rules presented here.

Right, so let's get you started. The progenitor of your family lives during the game's first Historical Period. This is original bastard of the family. The Adam to all of your Cains (forget Abel, he was a wussy). For your first character, follow the rules below, and fill in the information on the Character Card. Creating descendants follows the same process, except that you'll probably start with a different pool of points to allocate to Traits (described in Part VI, Legacy, Descendants, and Continuing the Game).

Family and personal name

Select a family name for your character. Make it good, because this name will be carried by your descendants. From the GM, find out the starting historical period, and devise an appropriate name. Don't be a dick -- put some thought into it. Don't call yourself Mr. McGuffin if the game is set in ancient Egypt. You can be clever and translate the family name into the common language of the various Historical Periods. By showing off this way, you're telling the others that you're a smart bastard, who will no doubt give just as much thought to revenge should they fuck you over.



Choose an appropriate personal name for your character. Go overboard. Be as terrifying as you want, like "Hafgan the Butcher" or "Claudius Horribilis." Or be oily, like "Three-fingered Pete" or "Vin the Skin." Or be deceptive, like "Anselm the Sleepy." Each descendant should get a distinct personal name, but there's nothing wrong with going with something like "Otto I", "Otto II", "Otto III", etc. Besides, guys like Otto, Boris, and Ivan sound like bad-asses.

Title

Titles are impressive. They make you sound like an important bastard.

One ground rule is that all characters are peers, more or less, moving in the same social circle. It's fun to pretend to be scheming, devious nobles, and that's the game's working assumption. If, however, your gaming group is a bunch of angsty post-modern bastards, then you all can pretend to be big city



detectives, car mechanics, computer-hacker-assassins, or whatever. But the assumption holds that you all have roughly comparable levels of wealth, property, and social connections.

That said, you start off with one title. It can be whatever you want, except for "Ruler of the Universe" or some shit like that. If you are European nobility, you can be the Prince of Dalmatia or Lord Slappybottom. If you are a bunch of car mechanics, one guy can be Shop Manager, another can be Employee of the Month, and another can be the jag-off in Accounts Payable.

Every 30 Fame points earned lets you make up one new Title for yourself. You also get 1 point to add to your Skills or Income Roll (below). I'll remind you about this in Part III (Cunning Plans) in case you're one of those forgetful bastards.

Character Traits

I could go gorilla-crazy here, and list tons and tons of traits and skills, with impressive names like "Subterfuge" and "Forensics." Chances are you'll use only about four of them regularly. With that in mind, I've come up with a set of traits that are vital to being a thoroughly ruthless, greedy bastard.



We start with skills, stuff that you know how to do. Even that goofy bastard Napoleon Dynamite said that a guy's gotta have skills. Skills are cool and all, but you need money, too. So, here's the deal. You have 6 initial points to assign to a combination of the below Skills and "Income Roll." The values of Skills influence your success at getting Fame and other people's goods. Income Roll is the number of d6 that you roll at the beginning of every Round to generate your own income. All of your money and possessions, no matter how you get them, is collectively called "Wealth."

There are two rules that apply to the creation of your original bastard. First, all Skills are initially set to zero (0). No Skill can be set to over four (4) during character creation. Second, your Income Roll is initially set to one (1). It takes TWO (2) initial points to raise Income Roll by one value. Now go get 'em.

Skills.

- * Astrology. Most people are superstitious bastards, believing in some pretty kooky crap. You can make a good living by appealing to their irrational fears. Couple this with a basic understanding of the solar system, and you're set.
- * Entertain. The ability to manipulate people's moods and emotions through Epicurean delights: music, singing, wining and dining. Also, erotic dancing and blowjobs, if that's how you swing. Good for relaxing some big-shot bastard before shanking him in the liver.
- * Law. The ability to legally screw over others. This lets you be a complete bastard while keeping your hands clean.
- * Poison. A sneaky way to kill somebody. Sneaky is good.
- * Weapon-play. Shooting, stabbing, or bludgeoning some bastard.
- * Other. OK, someone's gonna bitch about there not being Cartography, Read Ogham, Psychology, or some other pet subject. That's what this is for. If your GM is cool, then you can assign points to your very own super-special skill.
- * Military Command. This is separate because it might not apply to all games, especially for you guys playing everyday Joe Blow bastards. For games with

nobles and other social elites, this is a common and impressive way to become famous. This is the ability to effectively lead large groups of armed men, whether you're charging into battle or traipsing across Rhodesia looking for King Solomon's Mines.

- * Guard against Murder, Theft, and Fraud. This is a catch-all defense against other vicious bastards (i.e., PCs) trying to kill or rip you off. This is your "standing army" of bodyguards, surveillance cameras, watchdogs, lawyers, etc. You BETTER put some points here, instead of into Horticulture or Engraving.

Income Roll. This has a starting value of one (1), which can be increased during character creation and/or gameplay. At the start of every Round, you roll #d6 equal to your Income Roll, and add the sum to your current Wealth. At the start of Round 1 for any character, you do an Income Roll for your starting Wealth. You use Wealth for improving task resolution rolls (Part III, Cunning Plans), for rewarding other bastards, and for patronizing an unlucky bastard who has become part of the Mob (Part IV, Mob Rules).

Two more things. You know you're a bastard, right? So, by definition, you're not perfect. You are flawed. Also, at some point, someone's probably going to want to blow your fucking head off. So, you need to think about how to respond to duel challenges.

Flaw. You have a major flaw. Something so odious that it actually gets in the way of success, and can ruin your well-laid plans. I won't say that you are your own worst enemy, because there are plenty of vicious bastards that will gladly fill that role. Your flaw can be bad breath, clumsiness, Turretts, or just generally being an asshole. You decide. For the game, what's important is to assign a value to your Flaw, from 1 to 6. When you try to carry out plans, you need to roll over your Flaw value on 1d6 (see Part III, Cunning Plans). Also, should you have low Fame and risk getting demoted to the Mob, you need to spend Wealth equal to your Flaw to save yourself (see Part III, Cunning Plans). So, you ask, what's the point of giving your Flaw a high value? Well, if your plan succeeds, then you multiply your earned Fame by your Flaw value. Thus, an overbearing dickhead with a Flaw 5 really cashes in when his plans succeed.

Response to Duel. You can respond to duel challenges in one of three ways:

- * Accept. Someone's gonna die, with no legal repercussions.
- * Weasel Out. You try to get out of the duel, without losing Fame. You need to state one Skill that you'll use to weasel out. For example, you might use Law to bring up arcane rules about duels not being permitted on St. Gizzard's Fortnight. Or, you might use Entertain to send call-girls to your challenger's house the night before, to make him miss the duel.
- * Refuse. You survive, but your Fame is reduced to 10% of its current value, for being such a wuss.

Duel resolution is covered in Part III (Cunning Plans). In face-to-face games, you are free to respond to individual duel challenges as you see fit. In play-by-post games,

gameplay is facilitated by treating the Response to Duel as a standing order that the GM uses when resolving tasks during a Round. In play-by-post, you can change your Response at the start of any Round, but cannot change it once the GM calls for your actions for the Round.

OPTIONAL (but highly recommended): Coat of arms

Anybody who's anybody has some sort of emblem or coat of arms. I don't care if you're a caveman or the King of Siam. You need something that says, "You fuck with me, you fuck with the rest of my family." Sports teams know this all too well. Look at the Oakland Raiders. They've got a bad-ass pirate on their helmets. To paraphrase Mr. White, if you even try to tackle one of them in a dream, you better wake up and apologize.



So design a coat of arms. Make it easy on yourself and choose a central theme. Pick a red circle, a fist, a black rose, or even a black adder. It might have something to do with the family name, or might not. Then, use this in designs for the different Historical Periods in the game.

"I, on the other hand, am a fully rounded human being with a degree from the university of life, a diploma from the school of hard knocks, and three gold stars from the kindergarten of getting the shit kicked out of me."

- Capt. Edmund Blackadder (Black Adder IV)

Part III. Cunning Plans // How to Win Fame and Influence People

*"I've got a plan so cunning you could put a tail on it and call it a weasel."
- Edmund Blackadder, Esq. (Black Adder III)*



Within a Historical Period, there are 6 Rounds. Now, you can be a real clever bastard and emulate the "Black Adder" program by substituting the word "Series" for Historical Period, and "Episode" for Round. This is catchy as hell, and goody-gumdrops for you.

So, you have 6 Rounds to make a name for yourself. After Round 6, you're as dead as Dillinger -- NO EXCEPTIONS. As a marine photographer once told me, "Gettin' old's a bitch."

A Round consists of each Player Character (PC) first making an Income Roll, and adding the result to the current Wealth. PCs then interact, devise and hatch plans, and finally spend Wealth. Interactions between PCs involve all sorts of plans and plots: promising and withholding wealth and support, making and breaking alliances, bluffing, scheming, lying, and maybe even telling the truth every so often. Eventually, it comes time to shut up and put up.

One role, one plan

This Part covers rules for PCs that are not members of the Mob. During a Round, a non-Mob PC takes on exactly one role: Leader or Supporter. A Leader proposes a plan, describes how he will carry it out, and uses his Flaw and one Skill to determine success. If successful, the Leader earns the full amount of Fame associated with the plan.



A Supporter selects exactly one Leader to support during the Round. A Supporter cannot support another Supporter, or a member of the Mob. Multiple Supporters can attach themselves to the same Leader during the Round. Each Supporter improves the Leader's chance of success, but each supporter only earns 25% of the plan's Fame. Sounds like a raw deal, huh? Well, don't give your support away cheaply. Make the ace-face Leader bastard pay through the nose for it. Make him give you half of his Wealth. Or all of it.

Each supporter receives an equal 25% share of Fame, and these shares do not detract from the Leader's Fame. For example, suppose both Sir Walter and Lord Flasheart support Lord Melchett's plan to entertain the Queen with a lavish banquet for 15 Fame points. It is a success, so Lord Melchett gets the full 15 Fame (suppose Flaw = 1), and Sir Walter and Lord Flasheart get 4 Fame points each (rounding the decimal).

As long as you are not part of the Mob (Part IV), you are free to be a Leader or Supporter at the start of a Round. If a Leader, you can propose exactly one plan for the Round, directed either against society at large or against other PCs. If a Supporter, then you are free to support any Leader during the Round, regardless of previous support and interactions. A Leader does not need any Supporters to propose and attempt a plan.

Who goes first?

At the start of Round 1, all PCs have zero (0) Fame, so the Leader with the highest Wealth proposes, attempts, and resolves his plan first. Then the next most-wealthy bastard, and so on. For Round 2 and after, the Leader with the highest Fame goes first, then the next most-famous, etc. During a Round, you may get killed before you get a chance to enact a plan. Tough shit, deal with it. Or, you might get demoted to the Mob during a Round, which will leave you vulnerable to the nefarious plans of the other vicious bastards.



Plans against poor dumb bastards (society at large)

Just what the sub-title says: you're taking advantage of the hordes of poor dumb bastards through some crooked plan. For a Leader, this occurs in five easy steps.



- Step 1: state desired Fame.** Your Number One Goal is to win Fame. Go for it, buster -- pick a number. Realize that you have to roll above this number using d6s (Step 4), so don't be a dope and go for 100 Fame.
- Step 2: roll against your Flaw.** Before you propose and attempt your plan, you have to determine whether you trip yourself up. To overcome your Flaw, you need to roll above your Flaw value using 1d6. There are two modifiers here. First, you get a +1 bonus for every 1 point of Wealth that you spend on the roll. You must declare how much Wealth you will spend BEFORE you roll. Second, if you fail your roll, you get one re-roll for every member of the Mob that supports you. On these re-rolls, you get +1 to the roll for every 1 point of Wealth that you continue to spend. Again, you must declare how much Wealth to spend BEFORE your roll.
- Step 3: propose the plan.** If you succeeded in your Flaw roll, you now need to describe how you will use ONE Skill to win the desired Fame. Make it good. Roleplay, for Christ's sake. The GM will subtract -1d6 if he or she doesn't buy your plan, or if you are not convincing. So if you're a lame-ass and say, "I use my Astrology 3 to earn 12 Fame", then the GM will ding you 1d6. It's better to say, "I have Astrology 3, so I make dire predictions about the coming of Doomsday. I rave about the collision of planets, the rising of the sea, and the waking of the dead. I dress in a burlap sack smeared with dung, and show up at Charlemagne's court on Pentecost, screaming about the convergence of Jupiter and Mars. My goal is 12 Fame."
- Step 4: attempt your plan.** For your plan to succeed, you need to roll above the desired Fame, using your stated Skill. In the above example, the astrology bastard would have to roll over 12 using 3d6. There are two modifiers here. First, you get a +1 bonus for every 1 point of Wealth that you spend on the roll. You guessed it -- you must declare how much Wealth to spend BEFORE you roll. Second, your Supporters improve your roll. For the Skill that you are using in your plan, you add each of your Supporter's same Skill value to your Skill. If a Supporter has zero (0) for the Skill,

then you add +1 to your roll. For example, suppose the astrology bastard has two Supporters: one with Astrology 1, and the other with Astrology 0. The astrology bastard's roll would then be 4d6+1 (i.e., 3+1 d6 and +1 to the roll). There are NO re-rolls for this step.

Step 5: earn Fame. If your modified Skill roll is above the stated Fame, then you have earned the Fame. Multiply the stated Fame by your Flaw value -- you have earned all of this as Leader. Each of your non-Mob Supporters earns 25% of the stated Fame multiplied by your Flaw. If you do not roll higher, then you get no Fame, but are not penalized in any way.

Things are simpler for Supporters. If you are a Supporter, you only need to state which Leader you are supporting. Remember, you cannot support another Supporter or a Mob member. Your Skills, or lack thereof, are taken into consideration according to the Leader's plan.

Wait, you say, we're talking about plots against poor dumb bastards, right? So, what about taking their money and property? Well, that's what your Income Roll is. Every Round, you're bilking goods and cash from society at large, whether through tax collection, real estate scams, or insider trading. Yep, you're constantly stealing from the plebs in some way, because you gotta eat and because you're a bastard.

Plans against other vicious bastards (PCs)

Probably the most vicious act in this game is to directly target the other vicious bastards that are the PCs. And there's nothing wrong with that. Not a goddamn thing. Remember, they're out to get you first. There are three ways of screwing over other vicious bastards.

Murder. Taking out some bastard. You don't earn Fame for this, but, man oh man can this be satisfying. Be advised that you might get caught, which sucks royally. Here's the plan for "Murder by Numbers":



Step 1: name the victim (another PC).

Step 2: roll against your Flaw. As Step 2 above, subject to Wealth and Mob modifiers. If you fail at this step, the murder does not occur, but you are not penalized in game terms. Say you bought the wrong bullets for the gun, or wrote down the wrong address for your victim.

Step 3: propose the plan. State and describe which Skill you'll use. Follow Step 3 above, but note that you do not necessarily have to use Weapon-play or Poison here. These are the most obvious Skills, but you can also use Entertain (e.g., get the bastard drunk and then stab him), Law (e.g., have the bank confiscate his house and then stab him in a hotel lobby), or something creative (e.g., have him go to a fortune teller and then stab him). Again, roleplay it up, or you'll be penalized -1d6 by the GM.

Step 4: attempt your plan. This is an opposed roll. The would-be murderer rolls his stated Skill, modified by +1 for every 1 Wealth point spent and by any Supporter's same Skill (as in Step 4, above). The victim rolls his Guard against Murder, Theft, and Fraud. The victim's roll is modified by any Supporter's Guard against Murder, Theft, and Fraud. The victim DOES NOT get to improve his roll by Wealth, as the murder attempt is something of a surprise. After all, we're dealing with scheming, devious bastards here.

Step 5: outcome. If the murderer's total roll is higher than the victim's, then the victim is killed. He's dead, but revenge will most likely occur (see Part V, Wormsfood & Revenge). You don't earn Fame for the successful murder, and you don't get the victim's Wealth. If the victim rolls higher or ties the murderer's roll, then the attempt fails. The murderers are caught red-handed and beaten savagely by the victim's family and associates. Their businesses are fire bombed, and their kith, kin, and kine are defiled. The Leader, and the Leader only, of the murder attempt immediately becomes a member of the Mob (see Part IV, Mob Rules). The Leader cannot spend Wealth to save himself from becoming part of the Mob.

Theft and Fraud. Swindling another vicious bastard out of his Wealth. ALL of it. You don't earn Fame for this either, but you get filthy rich. Rules are similar for a murder:

Step 1: name the victim (another PC).

Step 2: roll above your Flaw. Modified by your Wealth and Mob support. If successful, go on to Step 3.

Step 3: propose the plan. State and describe a Skill to use. Law is an obvious Skill, but you can use Weapon-play to kill your victim's guards and ransack his house, or use Military Command to raid and torch his estate. Describe a good plan, or get a -1d6 penalty.

Step 4: attempt your plan. An opposed roll: your Skill, modified by Wealth and Supporters, against your victim's Guard against Murder, Theft, and Fraud, modified by his Supporters. As above, the victim does not get to improve his roll by Wealth.

Step 5: outcome. If you roll higher, then you immediately get all of your victim's Wealth. You may share some of it with your Supporters at the end of the Round, or not. If your victim ties or rolls higher, then he keeps his Wealth, nothing more. You are not penalized in any way for this failed attempt.

Duel. This is to the death. A way of legally killing another bastard, and earning Fame at the same time. Rules are somewhat different for duels.

Step 1: name the victim (another PC).

Step 2: resolve the duel. No Flaw roll is involved. The exact nature of the duel depends upon the victim's Response to Duel:

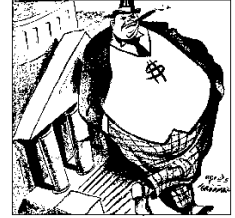
- * Accept. This is an opposed roll: the challenger's Weapon-play vs. the victim's Weapon-play. Highest roll wins; ties are re-rolled. This is man-to-man, so NO modifiers are used (Wealth, Supporters, or Mob). The winner survives and earns Fame equal to half of the opponent's Fame. The loser is dead (see Part V, Wormsfood & Revenge).

- * Weasel Out. The victim tries to get out of the duel while saving face. The victim uses a Skill to defuse or nullify the duel challenge. As above, the victim has to give a good description of his plan, or else he is penalized -1d6. The victim's Skill roll is modified by the same Skill of any Supporters, plus +1 for every 1 point of Wealth spent (as above, the victim must spend Wealth BEFORE he rolls). The victim has to roll above half of the challenger's Fame to successfully weasel out. No Fame is lost for a successful weasel. If the victim is unsuccessful in weaseling out, then the duel occurs under the "Accept" rules.

- * Refuse. The victim flatly refuses. He survives, but his Fame is reduced to 25% of its current value. Chances are that he will join the Mob at the end of the Round.

At the end of the Round

Spend Wealth. If you haven't been robbed blind, calculate how much Wealth you have (i.e., Wealth at start of Round + Wealth gained through Theft & Fraud). As long as you have some wealth, you can spend it by giving some to one or more non-Mob PCs, and/or patronizing one PC who began the Round as a member of the Mob (see Part IV, Mob Rules).

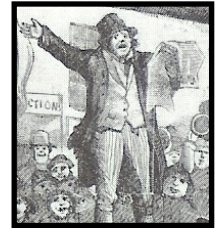


Calculate new Fame. Calculate your current Fame. For every multiple of 30 points of Fame, you earn two things: 1) a new Title for yourself, and 2) 1 point to add to any Skill OR 1 point to add to Income Roll.

Mob. Of the living PCs not currently in the Mob, the one with the lowest current Fame becomes a member of the Mob (see Part IV, Mob Rules). If two or more PCs are tied with the lowest Fame, then they all become a member of the Mob. Important note: a PC can save himself from becoming one of the Mob by spending Wealth equal to his Flaw. If the PC can't afford this payment, and no other PC gives him any Wealth, then he joins the Mob.

OPTIONAL: Putting it in writing

In play-by-post games, the format naturally lends itself to breaks in the Round when the GM calls for plans to be submitted in writing. Because *Bastards and Bloodlines* is meant to be played by devious bastards, it may be best for players to submit their roles (Leader or Supporter) and plans in writing in face-to-face games. At minimum, each plan should specify against whom, fame desired (if applicable), Skill used, and any Wealth spent on Flaw or attempt rolls. Players also need to state any other Wealth expenditures, and how they will respond to duel challenges.



"Now here's the plan. When he offers me the swords, I kick him in the nuts and you set fire to the building. In the confusion we claim a draw."

- Edmund Blackadder, Esq. (Black Adder III)

Part IV. Mob Rules

*"You are last in God's great chain, Baldrick.
Unless, of course, there's an earwig around
here you'd like to victimise."
- Edmund Blackadder, Esq. (Black Adder III)*



I don't mean Mob as in "Mafia." I mean "Mob" as in the mass of poor dumb bastards wearing "Kick Me" signs. You might become a member of the Mob, either because you had the lowest Fame at the end of a Round (and didn't have enough Wealth to bail yourself out) or because you failed a murder attempt. As soon as you become part of the Mob, the following are set to zero (0): all of your Skills, your Income Roll, and your Wealth. You keep your Fame and Flaw values. As part of the Mob, you cannot be a Leader, cannot have a Supporter, but can still be targeted for Murder, Theft and Fraud, or a Duel by another PC.

Sucks, huh? It gets worse. Every time that you begin a Round as part of the Mob, your Fame immediately decreases by 50% of its current value, and your Flaw immediately increases by +1.

OK, so you're an unlucky Mob bastard, but you're not completely useless. You can support one Leader in a Round, which gives him another chance to succeed at his Flaw roll. Perhaps this Leader or another non-Mob PC will patronize you in return. Patronization occurs at the end of a Round. To receive patronization, you must begin the Round as a member of the Mob. Through patronization, a non-Mob PC spends Wealth to elevate you from the Mob. Merely one (1) point of Wealth removes you from the Mob, and lets you be a Leader or Supporter at the start of the next Round. After this first point of Wealth, every point of Wealth spent on your patronization lets you increase a Skill or Income Roll by one (1) point.

Rabble Rousing

Sure, the Mob are faceless, hard-luck, poor zhlub bastards, but there's a lot of them. Their one redeeming feature is their strength in numbers. They come in handy should you want to storm the Bastille, say. While a member of the Mob, you can attempt to Rabble Rouse once. This is an all-or-nothing attempt to become famous and gain power. To Rabble Rouse, you must begin the Round as a member of the Mob. During the Round, you cannot support a Leader, and cannot receive patronization. You must choose one of the following three options for Rabble Rousing.



Insurgency. You must roll "7" on 2d6. If you fail, then you die at the hands of the authorities, with your head put on the gate of the city for all to see (see Part V, Wormsfood & Revenge). If you succeed, then you immediately earn 25 Fame, and

become a non-Mob PC. At the start of the next and every subsequent Round, you must roll vs. your Flaw, modified by any Wealth spent and any Mob members that support you (see Step 2 in Part III). If you do not roll over your Flaw value, then the Mob has turned against you and all of your Supporters. You're all dead, most likely hanging from a fence by your ankles. If you roll over your Flaw, then you continue to lead the Mob, and perform an Income Roll (if relevant). While leading the Mob, you cannot rejoin it due to lowest Fame. During the Round, you can do ONE of the following:

- * Execute one (1) PC (automatic success). No questions asked.
- * Immediately earn 25 Fame.
- * Assign 1 point to any Skill.
- * Assign 1 point to Income Roll.
- * Propose and attempt plan as Leader, described in Part III.
- * Act as Supporter, described in Part III.

Rebellion. You must roll "2" or "12" on 2d6. If you fail, then you die in agony, as above. If you succeed, then you immediately earn 50 Fame, and become a non-Mob PC. At the start of the next and every subsequent Round, you must roll over your Flaw, modified by any Wealth spent and any Mob members that support you, as above. If you do not roll over your Flaw value, then you and your Supporters die. If you roll over your Flaw, then you continue to lead the Mob, perform an Income Roll (if relevant), and cannot rejoin it due to lowest Fame. You can do ONE of the following during the Round:

- * Execute one or two (1-2) PCs (automatic success). Unleash your goon squad.
- * Earn 50 Fame.
- * Assign 2 points to any combination of Skills.
- * Assign 1 point to Income Roll.
- * Propose and attempt plan as Leader, described in Part III.
- * Act as Supporter, described in Part III.

Revolution. You must roll "2" on 2d6. If you fail, then, you got it, you're dead. If you succeed, then you immediately earn 100 Fame, and become a non-Mob PC. At the start of the next and every subsequent Round, you must roll over your Flaw, modified by any Wealth spent and any Mob members that support you, as above. If you do not roll over your Flaw value, then you and your Supporters die. If you roll over your Flaw, then you continue to lead the Mob, perform an Income Roll (if relevant), and cannot rejoin it due to lowest Fame. You can do ONE of the following during the Round:

- * Execute any number of PCs (automatic success). Let the guillotines drop!
- * Earn 100 Fame.
- * Assign 3 points to any combinations of Skills.
- * Assign 1 point to Income Roll.
- * Propose and attempt plan as Leader, described in Part III.
- * Act as Supporter, described in Part III.

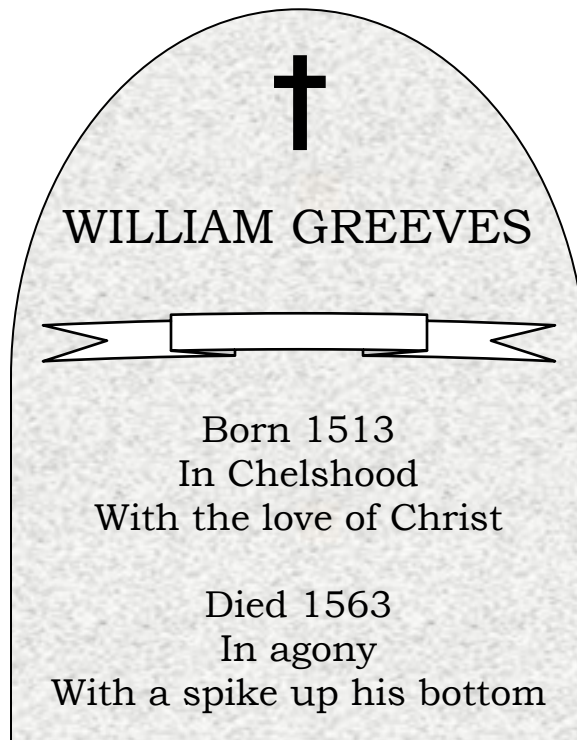
*"Sir, these are not the days of Alfred the Great. You can't just lop someone's head off and blame it on the Vikings.
- Edmund Blackadder, Esq. (Black Adder III)*

Part V. Wormsfood & Revenge

Some vicious bastard -- specifically, another PC -- might kill you before Round 6 of the current Historical Period. It happens. You might get murdered, fall in a duel, or end up on the wrong side of a Rabble Rousing. So you have a nice funeral and then wait around for the next Historical Period to rejoin the game, right? Wrong! You have kids, remember? Horrid little bastards, to be sure, but some shithead out there just took out one of the family. What good are kids if they can't avenge your death?

In the event of your premature death, your avenging child (call him "Hamlet") joins the game at the start of the next Round as a non-Mob PC. Entering the game, Hamlet inherits the values of the following at the time of your death: ONE of your Skills (Hamlet's choice), your Income Roll, and your Flaw. Hamlet gets all of your Titles at the time of your death, but does not begin as leader of the Mob if you were previously. Hamlet starts with 50% of your Fame at the time of your death, and he must state his own Response to Duel.

As for starting Wealth, Hamlet makes an Income Roll at the beginning of his first Round of play. Hamlet might also start with some of your Wealth, depending on how you handle your Legacy (see Part VI, Legacy, Descendants, and Continuing the Game).



Part VI. Legacy, Descendants, and Continuing the Game

"You know, over these last few years, I've come to think of you as a sort of son. Not a favourite son, of course -- lord, no! -- more of a sort of illegitimate backstairs sort of sprog, you know: a sort of spotty squirt that nobody really likes."

- General Sir Anthony Cecil Hogmanay Melchett (Black Adder IV)



Every bastard dies. You're a bastard, and you're gonna die. When you die, you leave a Legacy. This is how famous you remain after death.

Premature death (before Round 6)

Let's say that you die during the current Historical Period (i.e., before Round 6). You unlucky bastard you. Now, you have a decision to make with your Wealth at the time of death. You can be a selfish bastard and convert all of your Wealth directly into Fame (1:1 conversion). Add this Fame to your Fame at death, and this is your Legacy. Make your GM keep a "Hall of Bastardry" or some such. You want to be the highest score ever. Is this pure vanity? Of course it is! Do you think that the Romans made busts of themselves for decoration? Hell no, it was to let future generations know what bad-asses they were. And it worked -- would you want to fuck with Caracalla?



You don't have to convert all of your Wealth to Fame. Remember, you have a Hamlet that's going to crease some bastard for killing you. So, you can put aside some of your Wealth and let Hamlet have it as starting Wealth. Then, convert your remaining Wealth into Fame.

Natural death (at end of Round 6)

Now, suppose you make it to the end of Round 6, then keel over. In this case, you **MUST** convert all of your Wealth into Fame (1:1 conversion). You can apply all of this Fame to your Legacy. Or, you can divert some of your Fame to boost your next PC's starting scores. So, find out whether the GM is going to resume gameplay with another Historical Period. There's no point in pissing Fame away if you're staring at Armageddon.



Your next PC starts with FIVE (5) points to assign to Skills and Income Roll, plus 1 point for every 10 Fame that you set aside for him. For your next PC, go through character creation (Part II) with this pool of starting points.

If you had an avenging Hamlet that happened to earn more Fame than you did, then use your Hamlet's Fame to boost the next PC's starting points, instead of your Fame.

"I want to be remembered when I'm dead. I want books written about me. I want songs sung about me. And then hundreds of years from now I want episodes from my life to be played out weekly at half past nine by some great heroic actor of the age."

- Edmund Blackadder, Esq. (Black Adder III)

Epilogue

Well, that about does it. Have fun, and watch your back. There are lots of cruel bastards out there.

"What a mad, blundering, incredibly handsome nincompoop I've been!"
- George, Prince Regent (Black Adder III)



Appendix A: Bastards by the Numbers (step-by-step gameplay)

1. Character creation (the essentials).
 - a. Assign 6 points to some combination of Skills and Income Roll (pp. 6-7).
 - b. Assign a value to Flaw (p. 7).
 - c. Determine a Response to Duel (pp. 7-8; most relevant for play-by-post games).
2. Round 1.
 - a. Income Roll (pp. 7, 9).
 - b. Interaction among PCs: devise roles, plans, alliances, support, etc.
 - c. Order of gameplay determined by Wealth (p. 10).
 - d. Leaders resolve plans (pp. 10-12).
 - e. End of Round (p. 13): Spend Wealth, calculate new Fame, resolve demotion(s) to Mob (p. 14).
 - f. If PC dies, then determine characteristics of Hamlet to join gameplay at the beginning of Round 2 (pp. 16-17).
3. Rounds 2-6.
 - a. Income Roll, as above.
 - b. Mob PCs: Fame is halved, +1 to Flaw (p. 14).
 - c. Interaction among PCs, as above.
 - d. Order of gameplay determined by Fame (p. 10).
 - e. Leaders resolve plans, as above.
 - f. Mob PCs: Rabble Rousing option (pp. 14-15).
 - g. End of Round, as above.
 - h. If PC dies, then determine characteristics of Hamlet to join gameplay at the beginning of next Round (pp. 16-17).
4. End of Round 6.
 - a. Determine Legacy (p. 17).
 - b. If there is a next Historical Period:
 - b1. Determine new starting points for next PC (p. 17).
 - b2. Character creation (go to Step 1, above).

Appendix B: Picture-perfect Bastards (Character Cards)

Character Cards have been designed for convenience and ease of play. Each Card has two sides. The front side gives a quick visual image of the player character (PC), with space provided for a portrait and coat of arms. Space is provided for the family and personal names and any titles. This front side can be used as a placard for tabletop gaming, or can be posted for online games. The back side lists the necessary information for gameplay, with spaces to fill in values.

Both sides of a Character Card can be printed out separately. They can be kept apart, or affixed together. Alternatively, they can be slipped into plastic sleeves that are used for collectible cards. This way, the front side can face other players, while the back is held towards the owner.

Helpful tip – using historical portraits of PCs lends considerable atmosphere to the game. The following websites cover various periods of human history, with a bias towards the British Isles (all operational, June 2005).

Stone Age paintings

<http://www.kamat.com/kalranga/rockpain/timeline.htm>

Megalithic carvings

<http://merganser.math.gvsu.edu/myth/myth-gal.html>

Celtic coins

<http://www.ancient-art.com/>

<http://www.kernunnos.com/home.shtml>

Roman sculpture (100 BC - 300 AD)

<http://vandyck.anu.edu.au/introduction/rome/artserve.html>

Early medieval manuscripts

<http://www.bl.uk/catalogues/manuscripts.html>

Medieval to Romantic (1100 to 1850)

<http://www.wga.hu/index1.html>

Gothic & Byzantine (1300s to late 1900s)

<http://www.abcgallery.com/movemind.html#Gothic>

Tudor/Elizabethan (1490-1621)

<http://www.tudor-portraits.com>



Front side



Family name _____ Personal name _____ Titles _____ _____ _____	Coat of Arms

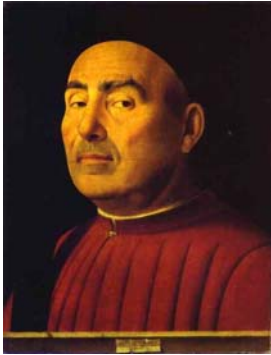

Back side



Personal name _____ Fame _____ Income: ____ d6 Wealth _____ Flaw: ____	
Skills ____ Astrology ____ Entertainment ____ Law ____ Poison ____ Weapon-play ____ Other: ____ Military Comm. ____ Guard vs. Murder, Theft, Fraud	Response Duel: __ Accept __ Weasel: Skill: _____ __ Refuse
	Mob? ____
	Leader of? __ Insurgency __ Rebellion __ Revolution

Example player characters of the “Bull” family, in various Historical Periods of Britain: Bronze Age (including megalith builders), Roman era, medieval, Victorian.

	
Family name TAUROS	Coat of Arms 
Personal name KENDOS	
Titles CARVER, MASTER HUNTER	

	
Family name TAURIUS	Coat of Arms 
Personal name TITUS TAURIUS RUFUS	
Titles PRAETOR	

	
Family name Bosse	Coat of Arms 
Personal name Robert	
Titles Earl of Oxford	

	
Family name Bull	Coat of Arms 
Personal name John	
Titles Lord Bull	