

in the duchy, meaning that a noble woman can sometimes make herself an heir even if she has younger brothers, or conduct her own affairs, own property, and even sometimes take up arms in a manner that is simply not permissible in outside Bretonnian society. While most women would still have to disguise themselves as a man to pursue a male pursuit, exceptions are many and not always considered strange in Mousillon.

The lords of Mousillon are still patrons of minstrels, musicians, and artists who can beautify their courts, and they still offer hospitality to other lords. Mousillon is rather lacking in artists and poets, however, so it is not unknown for a talented courtier

to be held prisoner to stop him from fleeing into Bretonnia's more wholesome climes. In many cases, a lord's court can be as isolated as the most backwards village, with courtiers huddling in a cold and draughty keep fearful of disease-ridden villagers and cut off from their relatives and fellow high-born outside Mousillon. Many is the daughter of Bretonnia who has been offered in marriage to a lord of Mousillon and never been seen again. Similarly, many a younger son has offered his lance to a visiting lord not knowing he hails from the lost duchy, and found himself compelled to follow his new lord back into Mousillon from whence he might never return.

— LAW AND ORDER —

Mousillon's lack of a duke means laws depend almost entirely on the whims of the nobles. The courts of nobility do not exist without a Duke to patronise them and justice between nobles is settled on who can intimidate or kill his opponent. Justice among the peasants is similarly haphazard, and it is not unknown for a malicious or unhinged noble to boil peasants alive for forgetting his birthday. There are as many sets of laws as there are nobles, but some deeds are considered crimes with set punishments across most of Mousillon. Frog and snail poachers, for instance, are normally impaled, since poaching of the lord's swamp is a crime against the principle of noble authority tantamount to rebellion.

The nobles, however, rarely seek to enforce the laws in the villages, unless they concern rebellion or illegal swamping. Villages enforce their own local customs, often surrounding the many superstitions that can vary greatly from village to village. Crimes which seek to introduce disease into a village are traditionally punished with burning at the stake, and a woman who runs off to marry a man from another village can still expect to be drowned in some of the more isolated communities. The oldest men in the village, those who live into their thirties, are normally entrusted with deciding which punishments are handed out; although, peasants are known to take up their pitchforks and knives to enact mob justice when a crime particularly offends their morals.

An aspect of law and order peculiar to Mousillon is the prevalence of animal trials. For some reason lost to history, Mousillon peasants maintain a tradition of assigning criminal guilt to various animals and charging, trying, and executing them as a result. While this is a relatively rare occurrence, an animal trial is a major event in the history of a community, and news of it sometimes even spreads beyond the village. Animals are most commonly charged with crimes that leave no physical trace, witchcraft being the most common, along with vague crimes like "bringing the pestilence" and "harbouring immoral thoughts." Highly esoteric charges like bigamy and sedition are not unheard-of. Chickens are often the defendants in animal trials, as are cats, dogs, and even pigs on the rare occasion that a village owns one. In fact, many pig trials ultimately result from villagers harbouring jealousy towards the village pig, which has considerable status as a symbol of wealth and prosperity.

Animals from outside Mousillon are not immune to prosecution. Tales are told of travellers having their horses strung up by fearful villagers who, having never seen a horse before, assumed it was some sort of monster and condemned it to death. Likewise, a historical account exists of a sailor's pet monkey washing up on the duchy's shore after a shipwreck, whereupon it was burned at the stake by the first peasants who found it in the belief it was a spy for evil forces. In all cases, however, frogs and snails are considered above the law, and most peasants would consider the idea of prosecuting one to be ridiculous.

— RELIGION —

The worship of the Lady is still the norm among the Mousillon's nobility and chapels dedicated to the Lady are common in knightly keeps. Without a duke or the presence of any Grail Damsels, however, many aspects of the Knightly Code have fallen by the wayside. Many nobles, for instance, employ mercenaries from among Mousillon's brigands and free lances, or even employ un-knightly weapons like firearms obtained from shipments brought into the Barony's docks. There are still some who obey the Lady's will as they have always done, but these knights are becoming a minority among the nobility.

Among the peasantry, religion is composed mostly of superstitions that vary from house to house, let alone between villages. Some of the more common suspicions include burying

the dead face down, always sparing a white snail, never leaving the village in which you were born, leaving food as an offering at the edge of the woods, dancing around a large burning effigy of a pig every winter solstice, and considering extra nipples to be very lucky. Superstitions are as numerous as they are strange, and failing to observe them properly marks one as a definite outsider. In extreme cases, ignoring them can mean becoming outcast or even the victim of mob justice.

The people of Mousillon pay observance to other Gods of the Old World but often in a skewed or obscure way. There is a temple to Manaen in the docks of the Barony, for instance, dedicated to a brutal, cruel version of the God who sinks ships for fun and laughs at the gurgles of drowning sailors. Many peasants know the name of Shallya, but because almost all

her priests died in the last outbreak of the Red Pox, few of them know anything more about her, and the rites they enact have little to do with the Goddess' worship elsewhere. Taal and Rhya can often be identified with some of the legendary beasts said to roam Mousillon's forests and swamps, which the peasants attempt to placate with offerings of food to keep

the land producing what little bounty it can spare. Finally the Lady is found in Mousillon folklore, used as the subjects of oaths and called upon to bless weddings and burials. There is little in Mousillon that can be considered organised religion, however, and what religion there is has more in common with Frogwives' tales than the pronouncements of distant priests.

— DANGER ABROAD —

For many of Mousillon's peasants, the stretches of swampy land between villages are as strange as a foreign land. There is good reason for this—Mousillon is a dangerous place. Many threats roam unchecked through the Lost Duchy and not just Human bandits.

THE UNDEAD

The walking dead have plagued Mousillon since Landuin's day. For the most part they are wandering Zombies, normally plague dead animated by the power of Mousillon's curse. These feral creatures can feast on unwary travellers or lay siege to peasant villages. Given Mousillon's lawlessness and plentiful supplies of corpses, it is little wonder that petty Necromancers sometimes surface in the duchy and create bands of Zombies to attend on them and do their will. One manifestation of Mousillon's curse is that uncontrolled Zombies do not collapse but instead wander off to pursue their own devices (normally eating things and moaning incoherently). There are therefore plenty of uncontrolled Zombies for even a minor Necromancer to control.

The very grimmest villages sometimes descend into utter degeneracy and become home to Ghouls, creatures that were once Human but have feasted on the flesh of their fellow men. Such places become foul nests of the Undead, and their presence is one of the few things that will have peasants from other villages banding together and marching out with brands and pitchforks to put the unliving to the flame.

Some say that the touch of undeath has reached up into the ranks of Mousillon's nobility. But that is another story.

SKAVEN

Ratmen come a-scuttling, as they are wont to do, to Mousillon as they do to more civilised places. Some among the Skaven are adept at using poxes and poisons to inflict plague upon unsuspecting populations, so on the surface it is no wonder that they have an interest in Mousillon, which has been ravaged by the Red Pox twice in its dark history and is still a highly infectious place to live. However, disease is so prevalent in Mousillon that there isn't much the Skaven can do to make it worse. Instead, they treat Mousillon as a sort of laboratory, studying the way plague spreads and the effects the Red Pox has on its victims. Those few who understand anything about the ways of the Skaven speculate that the Red Pox was actually a creation of the Skaven in the first place, but no one can be sure of such a thing.

BEASTMEN

Herds of Beastmen dwell in the pitch-black forests of Bretonnia, creeping out into the swamps at night to snatch their prey from peasant hovels. In this sense, they are no different from the Beastmen who dwell in the Forest of Arden in Bretonnia or the Drakwald in the Empire. However, what differs in Mousillon is how many villages have historically entered into a pact with Beastmen, offering them their children in return for protection from bandits or assistance in feuds with neighbouring villages. Such happenings are still rare, but they live on in tales told a-nights by Frogwives wishing to scare a naughty child.

SWAMP THINGS

With much of Mousillon consisting of snail-infested swamps, swamp-dwelling creatures exist that could well be unique to the Grismerie valley. Slow, strong, malodorous and possibly intelligent, these creatures are frequently indistinguishable from piles of swamp debris until they move. Strangely, rather

