



No one except the gravedigger celebrates when a travelling judge arrives on the scene.

vast bands of refugees are targets for the unscrupulous, who prey upon people desperate to survive. Reports have come of parents even selling their children to pit-fight promoters and as “servants” in the hope that they at least will have food and shelter. And, in the wreckage of Ostland and Hochland, criminal gangs have made themselves masters of whatever they can control, offering “protection” to those who could not flee in return for obedience and tribute. Count von Raukov has vowed to cleanse his lands, but the current situation is too unsettled for him to do anything at this time.

Not all criminals operate in the open, however. Some make their money providing services, such as the convenient disposal of stolen merchandise. These fences offer a fraction of what the item is worth—more if there is little risk associated with it, less if it is particularly “hot”—then sell it at a profit to a client or even another fence. Imperial Law makes little distinction between those who steal and those who sell a stolen item, however, so fences tend to be a careful lot.

TRAVELLING JUDGES

Sometimes a struggling lawyer cannot make a name for himself in a big town or city. Often, life at the bar is cruel. Given the high fees and privileges that the best can command, competition amongst attorneys is fierce.

Woe betide those who cannot keep up the pace, or worse still, anger their local guild of legalists. For those that fall by the wayside, there is little other choice than to petition the local magistrates for licence as a travelling judge.

So unpopular is the task of journeying the lands, holding assizes at villages and counselling roadwardens that few willingly take to it. There are untold horrors upon the roads, particularly since the Storm of Chaos. Whilst these travelling judges enjoy an almost religious reverence from the ordinary folk, they are looked down upon by many others of their profession.

Upon the grant of a licence, a travelling judge is granted powers over a certain stretch of land. In the service of the local nobility or Elector Count, they may order a hanging, place folk in the stocks, make rulings on land disputes, marry people, and perform many of the other official duties of a judge—that is until a “proper” judge steps foot upon their territory.

Most Judges travel upon a palanquin carried by their bodyguards-cum-executioners. This arcane and almost theatrical practice is said to instil the proper awe in the common folk—for none are to think themselves “above the law.” Traditionally judges hold trials whilst seated upon a huge book, unable to set foot to ground in case they sully the judgement. Many wear

FROM THE DIARY OF A TRAVELLING EXECUTIONER

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Arrived in Delberz to administer justice. To a man aged 30, 20 lashes for stealing two pigs from his neighbour. To a woman aged 50, five lashes and a fine for public drunkenness and blasphemy. Took pity and made the strokes light. To two men aged 18 and 27, torture and beheading for murder and chaos-worship. Blade was sharp, one blow each.

ornate hats to signal their profession—amongst illiterate peasants this has been found to be the best way to advertise.

Judges may claim sustenance from any place that they hold a trial or proclaim judgment. Other than that, their wages are largely based on the number and size of trials that they hold in a

year. Curious, dramatic, or large trials with many witnesses and big juries are the stuff of dreams to these failed lawyers. Player characters who encounter a travelling judge are as likely to be asked to dine and offer “civilised conversation” as they are to be drafted into an ad-hoc jury.

— THE LAW —

Law in the Empire is a complicated, arcane art. It is said that mastery of the law is secondary only to the study of magic in its difficulty. In Sigmar’s time, the law was a simple mixture of tribal custom and “might is right.” As the Empire developed, the first property laws came into being—to protect the feudal lords, not the ordinary people. It is not until recent times, and the rise of the middle class, that the law has moved away from this tradition, and become a matter of statutory rights.

Generally speaking, wherever one commits a crime, there will be two or more competing and conflicting systems of law. The ordered statutes of free towns and cities compete with the rough justice of the roadwardens. The vagaries of religious law vie with guild law for primacy. The word of a noble often brings down a death sentence, whilst the unwritten rules of the thieves’ guilds are an unseen influence upon criminals and victims alike. The result is a morass of conflicting jurisdictions that can leave a case hanging for weeks, if not months or even years. Given the complexity of the law and its procedures, the old Reiklander saying rings true: “I keep my enemies close, and my lawyer closer.”

IMPERIAL LAW

In theory, the Emperor is free to make whatever laws and regulations he or she wishes and have it apply to the whole of the Empire. The truth is more nuanced, for laws must pass the review of the Prime Estates, who report to the Electors. A bad report is often all the excuse an Elector needs to quietly not enforce the law or deny it altogether, in times of a weak emperor. In such cases, the Emperor, if he is determined to see the law obeyed, will exercise diplomatic and even public pressure on the recalcitrant Elector to come to heel. Often this is enough to gain grudging acceptance. But, if the Elector is determined, an Emperor may claim peremptory jurisdiction and have the case heard in his own courts. In rare cases, continued defiance by an Elector may merit military action, as Karl Franz’s ancestor Wilhelm threatened against Elector Gunnwald of Averland in the case of the Pudding Tax Revolt of 2433.

Imperial Law concerns itself mostly with revenues, security from foreign and internal threats, the regulation of sorcery, and the rooting out of Chaos cults. Many Emperors have claimed jurisdiction over the succession to Electoral thrones when the succession is in dispute, and even the right in extreme cases to depose Electors, elevate new families to the Electoral rank, and even give whole provinces to another Elector, as was the case with Drakwald under Emperor Mandred. Though rooted in ancient law and the precedent set by Sigmar himself, no Elector formally acknowledges this right and all resist it in any but the direst cases, lest a lasting precedent be set.

Imperial courts exist in all the major cities of the Empire, including the capitals of the Grand Provinces, with judges appointed by the Emperor through the office of the Imperial

Attorney-General. Because of conflicting jurisdictions and traditions dating back thousands of years, however, these courts often find themselves in conflict with local bodies. It is not an uncommon site to see Imperial court sessions in the provinces interrupted by Provincial bailiffs armed with a writ giving them

ODD LAWS OF THE EMPIRE

In its over 2500 years of existence, the Empire and its provinces have accumulated hundreds of laws that are outdated, contradictory, bizarre, and just plain annoying. Presented here are a baker’s half-dozen that GMs can use in adventures, even if only to introduce players to daily life in the Empire.

- “No Halfling shall enjoy freedom to come and go at will in Larswald, unless accompanied by their master or wearing their master’s livery.” *Passed in 2111 in Averheim, after the then-wealthy Larswald district had suffered a rash of burglaries.*
- “All horses shall have their hindquarters covered in cloth when traversing the public streets.” *A 24th century law of Middenheim, passed after the Graf had put his foot in the wrong place one too many times. Never enforced after a coachmen’s strike and riot, which the Knights Panther refused to put down.*
- “Ships berthed at the docks known as ‘Empress Annette’s Quays’ shall pay two shillings per foot of length per day to dock there,” and, separately, “all ships are required to dock at the Empress Annette Quays, unless no room is available.” *Issued in Altdorf in 2398 on behalf of the business partner of a court official, who owned warehouses in the district and hired a Halfling exciseman. It is now a rundown and dangerous area.*
- “All persons entering the town may carry no weapon longer than a short sword. To do otherwise shall be considered proof of conspiracy to commit mayhem.” *Law of Pfeildorf, dated 1977 but rarely enforced, issued after a particularly savage riot at the end of a match between supporters of two sporting clubs.*
- “Singing shall be limited to hymns of praise for Lord Sigmar in all taverns for the first three hours after sunset. Fine for violation, 1 Crown per singer, or closure.” *Law passed in Nuln in the 2200s during the reign of Albrecht the Pious, sometimes used by the watch to shut down overly rowdy taverns and inns.*
- “The River Stir is forbidden to rise higher than the bottom of the Grossweg Bridge.” *Wurtbad law passed in wake of the Great Flood of 1512. No instances of enforcement recorded.*
- “Any Dwarf has the right of way on public highways during the month of Sigmarzeit.” *Averlander law promulgated in the 9th century in honour of the close relationship between King Kurgan and Sigmar. Often only cited by drunken or obnoxious Dwarfs.*