

A WARPSTONE PUBLICATION

# PLAYING THE GAME

By Dave Perry



Playing the Game details the background of the political goings on in the Imperial City of Nuln. It provides enough information to use as the basis for a campaign.

Many thanks to Dave for allowing Warpstone to publish "Playing The Game".  
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*“Power corrupts, that’s what’s so wonderful about it.”*  
*Unknown Nuln courtier.*



Welcome to Nuln. Its inhabitants call it the most sophisticated and glamorous city in the Empire. Outsiders call it the most degenerate and corrupt place on Earth. Here the favourite pursuit is politics and power is everything. No matter how you

got it.

From knife-fights in the alleys to whispered gossip in the drawing rooms the conflict is fought throughout the city. To go up against the inhabitants of Nuln is to face opponents raised since childhood on the hunt for power.

Welcome to Nuln. Hope you survive, your morals won't.

### **Introduction**

Following the death in a duel in Altdorf of 'Deadly' Leos von Liebovitz, Countess Emmanuelle von Liebovitz's only living relative, the noble families of Nuln have watched like hawks for the sign of who she intended to choose as her successor.

Now the Countess has 'accidentally' let slip that she intends to marry and then pass on her position as Elector of Nuln to one of the city's noble families. The family that, in the Countesses own words, 'offers the most to the city'.

In other words the family that can show the most control of the city.

The Electorship race is on and the Three Families involved will stop at nothing to ensure that the city will be theirs.

(It hasn't passed anyone by that the Countess has cunningly ensured her last years of power will be peaceful by making sure that those most likely to try to remove her are pitted against each other instead of plotting against her. Or, for that matter, that 'offers most to the city' can also be read as offers the biggest bribe to her.)

### **The Arenas of Power**

To gain power the families must have influence in the areas that control the city. Whether the influence is theirs because of shared ideology, bribery, loyalty or intimidation is for the most part irrelevant. That the family have the influence is the important thing.

### **The Merchant Council**

Nuln's Merchant Council is vital to the running of the city. Many don't realise exactly how much the Merchant

Council does or how far its power extends and this is exactly how they like it.

The Merchant Council has the responsibility for collecting *all* the taxes in Nuln. It is responsible for setting and collecting the import taxes on all trade coming into the city. As well as controlling Nuln's economic policy the Merchant Council oversees all Judicial matters not involving nobles. Last but not least the Council is responsible for allocating the military budget, which includes the paying of troop wages.

This may not seem like much power. After all, the Countess retains control of all foreign policy decisions, the city's treasury, control of the Watch, the Gate-Guard and the military. The Council doesn't have the authority to give the lowliest trooper in Nuln's army an order.

The Council's power is entirely behind-the-scenes. While it can't give an order to anyone in the military it can, quietly and privately, suggest that if an officer doesn't wish his pay to be consistently tied up in red-tape he should interpret his orders in a way that suits them. Similarly merchants quickly learn that co-operating with the Merchant Council is a good idea if they don't want to be constantly hassled by tax inspectors or have their cargoes searched every time they enter or leave the city.

Consider that and you are left with two questions; how the hell did things get that way and why doesn't the Council run the city ?

The answer to the first is that this is the way the Countess wanted it. Horrified by the Marienberg revolution Nuln decided to diffuse the situation by answering some of the grievances the Merchants had. The Merchant Council was set up to give the merchants a say in the city's future and so diffuse tensions but still ensure the nobles maintained over-all control of the city (hence the fact that most of the people on the Council are actually Nobles).

Rather than engage in constant cold war with the city's merchants and risk a revolution she bought their support by giving the Merchant Council just enough of their demands to keep them happy. She also managed to dump on them all the boring bureaucratic tasks involved in running the city that she loathed as well.

The reason the Merchant Council doesn't control Nuln is because there is no monolithic entity called the Merchant Council but nine people all with completely different agendas.

The fact that any Council decision must have a two-thirds majority vote to pass inevitably means each decision is a compromise hammered out between the various factions. This tends to make the Council remarkably slow to decide and implement matters. (Not of course that it was intended that way, oh no)

The Merchant Council has ten seats. They currently are:

Jurgen Badendorf, Chairman of the Council. A minor nobleman appointed to the position as a compromise candidate. (Count Corleone-Von Sigmar has bought him with the promise of the return of his ancestral lands).

Judge Winter, representative of Nuln's Judicial system. (Strong rumour has it the Judge has got a gambling problem but no-one can find where he does his gambling. Many would like to know, as it would indicate who is pulling the good Judge's strings).

Ernst Grolsch, representing the Grolsch merchant interests.

Heimmler & Gustav Zeist, representing the Zeist merchant interests. (Much to Gustav's annoyance his father often seems to back Ernst Grolsch. Even when it could damage Zeist interests).

Astontillius, Head of the Minstrels Guild, representing the minor Guilds. (Astontillius is a High Elf and most Nuln players would give their eye-teeth to know what he is really doing in Nuln.)

Hans Schwartz, Keeper of the Council Records. (Schwartz is the Council's private spy. He is dead but as he often disappears on missions no one realises that yet. Gustav had him assassinated outside Nuln as he was in Werner Von Sigmar's pay).

Walter Yorrick, representing the minor traders. (Walter is the High Priest of Ranald and the Council's link to the Nuln underworld).

Deacon Knutz, representing the Church of Verena. (Some believe the good Deacon is an agent of the Veiled Blade chaos cult. Then again they could just be trying to discredit the one honest man on the Council).

One empty seat. (This empty seat is the source of much of the conflict between the various factions as they all try to put their man into the position. So far none of them has gathered enough influence to succeed and the seat remains empty.)

### **The Insurance Guild**

Nobody can understand fully Nuln's politics without

understanding the part the Insurance Guild plays in the city.

The Insurance Guild has a small, discrete office in the Guildhall where their business is quietly discussed in civilised surroundings. Perhaps surprisingly what they sell there is actual insurance but with a uniquely Nuln twist.

To be insured you must pay the Guild a sum of your choice (but of at least 100 Gold Pieces) every six months. Then if in the future someone wishes you ill they go to the Insurance Guild and pay them a sum, again entirely at their discretion. The Guild will take their money and check the records. If the sum exceeds ten times the 'insurance' on the person, they kill them. *If not they keep the payment and do nothing.*

Needless to say everybody whose anybody pays for 'insurance' and the Guild rakes in quite obscene sums of money for doing practically nothing.

This racket is successful for several reasons. The primary one is that there is another advantage to being 'insured'. That is that if you are insured with the Guild and you are assassinated within Nuln's city limits by anyone but them then they will hunt down and kill not just the assassins but whoever hired them. (Naturally this makes Nuln's assassins extremely unpopular with other Assassin guilds and has lead to at least one assassin's war).

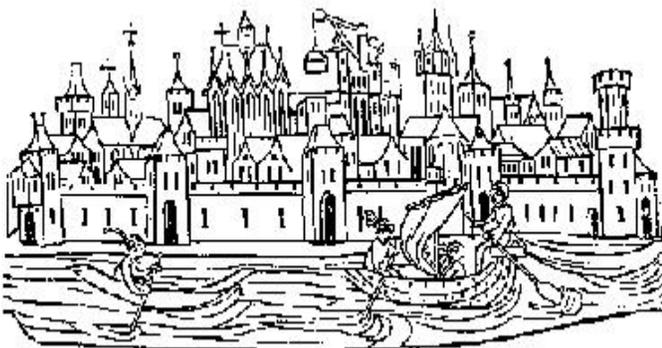
There are two other reasons the Insurance Guild operates so openly. One is that they are paying some quite stupendous bribes to the right people. The other is that Nuln's nobles quite like the system, it costs but insures (pun intended) you can sleep well at nights. It evens means Nobles can move through Nuln's seediest areas without worrying about being attacked.

This does mean that it is pretty much impossible to assassinate your political rivals and live through the experience. This has insured Nuln politics is simply played with more subtlety. You cannot just hire some thug to murder your opponents, you must out-manoeuvre them instead. So politicians have become masters of bribery, blackmail, drugs and innuendo.

There are two cases where you can kill an insured man. One, if they are anywhere outside the city limits. The other is if you kill them in self-defence, (killing someone in a duel is counted as self-defence by the Guild).

### **The Thieves Guild**

In Nuln even the Thieves on the streets have their place in the struggle for power. A very important place indeed. Control of the Thieves guild represents a huge potential for profit, not only that but it means that every member of the Guild is your ear on the dirty dealings of the city. Lets not forget also the possibilities for



blackmail, the cheap muscle at your disposal and the potential to be able to achieve all sorts of 'favours' for all sorts of influential people.

Currently the Thieves Guild is divided into three factions, all at war with each other, controlled by Gustav Zeist, Werner Von Sigmar and a figure known only as 'the head honcho'. However Gustav and Werner are not directly involved with their factions, they are controlled by seconds who do the actual 'hands-on' work and day-to-day running of the rackets. Following Werner's failing command Gustav has been able to place his faction in a commanding position and total control of the Nuln underworld seems to be only a matter of time.

### **The Watch**

Nuln's Watch is divided by the area's they patrol, all falling under the over-all command of the Watch-Captain. Each area has its own structure, officers and habits. Each receives different funding from the Merchant's Council and feuding for budget between the Watches can get very nasty.

These factors make the Watch different from area to area and can be very confusing to strangers to the city. For example the Noble Watch are by far the most well presented and polite but as only an idiot would dare try to arrest a Noble they are the most inefficient and soft. Their job is basically being to beat up any riffraff who wander into their area.

By contrast the Dock Watch are hard as nails but also a crime syndicate extorting money from smugglers and occasionally running their own smuggling operations. They consistently score the highest of any Watch on the 'accidental deaths in custody' form, which should tell you all you need to know about what being captured by them is like.

For a long time the Watch has been in disarray, leaderless since the death of the previous Watch-Captain. The present incumbent, Manfred Kesselring of Middenheim, has found it hard to get a grip. This has allowed the three-way war in the Thieves Guild free reign to spread chaos on the streets of Nuln.

In recent weeks Manfred has seemed to be taking control and the chaos has died down. Still Nuln's Watch remains deeply divided and knowledge of the city is vital if you want to know whether to bribe the local Watch or simply run for your life.

### **The Military**

Nuln maintains an extensive and highly professional army. Nuln also maintains several para-military units. The forces are:

The army under Lord Stefan Von Sigmar is efficient and highly professional. Lord Sigmar is a popular

commander but most are aware that their pay comes from the Merchant Council.

The Knights Crusader under Steffan Von Sigmar. The Knights Crusader is Nuln's elite Knightly Order and only the finest of the city's Knights are allowed to join. Although under the command of Steffan none argue that the most fearsome fighter in the group is Ralph who is also the chief Templar of the Knights of the Blazing Sun in Nuln.

The Gate-Guard under Joseph Praelberg. The Gate-Guard patrol Nuln's walls and while officially a military unit has not fought a military action in decades. Mostly they act as customs and excise men and check travellers entering and leaving Nuln.

Praelberg is incompetent and corrupt and those Gate-Guard not on the take look to leadership from his deputy Ulrica Von Hexen.

The Road-Wardens under Theo Light-Brow. The Road-Wardens patrol the roads around Nuln and in times of war acts as scouts for the army. Theo Light-Brow is a half-Elf who spends as much time as possible out on the roads with his men. He studiously avoids any political entanglements and is so obviously popular with his men and successful that no one has tried to replace him.

As well as these forces each noble house maintains their own household guard, with the size and quality depending on the resources of the family.

The Church of Sigmar maintains a force of soldiers and Templars under the command of Dieter Kaslen.

The Church of Myrmidia has a small group of knights of the Blazing Sun and their squires and support under the famous Templar, Ralph the Blade.

### **The Countess**

It is the Countess who will make the decision on her successors so not unnaturally much of the families time is spent currying favour with her. The tactic seems to vary for each family. The Grolschs seem to be courting the ambassadors of the near-by Electorships to press their case with the Countess. Gustav Zeist's formidable spy-network provides her with choice information and various shady favours. The Von Sigmars seem happy that Count Corleone has caught the Countess's eye.

While these tactics may help sway her, all are sure the Countess is too smart a politician to decide her successor purely on her personal liking. But every avenue helps, and so the families continue to work to please the Countess, or to discredit their rivals in her eyes.

### **Public Opinion**

Much as some of the families would like to, the common people cannot be ignored. It is they who pay the taxes who support the Elector, they who fight in the armies

that defend the Elector and they, who if mistreated, will rise up against the Elector. The masses have their place in the race for power and their support is a vital part of any of the families' power-base.

So the Three Families consider their public relations to be almost important as any modern politician. Again the families' approaches differ. The Zeists provide money for soup kitchens and other projects to help the poor. The Grolschs promise improved trade and more jobs when they are in power and the Von Sigmars hire Minstrels to sing the tales of the heroics of their family.

### **The Minor Families**

Nuln is home to many minor Noble families who vary in power from the Von Kliests who could almost be one of the big Three to the Brackenbergs who have to regularly sell off portions of their ancestral lands to keep going. Still all of the families are vital reservoirs of money, influence and (should it ever come down to it) troops. Resources that the competing Three families all want to be on their side.

All have attached themselves to one of the big three in the hope that when their patrons become Electors their loyalty will be rewarded. So the relations between the Noble families of Nuln is an insanely complex tangle of deals, marriages and treaties.

The five most powerful of the minor families are:

The Von Kliests, an arch-conservative family and fervent Von Sigmar supporters. The Von Kliest's heir apparent Johann von Kliest has attracted much attention as one of the most brave and skilful warriors in the city.

The Oldenhaller's are a fervently Solkanite family who despair of the corruption of Nuln and seek for a candidate that will purge this wicked city.

The Von Speer's, a merchant family who have only just bought their title but who desperately want to be 'proper' nobles. They support the Zeists but would love to be accepted by the epitome of Nuln nobility, the Von Sigmars.

The Brackenbergs, a family with a long and glorious history but absolutely no money. They are being courted by the Grolschs who offer them the money they so desperately need in return for their support.

The Von Hexens, a family of romantics and poets but with people in high places. Ulrica von Hexen is deputy of the Gate-Guard and Roland Von Hexen is a highly popular member of the Knight Crusaders. The Von Hexens remain politically unaffiliated.

## **THE THREE FAMILIES**

### **THE VON SIGMAR'S**

#### **Ideology**

The Von Sigmar's ideology can be summed up in one word: *Tradition*.

The Von Sigmar's believe they should rule because it is the divine right of the Nobility to rule over the lower orders. Thus it was and thus it shall ever be. As ordained by the Gods themselves.

Of course as the Von Sigmar's can trace their lineage back to Sigmar himself they are naturally the most suited to rule. (Naturally as the records of Sigmar's reign are spotty at best the claim is impossible to prove but anybody pointing this out in their presence is taking his life in his hands).

The Von Sigmar's are old school nobility who believe a noble's worth is measured by how far back he can trace his ancestry not how much money he has. Duty, honour and courage are their watchwords and, to give them their due, they live and die by them.

Naturally the Von Sigmar's are deeply suspicious of Nobility who have dabbled in commerce (not the kind of thing a proper gentleman should do). As for those

nouveau-riche nobles who have purchased their titles, they are just jumped up tradesmen and should be treated as such.

The Von Sigmar's are firmly against any change in the Empire, particularly, any which would give the rising merchant classes more power. In their view the Empire is perfect and all this talk of reform is just a cloak for a Marienberg style revolution. Well (pats sword) they know how to deal with that !

#### **Arcas Of Power**

Naturally the Von Sigmar's are the chosen candidate of the old Nobility. In particular they have the fanatical support of the powerful Von Kliest family, a family even the Von Sigmars regard as old-fashioned.

They also have great support among the army, not surprising as Lord Steffan is the Commander-in-Chief.

They also have the support of the Church of Sigmar, although as the Church is supposed to remain out of politics this is only manifest as verbal encouragement and occasional heavily biased sermons to the common folk.

Perhaps surprisingly the Von Sigmars are extremely

popular with the common people. This is partially because of their long tradition of heroism and service to the city and partially because of the extravagant antics of Count Corleone- Von Sigmar, whose deeds and style have quite caught the public eye.

### Areas Of Weakness

Naturally the Von Sigmar's are weakest in the Merchant Council. In fact most of the Von Sigmars have no idea what the Merchant Council actually does. The Merchant Council on the other hand is completely aware of them. As the Von Sigmars stand for the destruction of the Merchant Council's power the Merchant Council are naturally not their most fervent supporters.

### Players

*"What do I think of Lord Steffan as a man? I don't think of him as a man, more a force of nature."*

*Baron De Sade, visiting Bretonnian noble.*

### Lord Steffan Von Sigmar (Noble 1, Free-Lance, Noble 2, Mercenary Captain, Noble 3)

The Patriarch of the Von Sigmar family. Lord Von Sigmar is a bear of a man, with a colossal force of personality and an infectious joie-de-vivre. Although he is a bit of a rough diamond preferring songs about drinking and fighting to poetry and finding the intricacies of Nuln's noble etiquette 'a bit poncey'.

Even his bitterest enemies admit to a secret liking of Lord Von Sigmar. Maybe it is because in a city as duplicitous as Nuln, he is a totally honest man. If he likes you Lord Von Sigmar will let you know with a hearty laugh and a slap to the back that would fell an ox. If he doesn't, he will tell you to your face and if you don't like it then you can damn well meet him at dawn on the field of honour. (He will probably beat you to; although pushing 60 he is still a formidable fighter. But put up a good fight and he will probably change his mind about you.)

Lord Von Sigmar inspires great affection in his friends and total loyalty in his vassals. Unfortunately he is a man totally lacking in subtlety, a distinct disadvantage in Nuln. For that kind of thing he relies on his son-in-law, Count Corleone-Von Sigmar and (very reluctantly) his second son, Werner.

Lord Von Sigmar is famed in Nuln for his hunts. Some cities require a knight to slay a boar with a knife or

bring back a Beastman's head before he can be knighted. In Nuln surviving one of Lord Von Sigmar's hunts is enough.

Lord Von Sigmar's wife died five years ago. He never re-married.

### Steffan Von Sigmar (Noble1, Free-Lance, Noble 2)

Steffan is Lord Von Sigmar's eldest son and they share more than just a name. Steffan is exactly what you would expect from a son raised by Lord Von Sigmar. That is to say, he is a younger version of his father sharing his views on Merchants, Nobles and who should be ruling Nuln.

Steffan has inherited his father's vigour, charisma and force of personality unfortunately he has also inherited his intelligence. What's potentially more dangerous is that while Lord Von Sigmar's years have mellowed him a little Steffan is full of youth's energy and impulsiveness. This combined with his ambition to write his name in the history books can lead him to try some truly terrifying plans.

Steffan is Commander of Nuln's order of Knights, the Knights Crusader.

*"Werner would sell his own father for a bent crown."*

*"No he wouldn't. He wouldn't sell him for a penny less than his true value."*

*Conversation overheard in a Nuln tavern.*



### Werner Von Sigmar (Noble 1, Bawd, Charlatan, Racketeer)

It is a never-ending source of astonishment to all that know the Von Sigmar family that Werner is Lord Von Sigmar's son. Indeed both parties seem deeply embarrassed about it.

Werner is cowardly where his father is brave, treacherous where his father is loyal, cruel where his father is compassionate, dishonest where his father is honest and, vitally, subtle where his father is obvious.

While his father despises Werner for his treachery and lack of courage or warrior skills, Werner is contemptuous of his father's intelligence and lack of sophistication. Naturally both prefer to avoid the other whenever possible and any event where the two are together is inevitably strained. A state of affairs not helped by Werner's sarcastic sniping at his father and older brother.

Despite this Werner and his father do co-operate. This is because Lord Von Sigmar reluctantly recognise his son's intelligence and grasp of the city's politics. For his part Werner realises his best bet of obtaining real power is through his family.

Unknown to his father Werner controls one of the three factions that run the Cities underworld. Unfortunately his drinking is getting out of hand and he is losing ground rapidly to Gustav Zeist's faction .

**Count Jacob Corleone-Von Sigmar  
(Minstrel, Noble 1, Duellist, Free-Lance, Noble 2)**

Ask the more romantically minded nobles in Nuln and they will tell you that the story of Count Corleone and Lady Isolde Von Sigmar is one of the great romances of the age. How a Wood Elf noble enraptured by Isolde's beauty, fell in love and gave up his people to be with his human love.

Of course its rubbish. Jacob Corleone (or to give him his proper name, Jaehrim Corleith) was just a wandering Elf when he decided to re-make himself as an Elf noble on a whim. Aided by his natural charm and human's ignorance of Elves he succeeded admirably. What started as a whim became more serious when he discovered the humans had something his people had never dreamed of: Politics.

Jake was quickly addicted to this wonderful game and soon discovered he was good at it. An early brush with the Zeist's brought him to the Von Sigmar's attention and Jake charmed Lord Von Sigmar and married into the family to be part of the biggest game in the world.

Werner wasn't fooled for a second but recognised a sharper mind than the rest of his family. What's more someone on good enough terms with his father and older brother to talk them round to the right way of thinking. A deeply distrustful alliance was formed between the two.

As well as his brains Jake is perhaps the Von Sigmar's greatest populist. His charm helps sway the other Nobles. Particularly, it is rumoured, the Countess. His exploits in destroying a Tzeentch cult in the city have gained him much popular admiration.

**Lady Hedwig Von Sigmar  
(Noble 1, Bawd, Charlatan)**

The youngest daughter of Lord Sigmar, Hedwig is almost a great a beauty as her older sister Isolde (although dark of hair and eye as compared to her sister's blonde hair and blue eyes). She is also one of the most notorious ladies at the Nuln court.

Hedwig is one of the staples of Nuln's courtly life and no party is truly fashionable until she has graced it with her presence. In any other city Hedwig would be a shunned for her scandalous behaviour, in Nuln she is

just thought of as fashionably naughty. An incorrigible flirt and tease, she is a woman with a truly evil sense of humour when it comes to playing jokes. Most people who know Hedwig are usually torn between adoring her and wanting to throttle her.

Hedwig is also one of the prime movers in the Silver Spoon, a Slaneeshi cult popular among many of the young nobility.

As well as being stunningly beautiful and wonderfully charming she is also a devious thinker. Having decided the Von Sigmar's aren't going to win the Electorship race she has already cut a deal with Gustav Zeist. For the past few months she has been lacing her brother Werner's wine with an addictive poison. As Werner drinks more because of his addiction his grip on the underworld loosens to Gustav's advantage. The slow damage of the poison is put down to Werner's drinking and it won't kill him before his 'insurance' runs out. If Gustav can win before Werner dies Hedwig will stop poisoning him, he is her brother after all. In return for her aid when Gustav is Elector he will marry her.

**Lady Isolde Corleone-Von Sigmar  
(Noble 1)**

Said to be the most beautiful woman in the Empire, although not in front of the Countess, Isolde is a Aryan beauty with golden hair and sparkling blue eyes. Unfortunately raised being told you are the most beautiful woman in the world and, as a Von Sigmar, better than everyone else anyway had exactly the effect you would expect on her personality.

Isolde is as almost as famed for her temper and arrogance as her beauty. Indeed her father despaired of finding her a husband who could stand being subjected to her acid tongue. The fact that not only could Lord Corleone stand it but seemed genuinely to charm her sealed Lord Von Sigmar's decision to marry her to him before he could leave the city.

Marriage has mellowed Isolde slightly but the lower orders are still likely to receive the edge of her tongue at the slightest mis-step. Nobles who displease merely get an icy stare that could crack rock and the threat of meeting her long-suffering husband in a duel to the death.

**Kurt Von Sigmar  
(Noble1, Scout, Free-Lance)**

Kurt is a gallant knight in the finest traditions of the Von Sigmar family. Brave, gallant, modest and heroic. He is hardly in the city being almost constantly wandering on a fresh quest to destroy some evil, or rescue some innocent.

The other reason for this is that Kurt just doesn't really understand people. He dislikes cities and loathes social

affairs. Kurt is at his happiest alone with his war-horse in the wilderness, tracking down some foe.

Although neither knowing or caring anything about the cities politics Kurt's rugged good looks and heroic deeds do enhance the Von Sigmar's reputation as the steadfast defenders of Nuln.

### **Sigmund Von Sigmar (Nobcl. Scholar)**

Sigmund is an officious, prissy, pompous, rude and generally unlikeable little man.

He is a lecture in history at Nuln's university, a position arranged by his father to keep him out of his hair. His lectures are mainly used to bore his poor students with his 'vast' knowledge.

As well as lecturing he sits on the University council where he does his best to ensure the abolishing of grants for poorer students his predecessor established.

He is married to Ulrica Von Kliest but no one can actually remember his wife ever getting a word in.



## **THE GROLSCHS**

### **Ideology**

The Grolschs are a merchant family who bought their title a mere ten years ago. Needless to say, to the older families that just makes them jumped-up tradesmen. With no Noble blood or ancestry they are worthy of no respect. And that suits the Grolschs just fine, because if they have their way those of noble blood are going to be decorating the cities walls before too long.

The Grolschs see the Nobles as an out-moded remnant of a fast dying system of living. The merchant classes are the future and those Nobles who won't get out of the way for them will have to be disposed of.

The Grolsch's hold a strong belief in the removal of the ancient powers and privileges of the Nobles and the re-ordering of the Empire to run on more modern and

efficient lines. Marienberg has shown the way and they intend Nuln to follow, no matter who has to die along the way.

### **Arcas Of Power**

Naturally the Grolsch's have a great deal of, but far from total, control of the Merchant Council. They are also very popular among some of the Merchant families in Nuln. They also have obscene amounts of money to spread about to buy favours and supports.

This is not to mention a secret alliance with the Von Kuypers, the most powerful of the ruling merchant houses of Marienberg.

### **Arcas Of Weakness**

As well as being disliked by pretty much all of the Nobility they have no influence in the city's military or civil forces that doesn't come from the Merchant Council.

The public image of the Grolschs is of greedy merchants with none of the flamboyance or heroism that the public so love. Therefore they have the worst image of the three families.

### **The Players**

*"If the Von Sigmar's win there will be civil war within a few years, if the Grolsch's win it will be within a few months."*

*Unknown Zeist supporter*

### **Ernst Grolsch**

#### **(Noble 1, Merchant, Noble 2, Spy, Noble 3)**

Ernst Grolsch could be the prefect leader. He's intelligent, energetic, ambitious and imaginative. Unfortunately he tops off these qualities with a complete lack of charm. Perhaps it's the result of too long poring over the books of his many Merchant concerns but he comes across as dry as dust at the best of times.

People don't work for Ernst Grolsch from love or loyalty they do so from fear or greed. And while this is all right in the general run of things it doesn't inspire his supporters to really go out of their way for him or guarantee that when things get really tough they will stick by him. It's typical of Ernst that he doesn't regard this as a problem, after all why would anyone work for him if it wasn't for those two spurs?

Still Ernst is an intelligent man and a natural organiser. He has the entire Electorship campaign worked out. His followers' loyalty will not be tested because nothing will go wrong. From some that would be incredible vanity, Ernst may just be right.

Ernst is married to Eva Brandt, a minor noblewomen he married to gain his title (and for whom the impoverished

Brandts demanded a fortune). She has stood by him loyally and provided an heir but it is a loveless marriage and they rarely spend much time together.

Despite their families rivalry Ernst Grolsch and Hiemmler Zeist get on very well. However Ernst despises Gustav, a feeling he returns with a vengeance.

### **Hugo Grolsch**

#### **(Noble 1, Free-Lance, Noble 2)**

Hugo is a bull of a man. His natural strength and stamina lead to his father ordering him to join the Knights Crusader. This was partially to ensure the Grolsch family had someone familiar with Nuln's military and to give the Grolsch's personal forces a commander his father could trust.

Hugo is a natural warrior and easily met the requirements to join the Knights Crusader. While being on the taciturn side he is not the most popular of the group but his comrades respect his solid courage and unwavering determination. Generally he gets on well with the other Knights Crusader.

Because of his membership in the Knights Crusader and the fact he was brought up a Noble, Hugo gets more respect from the Nobles than his father. Because of this, and because he mixes with the Nobles of the Knights Crusader, Hugo has far less dislike of Nobles than his father. To tell the truth Hugo is far less convinced than his father that revolution is the right way to go. Yes things need to change, but slowly so there is no need for any disruption or loss of life.

Still whatever his personal feelings Hugo is loyal to his father and will go along with his plans. Come the day he is head of the Family things may just be different.

### **Bernard Grolsch**

#### **(Noble 1, Scholar, Merchant)**

The youngest member of the Grolsch family is only very rarely in Nuln. While officially based in Altdorf, coordinating the family's merchant ventures outside Nuln, he is actually located in Marienberg. Here he does coordinate much of the Grolsch's ventures but more importantly acts as a liaison between his father and the Von Kuypers.

Bernard unfortunately combines his father's colourless personality with his brother's stolid lack of imagination. Happiest when dealing with figures he spends most of his time auditing the books and investigating ways round various tax laws.

## **THE ZEISTS**

### **Ideology**

The Zeists are nobles with a fairly long and fairly undistinguished family line. Lacking the Von Sigmar's

history they also lack their refusal to move with the times. The Zeists have invested heavily in many merchant ventures. Indeed nowadays they run one of the largest Merchant companies in Nuln.

In every sense the Zeists are the compromise candidates. They recognise that the world is changing but plan to make the change as gradual and peaceful as possible.

The Zeists support comes from moderates of both camps. The more forward-looking Nobles back them, as do the Merchants who seek peaceful change and the minimum disruption to the Empire.

Apart from a desire to ensure that Nuln is run efficiently and peacefully and that they are the one's running it, the Zeists have no other ideology.

### **Areas Of Power**

The Zeists have the support of several of the smaller noble families, wielding some degree of influence on the Merchant Council.

Gustav Zeist controls one of the three factions competing for control of Nuln's underworld. He is rapidly becoming the dominant one because the failing leadership of Werner Von Sigmar is enabling him to absorb many of Werner's men and rackets.

Gustav has also forged an alliance with the Captain of the Watch, Manfred Kesselring. Manfred has decided to bring to an end the chaos caused by the war between the three factions. To achieve this end he has allied himself with Gustav in order to bring the entire underworld together under Gustav and thereby end the conflict. A consummate businessman Gustav has convinced Manfred he can run the underworld with the minimum disruption to the city. (He probably will as well).

By playing on his rivalry with Nuln's military the Zeists have also recruited the commander of Nuln's Gate Guard to their side.

### **Area's of Weakness**

The Zeists control of the Merchant Council is less than the Grolsch's and they often find their plans blocked by them. They also they have no influence in Nuln's military.

While they can trace their family history a decent amount back they have none of the history or glory of the Von Sigmars. While they are generally better regarded than the Grolsch's (being less ruthless in the pursuit of profit) their public image is that of an amiable bunch, which hardly stirs passion in the mob.

### **Players**

*"Where is Gustav? Has he been kidnapped?"*

*"I see he is with a murder and a thief."*

*“So does that mean he’s been kidnapped or he is with friends?”*

*Conversation between Gustav Zeist’s bodyguard and a Seer.*

### **Gustav Zeist**

**(Noble 1, Merchant, Noble 2, Charlatan, Racketeer, Wizard 1)**

Gustav may not be the head of the Zeists but everyone knows where the brains behind the Zeists rise to power lies. And brains Gustav has in abundance, as well as charm, good humour and the ruthlessness required to play the game of Nuln politics for keeps. Nobody can threaten you while keeping a warm grin on his face better than Gustav. Gustav is the living embodiment of the old saying ‘sincerity is the key. Once you can fake that you can do anything.’

Some wonder if there are actually any real emotions behind that dazzling grin but emotional depth has never been a requirement for power. With his looks, charms, brains and utter ruthlessness Gustav may just one day make the perfect Elector.

### **Heimmler Zeist**

**(Noble1, Merchant, Noble 2, Noble 3)**

Gustav’s father and the nominal head of the Zeist family, Heimmler is a distinguished man of fifty. Heimmler has lead the Zeist family for many years with an unadventurous but steady hand and the family have slowly prospered under his leadership.

However while a good father and businessmen Heimmler just doesn’t have the ruthlessness and twisted mind to really compete in the arena of Nuln politics. Therefore while he still officially runs the family he has let his son take command of their political ambitions.

Heimmler is worried about Gustav expanding the family into the underworld, particularly as he is well aware that Gustav is using these contacts to undermine his own position.

A loving father and husband and a generous boss to his employees, perhaps Heimmler is just too good to be really successful in politics.

Heimmler is happily married to Margaret Brackenberg and adores his wife. Insults or threats to his wife are practically the only thing that can rouse this quiet man to violence.

### **Katrina Zeist (Noble 1, Raconteur)**

It is truly a sorrow that some people are born the wrong sex. If Katrina Zeist was born a man she and Gustav would be running Nuln by now. But she was born a woman in a culture that considered their education complete with needlepoint and a their opinion unworthy of notice.

Stymied by society but loyal to her family and ambitious for her brother Katrina has honed what she can do to aid her family. Her glamorous presence at the Countess parties attracts rich suitors to her family in the hopes of marriage and alliance. Katrina skilfully maintains several suitors in competition for her hand. All trying to outdo the others with the help he gives the Zeist’s in order to impress her.

Her well chosen rumours and innuendo’s can wreck the reputation of those families who oppose the Zeist’s.

Finally some of Gustav’s friends have even enabled her to create scenes which can shatter reputations or make those caught in them very eager to be on good terms with the Zeists. (At least one unfortunate has accepted a goblet of wine from Katrina and woken up next morning in a strange bed with a smug Gustav Zeist standing over them).

Katrina has an especial loathing of Count Corleone- Von Sigmar but despite her best attempts to set him up the Count has dodged every-one of her traps. So far.

### **Wilhemina Zeist**

**(Noble 1)**

The youngest member of the Zeist family is a fragile girl of sixteen. Never healthy Wilhemina spends most of her time in a wheel chair and is constantly afflicted with a racking cough.

Trapped in a wheel chair and kept indoors because of her health Wilhemina has spent most of her life immersed in classic tales of romance. A quiet and desperately lonely girl, Wilhemina dreams of the brave hero who will sweep her off her feet and carry her away.

Wilhemina is all too aware that her ill health makes her a very unattractive candidate for marriage. Still in her heart of hearts she still hopes for her white knight to rescue her.

## **WILD CARDS**

### **Heinz Von Spiel**

Tradition is very important among the noble families of the Empire. How far back you can trace your ancestors is a matter of great pride and prestige. While some like the Von Sigmars and the Von Kliests can trace their ancestors back centuries it is widely acknowledged that the oldest family in Nuln is the Von Spiels. Hell, Heinz von Spiel is over seven hundred years old on his own.

This is because he is a vampire. This doesn’t mean that his castle is surrounded by hordes of undead, that strange mists and thunderstorms gather round it or that blood-drained corpses are found floating down the river. The von Spiels would never dream of doing anything so crude as that. They have lived in the same castle for centuries without ever attracting unwanted attention. As far as

the vast majority of Nuln's population is aware they are simply an old and respected, if reclusive, noble family.

This is done partly because some of the von Spiels are still alive and propagating the line. How many of the Von Spiels are vampires is actually unknown in Nuln. All of them have been seen in daylight but so has Heinz and he is definitely a vampire. Most decide they don't want to offend the von Spiels by investigating too far. Those who don't are politely warned off, if they ignore this they simply vanish.

The matter of feeding is equally strange. Nuln doesn't seem to lose more people than any part of the Empire and certainly a blood-drained corpse has never been found. Again as long as the Von Spiels are discrete most decide they really don't want to know.

Most of the players in Nuln politics are aware of the von Spiels secret but none really want to cross a family of centuries old vampires. For their part the Von Spiels have quietly approached each of the three families and donated a large sum of cash (though exactly the same in each case) and then made it clear that they will back no side in the race. They will let the families fight it out and then, as always, quietly follow whoever becomes Elector. They have no interest in politics they merely wish to be left alone and the three families are more than happy to grant this wish.

And so it was in Nuln until the appointment of Mort as the head of the church of Mórr. Finally there was someone in Nuln crazy enough and powerful enough to take on the Von Spiels. Centuries of peaceful co-existence went down the drain and the Von Spiels found themselves fighting a vicious, if secret, war for their very lives.

The Von Spiels are increasingly desperate and with this desperation out goes their previous subtlety. Who knows what they will do in order to survive but it is certain that the Von Spiels days of just observing Nuln are gone for good.

*“ Mort's faith is a sheer wall of ice in which nothing, especially reason and compromise, can take hold.”*

*Arch-Lector Karl of the Church of Sigmar*

### **Mort**

**(Cleric 1, Cleric 2, Cleric 3, Demonologist 1, Cleric 4)**

Until Mort came along the church of Mórr had quietly ignored the Von Spiels. A small church in a very Sigmarite city they had not dared challenge such a powerful and influential family.

That is until Mort became High Priest. No one is sure if Mort is mad or simply absolutely convinced of his own righteousness, his habit of answering most questions with “don't worry about it” hasn't given much chance to get

to know him. But what is sure is once he has decided on a cause of action nothing will stop him.

Mort seems to regard consequences as things that happen to other people and in a city that runs on compromise and deal making this makes him an incredibly dangerous man.

One example more than any sums up Mort. His actions once caused a near war between him and the Church of Sigmar. At this time Mort let it be known that if any armed men entered his Temple he would invoke magic's that would result in his death and as much of the city as he could take with him. While this is scary it should also be pointed out that no one who heard this had the slightest doubt *that he not only could do that, but that he undoubtedly would.*

The Insurance Guild refuse to even discuss a contract on Mort.

### **The Veiled Blade**

The Veiled Blade are a Tzeentch cult based in Nuln, although their influence seems to spread throughout the Empire. Nobody is quite sure how powerful the cult is because it has never really flexed its muscles. For now it seems content to act as an information brokering service to many of the players in Nuln's political scene. (And yes some of them even know exactly who they are dealing with but in Nuln you don't turn down any information source if you hope to survive).

What exactly the cult's plans are remain unknown, for know it seems happy to gather information and favours on Nuln's political scene. The Cult seems entirely neutral in the Electorship race, dealing with all sides but then all sides are careful to keep their relations with the cult simply business.

The only other effect the cult has in Nuln is that it ensures that any other cult of Tzeentch that dares to try to set up in the city is destroyed. They don't dirty their own hands but sell the information to interested parties (and yes that is how Count Corleone-Von Sigmar was able to destroy the Tzeentch Cult for which he has garnered such praise).

Strangely enough they seem to have no problems with cults of the other Chaos powers and even exchange information and favours with members of the Slanneshi cult, the Silver Spoon. Perhaps the Nuln habit of cutting deals with anyone has corrupted even the Chaos powers?

# RULES OF THE GAME

For those seeking to operate in Nuln there are several unwritten rules to be observed.

**Trust No-One.** This may seem a rather obvious statement. We are talking about dealing with politicians after all. It bears repeating because in Nuln most things are connected in ways you probably don't know about. With this level of connections people may have reasons to betray you that have nothing to do with your current dealings. Only by always distrusting can you be prepared.

The famous story of the minor merchant threatened by unknown gangsters who went to the Dock Watch for protection only to discover in an interrogation chamber that they were the very people he was being threatened by is a Nuln favourite and teaches a valuable lesson.

The other reason it that players should always bear this in mind, even when dealing with those who they are sure like or respect them, is because of Rule 2.

**It's Nothing Personal.** Betrayal and intrigue has become such a way of life in Nuln that this is one of its cardinal rules. Anything done in the pursuit of power is purely business and has no reflection on people's feelings for each other. People can try to blackmail or kill you but when you meet at a party you've got to be able to laugh with them. Because this is so understood even great friends will try to manoeuvre around each other.

Those who can't do this are at a huge disadvantage in Nuln. If you bear grudges you won't be able to cut a deal with that person in the future. Politics in Nuln change fast, the person trying to kill you last week could be your best friend this week. If you still bear a grudge how can you work with him ? Anyone cutting himself off from potential allies in this way won't last long.

Those harbouring grudges will also be looked down as not having the proper 'professional' attitude to politics. Again this makes people less willing to work with you.

**Nothing Is What It Seems.** Beware of appearances. Most people in Nuln have at least one secret. Always check out everything you can or you may be the idiot who gets hired for the 'easy' job of kidnapping one of the Von Spiels or

infiltrating Hedwig Sigmar's close circle of friends.

**Never Forget A Favour.** Nuln operates an unofficial system of 'favours'. At first PCs may be surprised that most of the people they meet will help them in return for the promise of a favour but they should soon get the idea. This is one of the major things that helps Nuln function and is very widespread. Favours are also exchangeable; agreeing you owe Hugo Grolsch a favour can lead to you owing the Von Spiels a favour if he swaps the favour to them. Indeed it is not unknown for people to auction favours to the unfortunates worst enemy.

There is no punishment for not honouring a favour but the word will quickly get around and you will simply be permanently shut out of the system.

**Information Is Power.** If you can't figure this one out, forget it, you've already lost.



# SCENARIOS

## AS ABOVE (For High-Level PCs)

### V.I.P.

The PCs represent one of the other Elector's, perhaps they are faithful servants or even nobility of that Electorship. However they are picked the mission will be the same. Envoys of the Three families have all arrived at the court of their Elector asking him to support their bid for the Electorship of Nuln. Not wanting to be on the losing side he has dispatched the PCs to Nuln to examine the situation, decide who has the best chance of winning and then get the best possible price for their Lord's support.

Talk about being thrown in at the deep end. The PCs are going to be subjected to the concentrated attention of the most powerful people in Nuln. Not just the Three Families but Mort, the Von Spiels, the Merchant's council, the Veiled Blade and the Insurance Guild. As the ancient Cathayan curse has it 'may you live in interesting times and come to the attention of people in high places.'

PCs can expect threats (shame they haven't heard of the Insurance Guild and bought insurance), blackmail attempts (beware of accepting invitations to 'private parties') and as many other nasty tricks as your black heart desires.

At the same time the PCs will be hit the other way with a sustained charm offensive by all sides. And in a city as decadent as Nuln this can be extremely pleasant (and may provide the PCs with some interesting addictions which only their hosts can satisfy).

On the plus side smart PCs may be able to translate their recommendation to their Lord into some truly impressive bribes. Beware of bargaining too hard, it may become cheaper to have them killed and bargain with their replacements.

The whole experience should leave the PCs with their heads spinning and some very annoyed enemies among Nuln's power-players.

### Love's Labours Lost

One of the PCs will be required to marry Hedwig Von Sigmar. The reason for this is up to the G.M. Perhaps the PCs family feel it would be a suitable match and form a useful political alliance. Perhaps Lord Von Sigmar worried about his daughter's reputation decides to marry her off and thinks the PC. would make a suitable match. Perhaps the PC. has political ambitions and sets his sights on her as an advantageous marriage. Perhaps the poor sap meets her at a party and actually falls in love with her.

However it comes about there is a catch (you knew there would be, didn't you?). Lord Von Sigmar dotes on his daughter and won't marry her without her agreement. So the PC. in question (with the aid of the rest of the group) must make Hedwig fall in love with him.

The problems will be myriad. First of all they will have to impress her father and older brother, which will mean attending and surviving one of Lord Von Sigmar's famous hunts.

Then there are Hedwig's friends in the Silver Spoon. They will be all too keen on meeting this newcomer following Hedwig around. Keeping them happy without joining them will be a major headache.

Then there will be the biggest problem of all, Hedwig herself. She isn't some shy school-maid who will wilt at some bad Brettonian poetry. To woo her will take some impressive romancing, the more imaginative and expensive the more she will be impressed. Conspicuous expenditure will be the order of the day but inventive, tasteful expenditure or the PCs will simply be seen as buffoons with more money than sense.

Finally there is her sense of humour. Hedwig will take the opportunity to drive her suitor mad. She will arrange midnight meetings in her room then put the Von Sigmar household guards on full alert. Flirt outrageously with the most dangerous men in Nuln in front of the PC. Arrange secret meetings and then tell some other unattached noble-lady the PC. asked for her to be there. In the end the PC. will be better off not marrying her but if he does a half decent job of wooing her she might be persuaded to not accept his offer while convincing Gustav Zeist (who has his own designs on her) to pay off the PCs.

## SO BELOW

### Baby-Sitting

Representatives of 'Black' Oswald, a mover in their cities underworld and a man they definitely want to make happy, will approach the PCs. Oswald will explain he has a job for them and they are going to accept it.

Oswald's one weakness is his little brother Erwin. Erwin longs to be as tough and feared as his big brother but Oswald is well aware that his brother doesn't have what it takes and so has kept him well away from the 'family business'. More and more, Erwin has chafed under his brother's control, looking for a chance to prove himself.

Oswald has just learned that some stranger approached Erwin and asked him to perform an assassination in Nuln.

Erwin jumped at the chance to prove himself and set off the same day. Oswald is well aware of the situation with the Insurance Guild in Nuln and wants his brother back *now!*

The pay will be great and the favour of Oswald will be a powerful tool. Of course it hardly needs mentioning that if Erwin dies so do the PCs. Bonuses will be paid for the employers head but that is secondary to getting poor Erwin out of the mess he is in.

So all the PCs have to do is travel to Nuln, find Erwin and bring him back. Easy! Apart from the fact that they have no idea where he is or who his target is. Or that Erwin will think they are bodyguards of his target and fight them (remember the job is to save him not kill him themselves). Or that his employer has several professionals trailing Erwin at all times who will do their best to ensure the PCs don't stop him.

If captured these tails can be induced to spill the beans. A lieutenant of the 'Head Honcho' seeking to advance himself hired Erwin to assassinate the 'Head Honcho'. As soon as Erwin has performed his task his tails will murder him to prevent it being traced back to his employer. (And yes, the Insurance Guild will be willing to pay for the name of the Lieutenant and will take care of him permanently. So smart PCs can get paid twice for him).

### **Do More Than Your Fair Share Of Objectives...**

Oswald is pleased with the way the PCs handled the last job (providing they succeeded, if they didn't they should still be running) and has another little task for them.

It has become quite clear to Oswald that Erwin will continue to get in trouble until he is given a chance to prove himself, so he has decided to kill two birds with one stone. Oswald is aware that the current three-way war in the Thieves Guild of Nuln is a golden opportunity to cut himself into the Nuln market. So he has contacted some 'family friends' in Nuln and has prevailed upon them to help set up Erwin as a minor boss in Nuln. Also to ensure Erwin's success and safety the PCs are going to guard and advise him.

This isn't as bad as it sounds, the 'family friend' will provide information, a legitimate business front to supply cash and even a section of turf. Apart from Erwin the racket will be the PC.s, they will have jumped straight to the position of chief lieutenants of a minor crime family.

Of course there are disadvantages, the 'family friend' is Gustav Zeist and the section of turf he allocates used to belong to Werner Sigmar's faction (which is why he so readily gave it up). While Werner is too out of it to bring the full weight of his organisation down on the PCs some of the local thugs will have to be convinced of just who the boss of the area actually is.

The other big problem is going to be Erwin, who is an idiot. Killing him is out but smart PCs should be able to sideline him and run the thing themselves. Certainly Gustav is smart enough to spot talent. If the PCs show the right smarts and ruthlessness he will be quite happy to work with them rather than the incompetent Erwin.

Apart from Erwin the PCs will face the usual trials of being in organised crime: vicious rivals. The Watch (both bent and honest) and chaos cults. However they will have the chance to carve out a position for themselves as lords of their section of the underworld.

### **Love's Labour Lost 2**

Pretty much the same as the first time only now the PCs will be hired by a noble to help his pursuit of Hedwig. The Noble should be as complete a loser as possible for maximum humour and aggravation. Despite his obvious unsuitability the poor fellow is hopelessly in love.

This will be a job for all the PCs. Scribes will be required to write love poetry, minstrels to sing romantic songs, thieves to break their boss into the Von Sigmar household for secret meetings and warriors to whip the poor fellow into some kind of shape so he might just survive Lord Von Sigmar's hunt.

Their tasks will be many and painful. Survive one of Lord Von Sigmar's hunts, guide their socially inept boss through one of the Countesses famous parties, and generally advise their boss on wooing one of the most difficult women in the Empire. Of course they may also have to fight off retainers of rival romantic rivals and guard their boss from Gustav Zeist's evil plans.

For an inter-connected campaign you could have Hedwig's suitor be the unfortunate Erwin. Having managed to buy a minor title with the profits of his rackets he has decided that to really be a power in Nuln he needs to be a part of Nuln's nobility and Hedwig seems the ideal way in. While the connections would be useful the PCs will have to be miracle workers to pull this off. However it might be possible for them to gather some interesting information that Gustav would pay well for. Of course this courtship will involve a lot of hanging around with Werner Sigmar, the man they stole their turf off.