



BY GEOFF LAMB

TABLE OF CONTENTS

About.....	ii
Introduction.....	iii
Character Generation.....	1
Select Specialty.....	1
Choose Nationality and Role.....	1
Record Attributes.....	1
Choose Focuses.....	1
Example of Character Generation.....	1
Game Mechanics.....	2
Declaring Actions.....	2
Attribute Pools and Focuses.....	2
Stress.....	2
Comparing The Roll.....	2
Explanation of Results.....	2
Bonus Dice and Empty Pools.....	3
Death, Madness, and Surrender.....	3
Setting.....	4
Game Master's Section.....	5
Running The Game.....	6
Setting Stress Values.....	6
Setting the Mood.....	6
Reacting To Players.....	6
Heart of Sherwood - Sample adventure.....	7
Appendix.....	11
Specialties.....	11
Nationalities.....	11
Roles.....	11
Sample Characters.....	11
Character Sheets.....	13

All The King's Men

ABOUT

Created for the 24 Hour RPG Movie Mash-up Competition at The Free RPG Blog (www.thefreerpgblog.com) and 1km1kt (www.1km1kt.net) by Geoff Lamb. This is a mash-up of the films *Apocalypse Now* and *Douglas Fairbanks in Robin Hood*.

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All The King's Men

INTRODUCTION

All The King's Men puts you and your friends into the role of soldiers loyal to the King of England, John the Usurper. You are tasked with hunting down and stopping all those who foment rebellion or act against your King. Chief amongst outlaws is that most hated turncoat, the Earl of Huntingdon... Robin Hood.

While the setting is England in the time of Robin Hood, Richard Lionheart, and John the Usurper, this game takes a sideways approach by casting the players in the roles normally filled by "Faceless Minions #1-20". Borrowing from *Apocalypse Now*, All The King's Men explores the themes of Duty, Loyalty, and their costs on those who adhere to them.

To play the game, you will need:

Friends – At least one other, but more than five people at the table may bog things down.

Something to write with – Pencils and pens are the classics, but follow your heart on this one.

Paper – You need one for your character sheet. Feel free to print the one in the Appendix.

Ten-sided dice (d10s) – You will need at least six per person for your attribute dice pools.

One person becomes the Game Master (GM for short) and has the task of controlling everything in the game but the actions of the remaining players. While the GM doesn't get a character of their own, they do get to play everyone the other players encounter (known as non-player characters or NPCs). The remaining players will be creating soldiers in the King's army, which is covered in the next section.

You will be going on dangerous missions. You will be facing your fellow countrymen. You may be killed, you may crack under the strain. You may desert the service of the King. You may even survive. You will not, however, come out unscathed.

All The King's Men



CHARACTER GENERATION

Characters in All The King's Men have three attribute pools: Physical, Social, and Morale.

Physical: How well you fight, climb, ride, etc..

Social: Interacting with others.

Morale: Keeping sight of the mission at hand.

These attributes start at two dice, but will be altered by your selections below. Record your choices and final pool values on a character sheet (a character sheet can be found in the Appendix).

Select Specialty

Each character has something that sets them apart from the others. Specialties are unique. If one character has chosen a specialty, no other players can choose it. If there is contention over a specialty, the GM will be final arbiter.

Choose your specialty from the list in the Appendix and record it on your sheet. If you cannot find a specialty that you like, work with the GM to define one.

Choose Nationality and Role

Most characters are Anglo-Saxon soldiers. Specialties can grant other options. Record your nationality and role on your character sheet. A list of nationalities and roles can be found in the Appendix.

Record Attributes

Each of the previous choices may add or subtract from your attribute pools. Total all of the changes and record the final values on your character sheet.

Choose Focuses

You get one focus for each die above two in your Physical and Social pools. Focuses represent specific skills and abilities, like Archery or Fast Talk.

Example of Character Generation

Martin is creating his first character, named Willard, for the game. Since he wants a character that will succeed, no matter the costs, he selects *Driven* as his specialty and records it on his sheet.

Driven: You refuse to give up, no matter the odds. You reduce all Morale Stress values by -1. [-1 Social; +1 Morale]

As Martin did not select a specialty that grants other options, Willard is an Anglo-Saxon Soldier.

Anglo-Saxon: You are a commoner. [no change]

Soldier: You fought in the Crusades. [+1 Physical; +1 Morale]

Totaling up the attribute pools, Willard has final values of Physical 3; Social 1; Morale 4. Willard is quite capable and strong of purpose, but does not relate well with people.

Because his Physical pool is 3, Willard gets a Physical Focus. Martin selects "Stealthy" and writes it down under Physical on the character sheet.

Martin is done, and Willard is now ready to serve his King.



GAME MECHANICS

All The King's Men uses dice pools to represent your character's general skills. When you declare an action, the GM will let you know which pool to roll and assign a Stress Rating. Occasionally, the GM will require you to roll a pool in reaction to something that happens in the story.

Once you have rolled, you will compare your dice with either the Stress dice or the Stress value to determine if you succeeded.

Declaring Actions

As a rule of thumb, you should declare an action that can be completed in a few seconds or can be reasonable seen as a singular action. Do not declare the result, only the action.

Good:

"I turn quickly, launching an arrow at the source of the noise."

"Calling upon the information we gathered, I try to convince the locals that I'm from Norwich."

Bad:

"Spinning around, I fire an arrow into his eye."

"I use my Bluff."

Attribute Pools and Focuses

Your attribute pools determine how many dice you roll when attempting an action. If you have Physical 3, you will be rolling three ten-sided dice (3d10) for your action and looking for the highest and lowest value rolled.

DO NOT TOTAL YOUR DICE

Example: Willard is sneaking past a sentry. Since he has Physical 3, Willard rolls 3d10. The dice come up 3, 5, and 8.

When an action falls within an area of your focus, you get to add +1 to every dice rolled.

Example: Because he has Stealthy as a focus, Willard adds +1 to the above dice and gets 4, 6, and 9.

Stress

Because numbers mean nothing without context (and possibly because your GM is evil), your GM will assign a Stress Rating to your task. If your action is being actively resisted, this will usually be represented by dice rolled by the GM. If your action not being actively resisted, or if you are reacting to the environment, you will be faced with a set value.

Example: Since the sentry is awake and expecting trouble, the GM rolls 2d10 and gets 5 and 8.

Comparing The Roll

Now that you have your dice results and the Stress value, compare your highest value with the highest Stress value.

If your number is greater and it is 6+, you have scored a **MINOR SUCCESS**. If you have another die greater than the highest Stress value, you have scored a **SUCCESS**.

If your number is greater, but it is 5 or less, you have scored a **PUSH**. You also score a **PUSH** if your number is equal to the Stress value.

If your number is less than the Stress value, but you rolled a 6+, then you have scored a **FAILURE**.

If your number is less than the Stress value and it is 5 or less, you have scored a **TOTAL FAILURE**.

Example: Willard's 9 beats the Stress value of 8. Willard has scored a **MINOR SUCCESS**.

Explanation of Results

SUCCESS: Not only do you succeed, but you gain a bonus die.

MINOR SUCCESS: Your action succeeds.

PUSH: Not a success, not a failure. Nothing changes.

FAILURE: You slip up. If you retry the action, the Stress increases.

TOTAL FAILURE: Not only do you fail, but you lose one die from the attribute pool.

Bonus Dice and Empty Pools

Bonus dice granted by successes can be used in two ways:

You can roll a single bonus die after the Stress value has been determined. Any modifiers of the original roll (focuses, etc) will carry over to this bonus die.

After the encounter is over, you may spend your bonus dice to replenish any attribute pool that has lost dice. You may only replenish your own pools, not the pools of others. You may only replenish back to starting values. Any extra bonus dice are lost.

When you would lose your last die in your Physical or Social pool, you may lose a die from your Morale pool instead. You may do this until you have only one die in your Morale pool. Losing your last die in a pool will, depending on the pool, lead to death, madness, or surrender.

Death, Madness, and Surrender

When a total failure would remove your last die from the Physical pool, you have died. Feel free to describe your death as poetically as you wish.

Losing your last die in your Social pool also removes your last, tenuous grasp on society. Upon the GM's discretion you may either break down or finally snap, deciding to take as many of them with you as you can.

Once your last die has been lost in the Morale pool, you have lost all belief in your cause and your mission. Depending upon your situation, you will either desert or attempt to join the rebels yourself.



SETTING

The year is 1192. The Third Crusade is drawing to a close, many soldiers are returning home after years of warfare. Richard Lionheart, absentee King of England, has disappeared.

England has suffered for years under the burden of the Third Crusade. Now it suffers again under the rule of King John. Tax collectors travel the countryside, hunting down every last farthing owed to the King. Knights hold the border lands through a mix of fear and mercenaries.



All of this greets you as you are discharged from the boats, members of an army that no longer needs you. Unable to return to society after what you have seen and done, you were looking towards life as a bandit or mercenary.

Thankfully, your life is destined for something more. You have been approached by those loyal to the King and offered a commission. You will go forth and remove those who act with treason in their hearts.

You are now one of the King's Men.



GM SECTION



NO FURTHER
PLAYERS

RUNNING THE GAME

There's a conflict in every human heart, between the rational and irrational, between good and evil. And good does not always triumph. Sometimes, the dark side overcomes... the better angels of our nature.

All The King's Men is a game about a dystopian past - The legend of Robin Hood viewed through the cracked prism of Coppola's Vietnam war epic. This is a game as told from the perspective of the "bad " guys. More than this, though, it is a game told from the perspective of people beginning to understand their place in history as being on the wrong side of a conflict.

In this game, players will die and go mad at an increasing rate as the game progresses. Do not worry that you are being too hard on the players – this is supposed to happen.

As the Game Master, you are not so much in opposition to the players as you are leading the players towards this realization. Your two biggest tools for this are setting the Stress values and setting the mood.

Setting Stress Values

The easiest rule of thumb here is to use dice if the player's action is being resisted by someone and set a specific value if it's not. Because we are using d10s, you can gauge a rough chance of failure or success pretty quickly (hooray for 10% values).

Using dice, a standard task with some risk (combat against a few commoners or a trained opponent) should have two Stress dice. Before reducing a task to one die, look towards setting a Stress value instead. Even a single die can roll a 10 and turn something simple into a nightmare.

When you do not want the chance of making a task too hard or easy, setting a Stress value is the way to go. A task that should have two Stress dice

can be set at Stress value 6. For less chance of TOTAL FAILURE, set the Stress value at 3. If you want a task to be nearly impossible, go no higher than Stress value 8.

Setting the Mood

Because this is a game with a dark end, if not dark themes, emphasize the bleakness of commoner life. The smaller the village, the more extreme the reaction to outsiders, especially if those outsiders are brandishing weapons or armor.

Remember that the King's Men are operating with no outwardly visible signs of royal edict. It will take time to present the crest of King John. Soldiers and tax collectors will only tolerate them so far, even if they believe the players' tale.

For added pathos, have the group visit one of the player's home towns. Take pains to remind the player of his or her ties to the people that they are investigating.

Reacting To Players

While printed adventures are good, far too often the whole work goes up in smoke the second the players are outside of NPC control. It is a good plan to adopt a "Yes, but..." method to steer players back towards their inevitable goal.

There is more than enough unrest within England at this time. If the players decide to travel far afield of your original plan and refuse to turn back towards their goal, feel free to change locations or names so as not to lose your preparations. Above all, have fun.

HEART OF SHERWOOD

Sample Adventure for All The King's Men

On the road, I thought that the minute I looked at him, I'd know what to do, but it didn't happen. I was in there with him for days, not under guard; I was free, but he knew I wasn't going anywhere. He knew more about what I was going to do than I did. If the nobles back in London could see what I saw, would they still want me to kill him? More than ever, probably.

Note to GMs: This adventure borrow heavily from *Apocalypse Now*. It is suggested that you watch this film to get a feel for how this should be portrayed.

London

Everyone gets everything he wants. I wanted a mission, and for my sins, they gave me one. It was a real choice mission, and when it was over, I never wanted another.

The players are summoned to the chambers of Lord Keeton, probably being introduced to each other for the first time.

"You men have been brought together by your shared love of your country and your King. Though you do not know each other, know that you all are beyond reproach. This mission can only succeed if you all work together.

Your mission is to proceed north by the main roads. Pick up Lord Huntingdon's path at Nottingham, follow it and learn what you can along the way. When you find him, infiltrate his band by whatever means available and kill him.

He's out there operating without any decent restraint, totally beyond the pale of any acceptable human conduct. And he is still in the forest, commanding men to acts of treason.

As he has become something of a folk hero to the area, it is imperative that this mission never be tied to King John. You will be given a small token of our King. Use this only as a last resort, not even our own men should know of what you

are doing.

You will be riding with other men returning from the Crusade. Your initial cover is that you are in the personal retinue of Sir Guy of Gisbourne. You will be given tunics in his livery and some simple weapons. All Sir Guy knows is that you will be traveling with him northwards, then parting ways.

Gather your things, Sir Guy leaves within the hour."

Lord Keeton is a gruff man, used to giving orders in the field. He will answer further questions with curt answers and will note that the players should get moving.

The men riding north stand more than forty strong. Most of them served in the Crusades, not all were soldiers. Sir Guy, the only noble riding with the group, can be found at the head of the men. While he knows that the players are on mission for the crown, he is conflicted by a complete disdain for commoners. Everything he says will be in French, only switching to English if none of the players are Norman.

Sir Guy will direct the players to a cart at the back of his retinue (Sir Guy's men account for nearly half of the group, at least six of them are light cavalry). The players are expected to drive the cart themselves.



On The Road

If that's how Gisbourne fought bandits, I began to wonder what they really had against Huntingdon. It wasn't just insanity and murder; there was enough of that to go around for everyone.

If the players wish to converse with the other travelers, let them. The other men will be short with their answers, then outwardly hostile to the inquisitive strangers. If they persist with questions or chatter, this will set off a Social check with a Stress value of 4 to avoid minor fisticuffs (Physical check, Stress value 1d10).

Afterwards, or if the players are not talkative, read the following:

"Less than a day's journey north of London, the rains start. Not relenting, the rains make traveling the road treacherous at best. Until the road dries, the road has narrowed to the point that the wagon is beginning to have problems finding ways around this impromptu stream."

Around a bend lay several bandits hoping to rob a wealthy merchant. In the rain, they mistake the players' caravan for one.

Combat starts with a Physical check against Stress value 6 to avoid the initial volley of arrows. After three rounds of combat (Physical check, Stress value 2d10), the bandits flee. Incensed by the attack, Sir Guy pursues the bandits.

Unless the players unhitch their horse from the cart, they must remain on the road until Sir Guy returns. If a player gives chase on their horse, it is a short run over uneven ground (Physical check, Stress value 4) to catch up with Gisbourne and his cavalry.

Sir Guy and his men will have captured three men. The men are bound and thrown onto the players' cart. Gisbourne wishes to make an example of them at the next settlement. During the ride, the captives plead for their lives (Morale check, Stress value 3).



"The rains let up before the village is reached. Gisbourne orders the bandits brought to the center of town. A cry come from the gathering crowd – one of the bandits hail from here.

Upon realizing this, Gisbourne orders the bandit's family forward. With a statement of 'C'est la récompense pour les rogues,' Gisbourne intends to kill the family along with the bandits."

There are several ways for the players to handle this situation:

Physical checks (saving the bandits or family by force) are at Stress value 4d10. Once started, these will not stop until Gisbourne and his eight loyal followers are slain or the players flee into the countryside.

Social checks (convincing Gisbourne to spare the family) are at Stress value 8.

Morale checks (watching the executions) are at Stress value 2d10 (4d10 if the players failed at the Social check; 3 if only the bandits are executed).

While the players may convince Gisbourne to spare the family members, there is no sparing the bandits. Gisbourne will curse the rain for making the village impossible to burn.

ALL THE KING'S MEN

Nottingham

In this unrest, things get confused. Power, ideals, the old morality, and practical necessity. But out there with the serfs, it must be a temptation to be God.

If the players attempt to thwart his justice, Gisbourne leaves them in the village without the cart. Unless the players were successful at saving the family, however, they will not aid the players in their pilgrimage to Nottingham.

If the players sat back and watched Gisbourne, they still must part ways at Northampton. Sir Guy is well known here – anyone still wearing his livery have increased Stress for any Social checks they make to the locals.

When the players reach Nottingham, the legend of Robin Hood has taken over. There is a price on his head of 40 crowns (5 crowns for each of his men). People speak in hushed tones of Robin's derring-do.

Gathering information on Robin Hood will be tricky for a group of outsiders. At least four successful (or minor success) Social checks (Stress rating 2d10) must be made before someone will trust the players enough to let slip the following tidbit:

"Robin Hood and his men are hidden away deep in Sherwood, in the old parts of the forest. Only the tanner in Wickham knows how to contact him."

Failed checks will not prevent pressing for more information, but a Total Failure will start a minor fight (Physical check; Stress value 1d10).

Make sure that the players see some of the beneficial influences of Robin Hood. Everyone has a story about how Robin Hood saved them with money for taxes or defeated thugs out to rob a village. Each such tale (no more than four) will

cause a Morale check with Stress value 4.

Wickham

As for the charges against me, I am unconcerned. I am beyond their timid lying morality, and so I am beyond caring.

Once the players reach Wickham, there is a commotion. The Sheriff's men (at least two for every player) are collecting taxes and taking those who cannot pay for a "tour of the dungeons of Nottingham." Again, there are a few ways to confront the situation:

Physical: Avoiding the men via stealth has a Stress value of 6. Failure means that the player is spotted.

Fighting the men will require at least three checks (Stress value 3d10) until Robin Hood arrives.

Social: Players cannot convince the men that they have "already paid" or don't live in Wickham.

Showing the King's favor will still require a Stress 5 check.

Morale: Watching the Sheriff's men without action will require a check at Stress value 3d10, as it's obvious that the men are robbing the villagers of everything they have.

Robin Hood and his men are announced by a volley of arrows towards the Sheriff's men.

Observant players will see a few villagers fall to the volley as well. If the players are still fighting the Sheriff's men after three Physical checks, they will need to make a Physical check with a Stress value of 6 to avoid getting hit by an arrow.

ALL THE KING'S MEN

Robin Hood

Everybody wanted me to do it, him most of all. I felt like he was up there, waiting for me to take the pain away. He just wanted to go out like a soldier, standing up, not like some poor, wasted renegade. Even the forest wanted him dead, and that's who he really took his orders from anyway.

"The years of rough living has not been kind to Lord Huntingdon. It is clear that Robin Hood and his men are suffering from infections and malnourishment. After the initial volley, they charge from the brush, sending the remaining tax men fleeing.

Robin and his men ignore the fleeing men and, to a point, the villagers. They are focused on retrieving arrows and picking over the fallen for better fitting boots or nicer weapons."

If the players attack right now, they must make Physical checks at Stress value 8 for two rounds until Robin and most of his men (those not killed by the players) retreat into the safety of Sherwood.

Attempting to talk to Robin Hood or ignoring him has the same effect. Lord Huntingdon notices the players after donning a new pair of boots and approaches. Whatever his physical state, Huntingdon's mind is still sharp. A Social check with Stress value 4d10 is required to hide the fact that the players are working for King John.



If the players manage to conceal this fact from Robin Hood, they are invited to a feast within the forest stronghold of Sherwood. If Robin figures out the players' intent, he and his men flee into Sherwood.

Hunting down Robin Hood within Sherwood forest is an arduous task. At least five Physical checks (Stress 2d10) is required to avoid the traps and ambushes. Once within the camp, a pitched battle will ensue between the players, Robin Hood, and his remaining Merry Men (two per player). This battle requires Physical checks at Stress value 3d10 until enough successes (or minor successes) are gained to kill the Merry Men and Robin himself (one per Merry Man, three for Robin Hood).

Accepting his invitation for dinner makes the journey into Robin's camp uneventful. Once the meal starts, Robin Hood will engage the players in conversation about the Crusades, King Richard, London, and other news of the day. Another Stress 4d10 Social check is required to conceal their motives.

Once the ruse has been discovered or the players finally attack, the combat plays out much as above. If the players managed to conceal their intentions, however, the Stress value is 2d10.

Aftermath

The horror... the horror...

Survivors will be allowed safe passage to Nottingham. From there, the Sheriff will treat them like conquering heroes, trying to gain favor with King John. Once back in London, the players recover all Physical and Social pool dice as they await their next mission.

Appendix

Specialties

Behemoth: You could probably punch out a horse. Roll an extra die with all feats of strength or brawling checks. [+1 Physical; -1 Social]

Best in the World: Pick a Focus. Dice below 6 are counted as 6, but you drop your highest die. [+1 to your focus' pool]

Driven: You refuse to give up, no matter the odds. You reduce all Morale Stress values by -1. [-1 Social; +1 Morale]

Grizzled: The men in your squad figured that you were unkillable. Re-roll your lowest die on a Physical Total Failure. [+1 Physical]

Heathen: You follow the King... and the Old Ways. Roll an extra Social die when interacting with villagers. [+1 Social; -1 Morale]

Loyalist: You serve the Crown, whoever wears it. Re-roll your lowest Morale check die. [+1 Morale]

Norman: While not a nobleman, you have it better than most. Your Nationality becomes Norman. [+1 Morale]

Silver-Tongued: You can talk your way out of anything. Re-roll your lowest Social check die. [+1 Social]

Warrior Priest: You served the Church during the war. Your role becomes Priest. [-1 Physical; +1 Social; +1 Morale]

Nationalities

Anglo-Saxon: You are a commoner. [no change]

Norman: You interact easier with nobles, sharing a common language. Reduce all Social Stress values by -1 vs Normans, but add +1 vs Saxons. [no change]

Roles

Soldier: You fought in the Crusades. [+1 Physical; +1 Morale]

Priest: You fought for men's souls. [+1 Social]

Sample Characters

Willard

Specialty:

Driven: You refuse to give up, no matter the odds. You reduce all Morale Stress values by -1. [-1 Social; +1 Morale]

Nationality:

Anglo-Saxon: You are a commoner. [no change]

Role:

Soldier: You fought in the Crusades. [+1 Physical; +1 Morale]

Physical: 3 (Stealthy)

Social: 1

Morale: 4

Jayson

Specialty:

Silver-Tongued: You can talk your way out of anything. Re-roll your lowest Social check die. [+1 Social]

Nationality:

Anglo-Saxon: You are a commoner. [no change]

Role:

Soldier: You fought in the Crusades. [+1 Physical; +1 Morale]

Physical: 3 (Archery)

Social: 3 (Gossip)

Morale: 3

ALL THE KING'S MEN

John the Lance

Specialty:

Best in the World: Pick a Focus. Dice below 6 are counted as 6, but you drop your highest die. [+1 to your focus' pool]

Nationality:

Anglo-Saxon: You are a commoner. [no change]

Role:

Soldier: You fought in the Crusades. [+1 Physical; +1 Morale]

Physical: 3 (Athletics)

Social: 2

Morale: 3

Brother Ronald

Specialty:

Warrior Priest: You served the Church during the war. Your role becomes Priest. [-1 Physical; +1 Social; +1 Morale]

Nationality:

Anglo-Saxon: You are a commoner. [no change]

Role:

Priest: You fought for men's souls. [+1 Social]

Physical: 1

Social: 4 (Persuasion; Oratory)

Morale: 3

Phillip

Specialty:

Norman: While not a nobleman, you have it better than most. Your Nationality becomes Norman. [+1 Morale]

Nationality:

Norman: You interact easier with nobles, sharing a common language. Reduce all Social Stress values by -1 vs Normans, but add +1 vs Saxons. [no change]

Role:

Soldier: You fought in the Crusades. [+1 Physical; +1 Morale]

Physical: 3 (Melee)

Social: 2

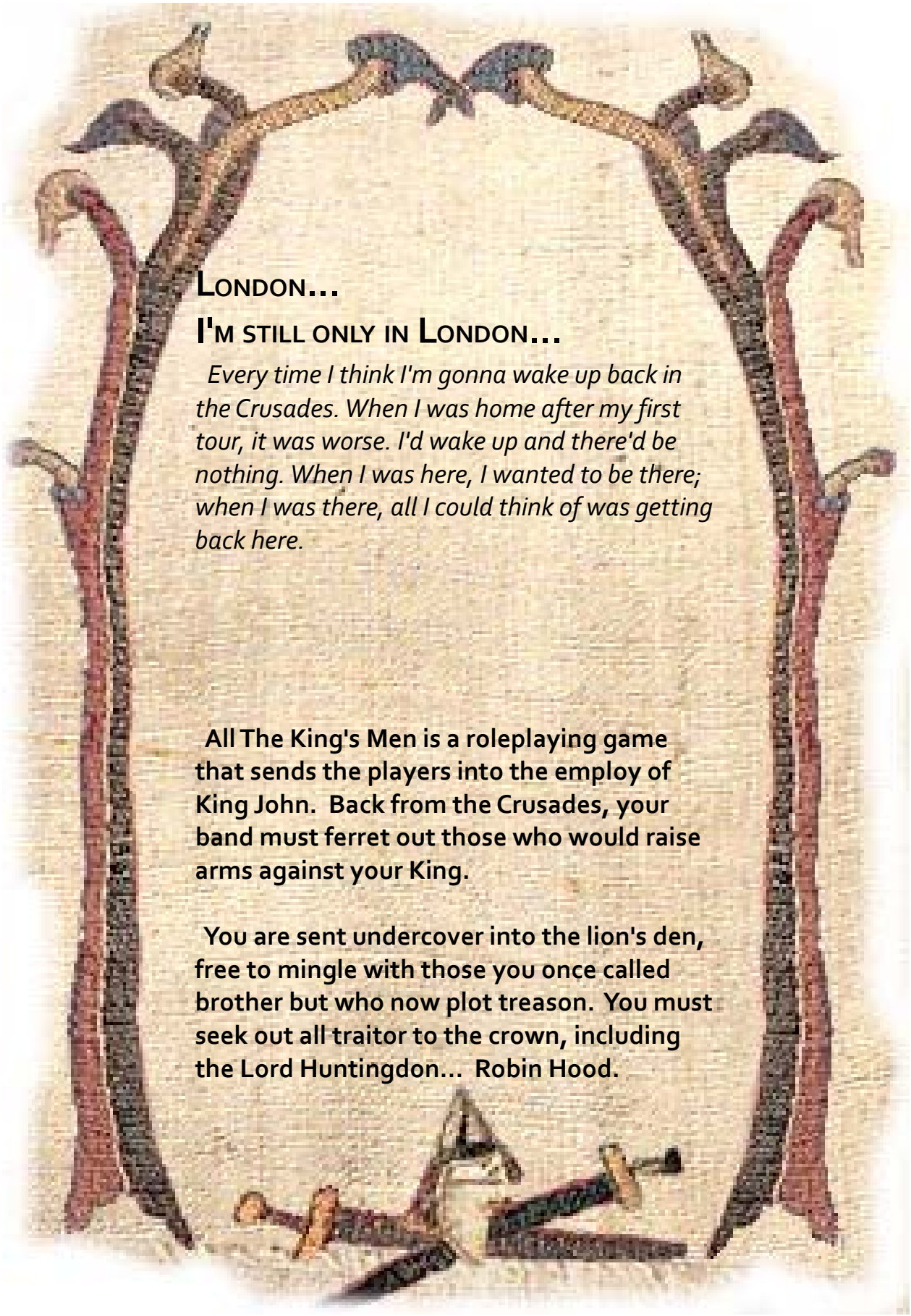
Morale: 4



ALL THE KING'S MEN

Specialty:	Specialty:
Nationality:	Nationality:
Role:	Role:
Physical:	Physical:
Social:	Social:
Morale:	Morale:

Specialty:	Specialty:
Nationality:	Nationality:
Role:	Role:
Physical:	Physical:
Social:	Social:
Morale:	Morale:



LONDON...

I'M STILL ONLY IN LONDON...

Every time I think I'm gonna wake up back in the Crusades. When I was home after my first tour, it was worse. I'd wake up and there'd be nothing. When I was here, I wanted to be there; when I was there, all I could think of was getting back here.

All The King's Men is a roleplaying game that sends the players into the employ of King John. Back from the Crusades, your band must ferret out those who would raise arms against your King.

You are sent undercover into the lion's den, free to mingle with those you once called brother but who now plot treason. You must seek out all traitor to the crown, including the Lord Huntingdon... Robin Hood.