

# The Musketeers Core Rulebook

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## Setting

[What you Need to Play](#)

## Characters

[Creating a Musketgear](#)

[♦Code Name: Porthos](#)

[♠Code Name: Athos](#)

[♥ Code Name: Aramis](#)

[♣ Code Name: D’artagnan](#)

[Side Note: Playing with More than 4 Players](#)

## Skills

[Equipment: Airships , Rayguns, and Gadgets](#)

[Vessels and the Aether](#)

[Aether Weaponry](#)

[Gadgets!](#)

[Aether Equipment Traits](#)

## How to Play

[Static Challenges](#)

[GM Sidebar: Setting Difficulties and Risks](#)

[Direct Conflicts](#)

[Sidebar: Optional Page Cards](#)

[Injuries and Standing](#)

[Challenges and Conflicts on the Queen Anne](#)

## For the GM

[A Sense of Place](#)

[Side Bar: Adding more “Weird” to the Setting](#)

[Allies](#)

[Risks](#)

[Social Standing and the Emperor](#)

[Public Status](#)

[Party Infamy](#)

[Sidebar: Optional Rules for One-Shots](#)

[Plot Hooks](#)

[Sample Adventure Structure](#)

[Dramatis Personae](#)

[Using the GM’s Folio](#)

## Setting

France in the mid-19th century was an exciting and terrifying place to be. Political unrest had left a dictator in control of the government, and Napoleon III was not exactly a force of social justice. Free speech was down, censorship was up, and philosophy was banned from schools. The working classes were unrepresented. Moderate voices for a republic, like Victor Hugo, as well as royalist supporters (and descendents of royal families) all lived in exile. Wars in Prussia and the United States put financial and political pressure on this world. State-run “workhouses” seem, to many in the unions, to be little more than slave labor.

Into this historical landscape, let’s inject a bit of speculation and fiction. Imagine a dystopian France, then, where inspired (some say mad) scientists have harnessed the power of aether and, trading with Great Britain, have developed elegant airships and magnificent inventions powered by this mystical energy source. Enter into this world a small team of compatriots, friends and companions, who have secretly trained in the arts of swordplay and gunfighting, who are acrobatic and keenly honed. A team who excels at what they do as spies and mercenaries and messengers for the interests of the currently-defeated Republique.

This team of secret heroes takes their codenames from an earlier era, yet reflects the new technological world in which they operate. They are: The Musketeers.

## What you Need to Play

To play The Musketeers, you will need:

- No more than 5 players: 4 Musketeers, plus 1 GM, all with good imaginations.
- Printouts of the Character sheets
- Printout of the GM’s Folio
- An adventure
- At least two decks of standard suited playing Cards, one with the face cards and jokers removed for the GM, the other with all 54 cards, for the players.
- Pencils for everyone

## Characters

There are four player characters in the Musketeers. Each has a codename and some special abilities tied to their role in the Musketeers. Musketeers are recruited only when a previous Musketeer retires or expires, and only from those who can fill the role left vacant by their predecessor. They are also only recruited if they fulfill the code of honor set out by the original Musketeers: *All for one and one for all!* In these troubled times, that currently means working to bring in a new, liberal Republique, a form of government that promises the greatest benefit to the most people with the least chance of corruption.

## Creating a Musketeer

1. **Choose one of the Musketeer roles.**
2. **Name and describe your character’s public persona.** Who are you? Where do you come from? Do you have any living family? Do you have a day job? How were you recruited into the Musketeers? What happened to your predecessor? What do you look like? Age, sex, etc.?

3. **Set your public persona's status.** Choosing from 2, 4, 6, or 8, determine how far up the social chain you are. A character with a low status has greater access to the common folk. A character with high status has access to nobility. It is a good idea for there to be a mix of statuses among the Musketeers.
4. **Name your "achilles heel" weakness.** Are you too fond of drink? Too easily ensnared by a pretty face? Are you quick to anger? Do you have a powerful enemy?
5. **Name one person who assists you.** This person is your ally and is capable at what they do, but is not very effective in combat. They might go with you on missions, or they might stay behind to keep tabs on your information network. In general, your ally will take on one or two tasks on your behalf, per game session.
6. **Select your skills.** Each Musketeer chooses three skills which they can use to overcome challenges. In addition, all Musketeers have the following skills:
  - Fight: All Musketeers are excellent swordsmen and fencers.
  - Shoot: All Musketeers are crack shots with a gun.
7. **Get ready to play!** Read over the mechanics section if needed, and play!

### ◆ **Code Name: Porthos**

Porthos was traditionally the dandy, the bon vivant, the lively lover of life among the original Musketeers, and this role is held by a hero with a great appreciation for life and material goods. Thus, the role of the agent codenamed Porthos is to keep and maintain *The Queen Anne*, the jewel of the Musketeers-- a merchant airship used by the Musketeers for both transportation and a convenient cover story.

Who are you, Porthos? Are you a seemingly mild-mannered merchant? A runaway bride? A pilot from the British corps? Describe yourself and choose three skills.

**Suit:** Diamonds ◆

#### **Special Abilities**

- When a challenge involves piloting *The Queen Anne*, draw an extra card.
- When a challenge requires you to spend lots of money, draw an extra card.

### ♠ **Code Name: Athos**

Athos was traditionally the mentor and teacher of the Musketeers, a respected nobleman and former husband of the villainess Lady de Winter. The Athos agent is recruited for his sense of purpose and knowledge of the political and social ins and outs among the Assembly. He or she holds a seat in the French Assembly, which serves as an excellent source of information for the spy network.

Who are you, Athos? Are you an elected assemblyman, beloved of the people? A son of one of the old noble families, now trying to remain relevant in post-Revolutionary France? An open supporter of the emperor, even while you secretly plot his downfall with your compatriots? Describe yourself and choose three skills.

**Suit:** Spades ♠

#### **Special Abilities:**

- When a challenge on the *Queen Anne* requires you to navigate or use a map, draw an extra card.
- When a challenge involves using your authority or diplomacy, draw an extra card.

### ♥ **Code Name: Aramis**

Among the original Musketeers, Aramis was the most scholarly and devoted to God. Among the new Musketgears, Aramis is still the scholar, but he or she is often hindered by the censorship and constraints imposed by the current regime.

Who are you now, Aramis? Are you still spiritually devoted? Are you a mad scientist, driven to understand the world? Are you an engineer, endlessly tinkering with inventions? Describe yourself and choose three skills.

**Suit:** Hearts ♥

**Special Abilities:**

- When a challenge involves engineering on *The Queen Anne*, draw an extra card.
- When a challenge involves academic knowledge, research, or study, draw an extra card.

♣ **Code Name: D'artagnan**

D'artagnan was not one of the original Three Musketeers, but was instead the country boy-turned-good in the original Dumas stories. Originally somewhat naive and very bold, D'artagnan became the hero of the stories, a skilled fighter who often found himself falling in and out of love.

Who are you, D'artagnan? Are you a laborer in the workhouses, keyed into the plight of the common people? Are you a dock hand in the great airship mooring stations? A farmer from the countryside? Describe yourself and choose three skills.

**Suit:** Clubs ♣

**Special Abilities:**

- When you use your strength and agility on the *Queen Anne*, draw an extra card.
- When you defend someone weaker than you, draw an extra card.

**Side Note: Playing with More than 4 Players**

If you have more than 4 players, plus the GM, promote one of the Musketgears' named allies to a full member of the team for this mission.

**Skills**

Skills represent your knowledge specialized history in the world. When using a skill in a static challenge, draw an extra card. Some skills that may appear to be missing, like Piloting, Science, Diplomacy, and Fighting, are covered by the agents' special abilities.

- Swimming
- Accounting
- Agriculture
- Architecture
- Craft
- Cuisine
- Fashion
- Horseback Riding
- Languages
- Logistics
- Medicine

- Performance

## **Equipment: Airships , Rayguns, and Gadgets**

The Musketgears exist in a world where the discovery of the mystical substance of aether has revolutionized technology. Vessels are now lighter than air and can be carried on the winds-- to their benefit, or their peril! Aether-powered guns fire not just ordinary bullets, but bullets, pods, or rays of aether that can be manipulated to affect their targets in strange ways-- slowing or stunning targets are popular applications, but more complicated models have been rumored that can transform, phase out, or even teleport a target!

Some principles of aether equipment:

- It's never small. It might be elegant, and it might be powerful, but the technology is big and obvious.
- The aesthetic is industrial: gears, steam, and tubes everywhere!
- It's smelly, noxious, and loud!
- It's very fashionable, so even the highborn ladies have taken to "glueing a few gears on it" to enhance their wardrobes. This trend has made it difficult sometimes to know if a device is actually functional, or just looks pretty.

## **Vessels and the Aether**

Transportation through three possible mediums (land, air, and sea) can be fraught with peril. Fortunately, the Musketgears have their own airship, a beauty of a vessel that flies through the skies with relative ease.

However, not all transportation is equal. The *Queen Anne* isn't a submarine, and you never know when you'll need to tackle aether pirates underwater! It may also be much faster to saddle up and chase a fleeing assailant through Paris than to float overland among the clouds.

When creating a transportation vessel, name the vessel and give it up to three traits, like "fast," "armored," "submarine," or "fuel efficient." When drawing for a challenge directly involving that vessel, such as ship-to-ship combat, a chase or race, or some natural disaster or weather event, draw an extra card if the vessel has one or more traits that apply. The core nature of the vessel (air, land, sea) should define where a challenge can take place, so if a vessel can operate outside its location (such as a train that can also act underwater), it needs to have that trait added to it (submarine). However, it doesn't need to have its core nature (land vessel) added to its traits.

During this era of exploration and discovery, although the Parisian subway system hadn't been developed yet, the French railway lines were in full throttle of expansion, having been boosted by the emperor's fiat (so, he does something right once in a while....) Thus, it is possible to take a train from Paris to nearly anywhere in the French countryside-- especially useful if you need to transport something heavier than the *Queen Anne*'s cargo hold can carry!

## **Aether Weaponry**

From blunderbusses to freezeray guns, the combination of gunpower and aether have produced some... interesting results.

For standard, non-aetherized weapons, you don't really need extra traits. A gun fires bullets, and a sword stabs people, and the Musketgears are excellent fighters with either weapon.

As with vessels, use traits to define any unusual, aether-enhanced weapons. A weapon gets 1-2 aether traits, and for each aether trait, the GM will assign an appropriate weakness or hazard to the weapon-- a negative trait that you need to accommodate. Feel free to be creative with your aether-weapon effects. If you're shooting with a freezeray,

you won't injure the target, but you will capture them on a success. The GM might rule that your freezeray is a fuel hog too, so you have to lug around extra tanks of aether just to fire it.

For the GM: Aether weapons can introduce new risks, especially when they get damaged. A teleport cannon might, as a risk, overheat and teleport the wielder to someplace unfortunate.

## Gadgets!

In addition to vehicles and weapons, a motley assortment of utility devices have been invented and crafted, often by Aramis himself, to solve problems and meet specific needs. Some examples are provided here, but you shouldn't feel limited by these.

- An aether-rope grappling hook
- A clockwork canary
- An aether disruption pulse
- The probability wheel - does it determine probability, or just reflect it?
- The stereo-amplificator - quiet speech can be heard loudly within 500 feet
- An aetheric communicator - allows for morse code-style short messages to be sent through the aether, with limited reliability and range.
- Aether ink, pen, and glass - uses aether to write a hidden message which can only be read through an aether-infused glass. The paper can also be written on in normal ink.
- Clockwork spider and aetheric-steel webs

Although the Musketeers obviously can't have everything, they might have an assortment of these devices in various states of functionality, from "never been tested" to more advanced prototyping or even production-ready equipment. Work with the GM to decide which devices you have, and which ones might still be in a research notebook somewhere, worthy of further development.

## Aether Equipment Traits

These are just a few traits your equipment could have.

- Fast
- Quiet
- Armored
- Subtle
- Stunning
- Cold
- Flames
- Entangling
- Strong
- Underwater
- Flight
- Fuel efficient
- Aether-draining

## How to Play

The basic structure of the game is that the GM presents the players with some rumors and events, things to call them to adventure and draw them into the story. As players, it's your responsibility to look at the events and decide what to do first. Going back to bed is not an option for heroes like you!

From there, the GM will describe the scene, what's going on, who's there, and so forth. Ask questions to find out more, or describe what you're doing.

At some point, you will try to do something risky, and the GM will ask for a challenge, based on what you've described. All challenges and combats scenes are resolved with one draw of the cards, so set up as many advantages as you can to complete the challenge. You'll either be given a static number to beat with your card draws, or you'll be in a direct confrontation, where you and the GM will both draw cards.

After you draw cards, the GM will narrate-- with your help!-- what the outcome is. A combat might range all over a courtyard, before finishing with a quick stab halting your opponent's escape, even as he fires a lone bullet into your shoulder, perforating both your flesh and the dearly-won map to Doctor Oliphant's Island! All of that description is brought forth from a single draw from the deck of cards.

## ***Static Challenges***

A static challenge is a challenge in which you are using a skill to overcome some obstacle or threat which is not another character trying to harm you. For example, navigating a new land, steering through a storm, haggling for a better room, repairing the *Queen Anne*, baking a magnificent cake, or sneaking through a combat front.

Describe to the GM what you want to do, and how you want to do it, in detail. Bring up relevant skills you wish to use in achieving your goals. The GM will select a difficulty from 2-10, and name it for you. In addition, the GM will secretly assign some risk of failure (though you can certainly make a suggestion).

You can also use a static challenge in advance of a direct conflict to set up an advantage for yourself. For example, if you are about to get into a fistfight, you might use your skill in Architecture to know where the easily-broken door is, or your Culinary skill to arm yourself with a soup tureen to help you in the fight. Making this kind of draw ignores face cards. If you succeed at this static challenge, you draw an extra card in the conflict draw, above whatever the opponent draws.

Draw 1 card for making the attempt. Draw an extra card if a special ability applies, if one or more of your skills apply (limit 1 card, no matter how many skills apply), and if one or more allies are assisting you (limit 1 card, no matter how many allies help). Although you must draw 1 card to make the attempt, you do not have to draw all the cards you're entitled to draw.

Note that if you attempt a draw and fail, that's it. No one else can attempt to do the same thing, so if your friends want to help, they should help the first time! Which is fine, because at that point the GM will trigger the risk and now you will have a new situation to deal with.

**Success:** If one or more of your cards is the same or higher as the difficulty, you succeed.

**Failure:** If none of your cards is the same or higher as the difficulty, you fail. The GM's risk comes to pass.

**Face Cards:** Face cards are special. If you draw one or more face cards in your static challenge, here's how they count:

- **Jacks:** If you draw a jack of your own suit, you succeed with extreme panache. If you draw a jack of another suit, you succeed by somehow involving that character. Turn to that character and ask him how he or she became involved in your successful challenge.
- **Queens:** Queens do not count as a success. Rather, they add a mechanical complication to the story, often to



the *Queen Anne*. After this challenge is resolved, a complication arises involving the ship or your equipment, usually some kind of breakage or loss.

- **Kings:** Kings do not count as a success. Rather, the emperor hears about your actions!
- **Aces:** Aces do not count as a success. Rather, they add a social complication to the story. When this challenge is resolved, a complication arises involving someone you care about, especially if there's romantic interest involved.
- **Jokers:** Jokers count as a wild card. You succeed, but there is a cost, usually tied to the risk, that the GM will announce.

## GM Sidebar: Setting Difficulties and Risks

Always decide on a good risk before you have the player draw cards. Think to yourself “what would make this scene more exciting if it happened?” Don't forget to add in elements of the weird science that powers the world whenever you can!

A difficulty of 2-4 is quite low and easy to overcome, but might be warranted if the risk is exciting enough. For example, if D'artagnan is scaling the side of the *Queen Anne* to make a repair outside of combat, it should be easy for him to do so, but failing means he might fall a very long way!

5-7 is a moderate to difficult task. Because they ignore face cards, Establishing an advantage normally is a 5 difficulty.

8-10 is very challenging. Making a direct challenge to the emperor, outrunning the entire British air fleet, crafting an easily-hidden airship raygun... these are very difficult challenges.

**Always shuffle the cards after a draw.**

## Direct Conflicts

In a direct conflict, two characters are trying to somehow harm or hinder each other. The most typical is a fight, of course, but an airship chase or a debate on the Assembly floor would also be examples of direct conflicts.

Because they are on the same side (*All for one and one for all!*), Musketgears never fight each other-- at best, they spar, bicker, and play. Since there is no risk of one Musketgear harming another, when Musketgears engage in a direct conflict with each other, the players work out between them who wins and how.

For a direct conflict, the GM determines how many cards the opposition will draw for the conflict, and draws them from the GM deck (the deck with no face cards or jokers). A low-threat opponent, such as a nameless guard, will only draw 1 card for the conflict. A medium threat should draw an equal number of cards to the number the player draws. A very challenging threat will draw 1-3 more cards than the player. When determining how many cards compared to the players, ignore any extras the players got for creating advantages using a static challenge.

When multiple players are in a conflict with multiple opponents, ask the players if they want to all act together, separately, or in a group, then group them as appropriate. A group uses whichever player wants to take the lead (usually someone who has an appropriate special ability), who draws an additional card for each additional player in the group.

Combat is resolved with **one** draw of the cards, so make them count!

In a direct conflict, compare the players' cards to the opponents' cards.

**Success:** If **all** of your cards is the same or higher as the highest card of the opponent, you succeed completely.

**Partial Success:** If **some** of your cards are the same or higher, and some are lower, you succeed, but at a cost. If

you are in combat, then you are injured, but so is your opponent.

**Failure:** If none of your cards is the same or higher as your opponent's highest card, you fail. If you are in combat, you are injured to the point where you can no longer fight, and your opponent wins the combat.

**Face Cards:** Face cards are special. If you draw one or more face cards in your challenge, here's how they count:

- **Jacks:** If you draw a jack of your own suit, you succeed with extreme panache, no matter what other cards you draw. If you draw a jack of another suit, you succeed by somehow involving that character. Turn to that character and ask him how he or she became involved in your successful conflict.
- **Queens:** Queens do not count as a success. Rather, they add a mechanical complication to the story, often to the *Queen Anne*, though it could be to yourself or another Musketgear. After this conflict is resolved, a complication arises involving the ship or your equipment.
- **Kings:** Kings do not count as a success. Rather, the emperor hears about your actions!
- **Aces:** Aces do not count as a success. Rather, they add a social complication to the story. When this challenge is resolved, a complication arises involving someone you care about, especially if there's romantic interest involved.
- **Jokers:** Jokers count as a wild card. They count as both a success and a failure, so unless you drew a Jack, this conflict resolves as a **Partial Success**.

## Sidebar: Optional Page Cards

Some cards, usually from Europe, have an additional "page" card, similar to the minor arcana cards in a Tarot deck. You can use these in Musketgears. If a player draws a **Page** during a challenge or conflict, it does not count as a success. Rather, something happens to your ally, such as a social complication, an injury, depression, etc.

## Injuries and Standing

The Musketgears uses a very basic status for injury and debility. If you lose a physical conflict (a fight), you are injured and cannot use your extra Fight or Shoot card until you get medical attention or until you have a rest of at least a day.

If you are already injured and you lose a physical conflict again, you are incapacitated. You **must** rest and can only draw one card on any challenge until you do so. The GM might also limit what challenges you may attempt (for example, you might not be permitted to swing along a rigging line when incapacitated... even Musketgears have limits)

The social and political health of Musketgears is much more complicated than their physical health. The GM will generally track how popular the Musketgears are based on how successful they are in their missions, as well as how successful they are in their public personas. Your allies can help you if you task them with protecting your reputation.

## Challenges and Conflicts on the Queen Anne

The Musketgears have access to an amazing invention: the *Queen Anne*, a merchant airship operated by Agent Porthos and fueled with the mystical energy source known as aether.

Because the Queen Anne is your "home turf," each character has a special advantage and role concerning the ship. Porthos always draws an extra card when engaged in a conflict where the *Queen Anne* is involved. Athos draws an extra card on the *Queen Anne* whenever he or she pulls out a map or navigation. Aramis draws an extra card on the *Queen Anne* whenever he or she uses engineering. And D'artagnan draws an extra card on the *Queen Anne* whenever he or she uses athleticism or agility. In a challenge like a storm, these skills might include navigating around the storm

(Athos), piloting the vessel (Porthos), bolstering the engines by supercharging them (Aramis), or handling the rigging without falling off (D'artagnan). In an on-board combat, Porthos might use their knowledge of the ship to release rigging and drop a sail on a combatant, Athos might use their intimate knowledge of the ship to lure someone into a blind corner and then ambush them, Aramis might shoot them with the secret raygun on board, and D'artagnan might swing down a rope to knock over an assailant. Be creative about how you use your special *Queen Anne* ability!

When a challenge involves the *Queen Anne* directly, such as an on board fight, fire, damage, etc., you may pull an extra card if the challenge or conflict involves one or more of the *Queen Anne*'s traits, which are selected by the party at the start of the campaign.

Example: The party is in a ship-to-ship race at the Empress' birthday party. The stakes are pretty low, but the party still wants to win. Porthos is piloting, so he takes the lead on this challenge, drawing an extra card. Aramis has used his knowledge to coat the hull with aerodynamic wax, making it cut through the air even faster, drawing one more extra card. They're going to need all the help they can get, because when they selected traits for the Queen Anne, the party took Armored, Fuel-Efficient, and Armed-- she's tough, but not very fast!

## For the GM

Running an adventure of Musketgears should be an exciting, over-the-top experience with big actions and bigger conclusions. The highs should be very high! The lows should be in the absolute depths! The Musketgears inherit a tradition of saving the Queen of France from scandal, rescuing the true heir from the depths of the worst dungeons, and righting all the wrongs that have befallen the Bourbons.

Keep the following ideals in mind as you run Musketgears:

- The tone of this game is one of **high action with few permanent consequences**. The Musketgears are bigger than life, bold adventurers, and always the main protagonists in their story.
- **The Musketgears are experts** at being Musketgears. They are recruited for their abilities as soldiers and spies. They take big risks-- don't make them draw for petty things. Walking a plank to get onto the ship when it's moored safely is petty. Walking a plank to get onto the airship, 300 feet in the air, during a cyclone, with Napoleon's agents firing on you? Draw.
- The world is quite different from history. **Take elements of the steampunk/alternate history/weird science genre and use them**, liberally. Airships float, rayguns shoot, aether is an energy as well as a substance, and it may very well be the "magic" of your world. But this is still the Second French Empire, and political intrigue, social causes, and the troubling state of the world should play a role in your story. Remember that the Musketgears are a force to be reckoned with, even if they operate in secret.
- **Make the risks big, bold, and beautiful! Make them personal!**
- **Know the characters**. Use the GM Folio to note the skills the characters have chosen, and to remember notes and details about them. Always look for opportunities for players to use their skills, allies, and special abilities. In terms of basic niches: Porthos has wealth, Athos has power, Aramis has knowledge, and D'artagnan has strength.
- **Leverage their weaknesses**. Each character has named a weakness-- use them! If the weakness can come into play in a risk, make it so. If not, tie it into the plot hook in some way.
- **Let them leverage their own allies**. Each character has an ally or servant-- let them use those resources to get things done when they're off swashbuckling! Don't have a nameless messenger deliver a note about a labor riot on the docks-- instead, D'artagnan's drinking buddy shows up with bruises and a fat lip!

- **The *Queen Anne* is their home turf.** If the player can describe how their special ability applies, let them draw the extra card.

## ***A Sense of Place***

The steampunk genre is overwhelmingly dominated by literature focusing on English-speaking people, primarily from Great Britain and America. *Musketgears* takes place in France, a trouble place during the latter half of the 19th century. This is the place born out of the revolutions of the 18th century and the troubles expressed by Victor Hugo in *Les Miserables*.

And yet, because steampunk is a blend of industrialism and innovation, this is also a place of hope. Paris in the 19th century was still the center of fashion and gastronomic delights. The juxtaposition of social injustice, political upheaval, and remaining the height of fashion, is a curious, but exciting one. While your agents are flying through the air, chasing down an English spy, they do so with nothing short of panache and in a blouson that could only be hand-tailored and of the finest linen. If Aramis is tinkering away at a new invention, he is doing so with an eye not only to the function of the thing, but also its form-- is it elegant? Is it a work of art as well as science? If not, back into the scrap heap and a return to the sketchbook!

At its heart, *Musketgears* is a game about being bold, innovative, heroic, but also beautiful. We may be steampunk, sir, but we are also French!

## **Side Bar: Adding more “Weird” to the Setting**

This game leaves out a lot of the supernatural and “weird stuff,” favoring a rise in science, the existence of “aether,” and a more general “industrial punk” ambiance to carry the feeling of the unknown. However, there is nothing stopping you from adding supernatural, or even horrific elements to your game. Keep in mind, though, that these elements should always take a back seat to the tone of the game: big, heroic adventure.

## ***Allies***

The *Musketgears* each has a loyal ally, which is one of their personal resources. They may describe their ally as a friend, family member, trusted servant, confidante, or informant.

As the GM, you can use their allies to move the story along, prompt the heroes to action, or protect their interests. These allies are loyal and unshakeable: they do not betray the *Musketgears*, ever.

## ***Risks***

Here are some possible risks you can apply to a card draw:

- The character will be hurt by the outcome.
- The character will be in a bad position (on the ground, over a railing, down the hill, dangling by a rope, etc.)
- The character will be publicly humiliated.
- Another character will suffer (ex: Porthos bribes their way past the emperor’s guards, but he’s unsuccessful, and they recognize D’artagnan’s public identity as one of their cadets!)
- The *Queen Anne* will be damaged or run out of fuel
- The character will be lost and lose their bearings
- The character will be detained (arrested, imprisoned)
- The character will run out of a resource (money, ammunition, street cred, a lady’s patience)

- The character's ally will suffer
- A new threat will present itself (ex: Athos is infiltrating a wealthy assemblyman's house to purloin some documents, in disguise, but he fails his disguise draw. On the way to the assemblyman's house, a pair of ruffians mistakes him for a wealthy merchant and tries to mug him!)
- The character's weakness is brought into play.

## ***Social Standing and the Emperor***

The players will track their physical health, but it is up to you to track how much social standing the heroes have, and how much the emperor has noticed their actions.

Social standing can be complicated, especially when dealing with characters who have secret identities and multiple factions. If Athos is popular with the labor class, he loses standing among the assemblymen. Does D'artagnan lose social standing if he's seduced by a married woman, if that woman never knows his name?

This game abstracts social standing to two statuses: Public Status and Party Infamy, and these are ranked 2-10. The public status is the standing of the heroes' public identities, the heroes select it at the beginning of the campaign, and it almost never changes. The Infamy is the social standing of their secret identities, and is much more flexible.

### **Public Status**

Public Status is affected when the characters are presented with a complication or challenge to their public persona, and they do nothing about it. If they send their ally to deal with it, their status is not affected. Status might go up or down, depending on which direction is worse for the hero. For example, D'artagnan has decided that his persona is a dockworker, and he normally hears all the rumors among the commoners, so his status is low (2). One day, as a complication during a mission, you decide to complicate his public persona, and D'artagnan is recognized by a fellow dockworker, palling around with Porthos.

You mention this to D'artagnan, but he's actually really busy protecting the Queen Anne from an agent of the emperor, so he brushes it off. His ally is a smart-mouthed "working girl" who he's tasked with learning more about the emperor's agent, so she isn't even available to counteract the rumor mill. At the end of the session, his public status goes up, and he begins to lose touch with the common folk.

What does that mean for you and the game? It means that D'artagnan, and therefore the rest of the party, won't have advance notice about problems among the common folk until after they've happened. They won't know there's a labor union strike coming. They won't hear about all the murders among the factory girls. They won't know there's a virulent cough troubling everyone in the stews. Those things won't hit their radar until they turn into real problems, affecting someone higher up the social ladder.

Players always know their public status, and when it changes, you should tell them so. Public status changes at the end of each session. If D'artagnan does something during the next session to get back in touch with his roots, his status automatically returns to 2.

### **Party Infamy**

Party Infamy is much more in flux, and affects all of the characters equally. It reflects how well the "Musketgears" are known as a force to be reckoned with, rather than as the individuals behind the masks. [In comic book terms, it's Batman and Robin's standing, not Bruce Wayne's.]

In general, you track the Party Infamy on a scale of 2-10. The higher their infamy, the more attention the nobility

and emperor pay to them.

When a Musketeer draws a king, the party's Infamy changes. If they drew a king on a failed challenge, it decreases as the emperor hears of their mistakes and dismisses them as buffoons. If they drew a king on a successful challenge (even partially successful), their Infamy increases because the emperor is becoming concerned.

Like public status, Infamy does not change until the end of the session. Thus, the party might have some plusses and some minuses during the session. If they even out, there's no change.

The party's Infamy starts at 4. At 10, the emperor begins to act.

Normally, the Musketeers do not mind if people know that the Musketeers fulfilled a mission, but sometimes it is better to remain completely anonymous. Whenever the party is in a challenge where hiding their identities as Musketeers is very important, they must draw in a static challenge to maintain their disguises. **The challenge difficulty for this draw is their current Infamy, or 10, whichever is lower.** For example, if they are currently at 10, the existence and exploits of the Musketeers is very well known, and it's nearly impossible for them to hide the fact that this group of four braves is, in fact, the same four Musketeers that everyone has heard about.

When the party's Infamy is at 10 or higher, increase the risks and difficulties as the emperor begins to put into place his plans to quash these upstarts, but give the heroes ways to fight back against this oppressive regime: the story is coming to a head.

When the party's Infamy has been at 10+ for a while (2-4 sessions), the emperor considers them a serious threat. It's time for the emperor to make his move and send some of his own resources to crack down on the Musketeers. Begin the emperor's endgame and *vive la revolution!*

## Sidebar: Optional Rules for One-Shots

For a one-shot adventure, start Infamy at 7 and track Infamy after each scene ends. Bring the emperor into the scene when Infamy reaches 10.

## Plot Hooks

Major plots in Musketeers revolve around four main areas of influence:

- The emperor Napoleon III, and his decadent courtiers
- The French Assembly, a group of politically powerless elites who nonetheless manage to get fat and rich off the labor of others
- The displaced and exiled fathers of the Republic
- The disenfranchised labor class, toiling beneath the weight of their work

The emperor is constantly embattled against the Assembly and, to a much lesser degree, the Republic. The Assembly is in a state of outright class war with the labor class. The Republic wants nothing more than to work with the Assembly and laborers to oust the emperor. The laborers despise the Assembly (but work for them anyway, cause a job's a job) and many believe "if only the emperor knew what was going on..."

Any plot involving one of these conflicts will yield rich results. Perhaps the emperor's wife Eugenie is having an illicit correspondence with a member of the Republic? An assemblyman might go missing mysteriously. A labor riot can set off a spark that sets Paris ablaze. Perhaps a member of the Republic must come to France for a family emergency, and avoiding arrest and imprisonment is paramount!

In addition to these big plots, there are smaller, personal crises that can affect our heroes. An aging parent, proud yet worried for his "Aramis" sends letters from home...until one day they mysteriously cease. Athos is up for re-election

in the Assembly-- and his opponent claims to have blackmail material! D'artagnan falls in an out of love so easily... but the most recent one just sent him a gift he truly must refuse!

For any plot hook, ask yourself and the players the following questions:

- Who needs something?
- What will they do to gain or protect it?
- Who opposes them from gaining or keeping it?
- Do the Musketeers want them to have it?
- What will the Musketeers do to help or interfere?
- What secrets are there about it, and how can we learn those secrets?

## ***Sample Adventure Structure***

Below is a fairly basic adventure structure, drawn from the “five room dungeon” that may help you in planning your escapades, but it is by no means a requirement that you follow this structure:

1. Call to adventure: The Musketeers obtain knowledge about some trouble in one of their areas of expertise.
2. Obstacle to Entry: The Musketeers have difficulty reaching the trouble area. This might be because they need to do more investigation, apply some bribery, or simply that the trouble area is physically inaccessible.
3. Social Challenge: The Musketeers have an encounter with someone who they need something from, but cannot offend. If chivalry isn't dead for your Musketeers, it may be from someone of the opposite sex.
4. The Plot Twist: As the heroes think they're on the right path, something surprises them!
5. The Chase: A very, very good way to heighten the mood is to give the heroes a chase scene.
6. The Climax: The big showdown with the trouble, whether it's an enemy, a force of nature, or a big event.

One piece of advice is to stage at least one scene on the *Queen Anne*, and to give each character a “spotlight” moment where their skills and experiences really shine, somewhere in the adventure.

## ***Dramatis Personae***

These historical people existed during the time when the Musketeers operate in France. The Musketeers, generally speaking, oppose the emperor and support the future French Republic.

- Napoleon III (historical) - the dictatorial emperor of France from 1852-1870
- Empress Eugenie (historical) - Napoleon III's decadent wife. They had 1 son.
- Eugene Rouher (historical) - “the “vice emperor” and voice of totalitarianism
- Adolph Thiers (historical) - leader of the Opposition in France. The Opposition at first was just a handful of 5 people, but later grew to overtake the government.
- Victor Hugo (historical) - influential author and republican who was very strongly interested in architecture and social justice
- Victor Noir (historical) - a journalist and moderate voice in Paris who was later murdered by a member of the Buonaparte family.
- Leon Gambetta (historical) - a statesman and a republican

In addition to these historical figures, populate your Paris with labor movement leaders, communist organizers, performers, courtesans, bohemian artists, beggars, craftsmen, merchants of all trades, industrialists, innkeepers and restaurateurs, decadent nobles, factory workers, prostitutes, depraved scholars and clergymen, mothers and grandmothers, thieves and murderers, shopgirls, courtiers, the disabled and infirm, and assemblymen. Add to this a slew

of foreigners-- academics, doctors, inventors, visitors, exiles from other lands, diplomats, and spies, and you can have a veritable rogue's gallery to chose from.

### ***Using the GM's Folio***

Included in this packet are several PocketMod documents for you to use and adapt to your game.

The first four are the character sheets for your players.

The last two are a small folio for your overall campaign notes (character notes, some "cheat sheet" information, notes for you to make about the *Queen Anne*, allies, statuses, and recurring NPCs in your campaign), and an adventure folio for you to start your adventure.

Be sure to track how much the emperor has discovered about the Musketgears; when they draw enough attention, ratchet up the emperor's opposition to them. The final showdown with Napoleon might never take place, or they might trigger it in their second session (they might even seek it out!) But the emperor has a vast amount of power, and the Musketgears cannot hope to openly flout him until they are truly ready.

Feel free to paperclip or staple the two folios together for convenience.