

THE STABLE MASTER

Key

Bargaining: The King's death is not the end of the Kingdom. Peace and greatness are still a possibility.

Spirit

Pragmatic: Being a Knight is not that different from being a farmer. You keep your head down, you fulfil your duty with dedication and tenacity.

Remote: You are more comfortable around hounds and steeds than around men. Although you may be the quietest of the Knights, when you do speak, it is never for meaningless platitudes.

Bonds

The King: In your long life you have served two Kings: The first was a ruthless tyrant, the second a fair and honourable ruler. Though you rode and fought at the side of both, however, you have never been a slave to the crown, nor have you ever called either of them a friend. Your oath has always been to the land, and never to one man, because you know that men are destined to pass, regardless of their merits. Your failure to preserve the King pains you greatly, but you are aware that there is much yet left to defend from the onslaught of the People under the Mountain.

The Knights: No one has ever come closer to breaking your shield of solitude than these men. In the *Squire* you found the young, eager mind of a learner, supported by a gentle heart.

The *Last Knight* is of another sort entirely, yet you see in him the righteous integrity of youth. He reminds you of the *Champion* as he was twenty years ago, although your friend has always been more good-hearted and ready to quip a joke. But those times are gone, and the eerie glint in the back of his eyes is starting to frighten you. Lastly, you have always admired the *First Knight's* wisdom, even though you can sense how tired he is, behind the mask of austerity he forced on himself. Still, you are convinced that he is the only one who can keep your comrades united through these troubled times.

The People under the Mountain: You know that the People under the Mountain lurk in wait at the other side of the lake: Not on the opposite shore, but beyond its waters. Men with the same faces as those in the Kingdom live in a twisted world, consumed by the desire to see their reflections destroyed. You know all this because you are one of them: You slew the real Stable Master years ago and took his place among the Knights. You had orders to murder the King, but you forsook your duty to watch over Him. Until today. Until His duel against himself, against the Tyrant under the Mountain. Your former Sire.

Quote: "You are furious, and so you look for someone to blame. I understand that, but there are no culprits. Not this time".

Body language

Steadfast: Your gestures are slow, your movements precise, your manners curt. If not for the armour, you would hardly seem a nobleman of the Kingdom, but you are proud of your simplicity.

Darkening

When the People under the Mountain point to you and give you one of these instructions, follow this guideline up to the end of the current dialogue or action sequence. Once it is over, go back to acting however you wish.

- More:* On the scales of Bargaining the life of a single man, even a King, is of little weight. You keep pointing out that His death is not such a terrible catastrophe, you just want to think about the future.
- Less:* You are tired of living between two worlds, with the weight of your secret—your origins as one of the People under the Mountain—so heavy on your shoulders. You are tempted to confess, to forever end the dichotomy. To find peace at long last.

Impressions

To play out an Impression grab the Mask and, while holding it up, declare the setting and participants of the upcoming scene. Then bring the Mask to your face and act as the King, keeping close to your Knight's vision of Him. You will need to take the lead, as the others have no clue about the point of the scene.

- Hunting party. The King, the Squire and the Last Knight.* The King teaches His youngest Knights about the delicate balance of existence: If men overindulged in the hunt, they would break a pact with the wildlife. So the People under the Mountain prove themselves treacherous by attacking the Kingdom, and a solution is needed, be it words or battle.
- In the bowels of the Mountain. The King, the First Knight, the Champion, the People under the Mountain.* The King urges His Knights to listen to the voices nestled between the rocks. They whisper the fall of the Kingdom. For this reason, no matter what happens under the Mountain, the Knights must return to their people and never surrender the fight.
- On the lakeshore. The King and the People under the Mountain.* The King is alone, having dismissed the Knights. He must find the courage to face His greatest trial: A confrontation with His other side. He knows that slaying the enemy will spell His own end.

When the Impression is over, lay down the Mask, tear a fragment from it and remember to keep it with you. When everyone is back to the present, in the cave, explain how you know what you just recounted. Take initiative here, as well.