

Status and social mobility in the Midnight Realms

Social classes

Social status is the most important consideration for the tarterans in the Nine Princedoms. Every action, relationship and social encounter is colored and shaped by the participants' respective social status. It is a social imperative, more important than kinship, appearance, friendship or gender. Only sworn oaths rival the importance and influence of social status.

Dreg

Prerequisites: Status 1

Privileges: A place in the hierarchy and the protection of city walls.

Duties: Obey and serve superiors, obey the Law.

Freeman

Prerequisite: Status 5, Living Standard: Freeman (15 s.a./month), be recognised as a freeman by a Peer, Esquire or Noble.

Privileges: The right to own property and dreg slaves, access to inner city, freedom to travel.

Duties: Obey the Law, obey ruling lords, manage slaves, muster with city militia in times of war, own an argentium weapon.

Peer

Prerequisite: Status 10, Living Standards: Peer (150 s.a./month)

Privileges: The right to own private property, access to inner city, own slaves, freedom to travel, employ freemen.

Duties: Obey the Law, obey ruling lords, manage slaves and serving freemen, muster with city militia in times of war, own an argentium weapon and a suit of armor.

Aspirant

Prerequisite: Status 8, Living Standards: Aspirant (50 s.a./month), Swear oath of servitude to a Noble

Privileges: As freeman but need only obey sworn leader and his followers with greater status, access to the noble's manor, command the Noble's slaves.

Duties: Obey the Law, serve sworn noble, manage slaves, own an argentium weapon

Esquire

Prerequisite: Status 15, Living Standards: Esquire (500 s.a./Month), Oath of servitude to a Noble

Privileges: As Peer but need only obey sworn leader and his followers with greater status, access to the noble's manor, command the Noble's slaves and aspirants.

Duties: Obey the Law, serve sworn noble, manage aspirants and slaves, own an enchanted argentium weapon, and an enchanted suit of armor.

Lord

Prerequisite: Status 20, Living Standards: Lord (5000 s.a./Month), Oath of servitude to a noble superior, Manor.

Privileges: Need only obey sworn leader and his followers with greater status. Create household with aspirants and esquires. Create personal banner, outfit army from Manor, aid his superior in war.

Duties: Obey the Law, serve sworn noble, manage followers, own high quality enchanted argentium weapon and suit of armor.

Baron

Prerequisite: Status 30, Living Standards: Baron (15000 s.a./month), Oath of servitude to a Duke, Barony.

Duke

Prerequisite: Status 40, Living Standards: Duke (50000 s.a./month), Oath of servitude to the Prince, Dutchy

Gaining and losing Status

Members of tarteran society go through life trying to increase their social status, make their rivals lose status and, most preferably, do both at the same time. The rules for gaining and losing status is highly codified in hierarchic law - and called "the great game". In the great game, social appearance is the key. Criminal activity isn't damaging to your social status unless you are caught, killing your parents while managing to fend of your siblings could earn you their status and not shame. On the other hand, killing your parents without having the strength to hold on to the position will hurt your social status on many levels. There are six aspects that determine your position in the hierarchy:

Bloodline:

- A single child inherits the status of the most prestigious parent when that parent dies. Sometimes this child is pointed out by the parent in advance, but often the children will have to fight his or her own siblings for the rights to this Status. Of course, some tarterans don't have the time to wait for their parents' demise and take matters into their own hands.
- All children that were recognized by their parents get status equal to the most prestigious parent's status – 10 when they reach adulthood. Any other children are considered Dregs (Status 1). Due to the resources needed to maintain social status, most recognized children of high status parents will still fall down the social ladder.

Honor:

- Lose 1 Status every time you violate the letter of any agreement, justly given order or contract.
- Lose an entire level of social status if you break the letter of a sworn oath (this can take you below Dreg, giving you a "permanent" Status 0).
- Lose 1 Status every time you are witnessed harming person of superior status.
- Lose 1 Status every time you are caught breaking the Law.
- Lose 1 Status every time you are caught lying.
- Lose 1 Status if you publicly fail to show proper respect for a superior.
- Lose 1 Status if you don't defend your honor when challenged by an equal or inferior.
- Lose 1 Status if you are publicly humiliated or ridiculed by a social superior.
- Lose 1 Status if you are accused of lying, criminal activity and disrespect by a social superior.

- Lose 1 Status if accused of oathbreaking.

Wealth:

- At the start of each month a tarteran must invest a certain amount of money to maintain his social status. Living at a lower standard of living hurts your Status. When spending less than required, a tarteran loses 1 Status pr month for each social class he falls short. When gaining a higher social class the tarteran must live at the new level of living standard for at least one month, before he gains the benefits of the new class.
- Gain 1 Status by spending x5 on living standards for a month.

Knowledge:

- Gain 1 Status pr ability rating at +10/+20/+30/+40.
- Gain 1 Status pr magical ability rating at +15/+25/+35
- Gain 1 Status when learning a new magical ability.
- Gain 1 Status when learning a new scholar ability
- Gain 1 Status when the first time you benefit from knowing a language.
- Gain 1 Status when returning from a dangerous journey.
- Gain 1 Status when returning from a different plane of existence
- Gain 1 Status for being credited with a significant discovery.
- Gain 1 Status when acquiring a magical item (max status = ability level).
- Gain 1 Status when creating a magical item (max status = ability level)
- Gain 1 Status when using secret knowledge to gain an advantage over an enemy.

Deeds:

- Gain 1 Status when killing a demon in single combat (max status = demon ability rating)
- Gain 1 Status when winning a duel of honor (max status = opponents ability rating),
- Gain 1 Status when defeating a new kind of demon (max status = demon ability rating).
- Gain 1 Status when taking part in a major military victory,
- Gain 1 Status when leading troops in a major military victory.
- Gain 1 Status when making a great financial gain (doubling the investment)
- Lose 1 Status when being on the losing side in major military conflict.
- Lose 1 Status when leading troops when losing a major military conflict.
- Lose 1 Status when trading at great loss (halving the investment)
- Lose 1 Status when losing a contest with a tarteran of equal or lower status.
- Lose 1 Status when being outwitted by a tarteran of equal or lower status

Connections:

- Individuals with high status can raise the status of those serving them. A leader can grant any follower Status equal to the leader's Status - 10.
- Leaders can reduce any sworn follower's status to Dreg.
- Gain 1 Status when swearing an oath of servitude to a tarteran of superior status.
- Gain 1 Status when gaining a sworn follower (max status = follower's ability rating)
- Gain 1 Status when gaining an ally of equal or greater status.