



# Fatal Bonds

## Design Document

*A Journeys & Tales Production*




Version 1.8





The Setting in Fatal Bonds.....	3
Game Design .....	3
What Fatal Bonds Is About.....	4
What Fatal Bonds is Not About.....	5
The Concept of Shadow and Light .....	6
Families, Companies, and Friends.....	7
The Vallier Family.....	7
The Malone Family.....	7
The Carter Company .....	8
Friends of the Families.....	8
Characters .....	10
Plots and Activities.....	11
Play to Lift Philosophy.....	11
Policies and Mechanics .....	13
Code of Conduct and Anti-Harassment Policy .....	13
Code of Conduct - The quick version .....	13
Code of Conduct - The long version.....	13
Anti-Harassment policy.....	15
Consent / Safety mechanics.....	15
These mechanics consist of: .....	16
Briefings and Workshops .....	16
Pre-Scene Negotiations.....	16
Mechanics During Scenes .....	16
OK sign / Stoplight check in. ....	16
Leaving a Scene / Out of Character mechanics.....	17
Accessibility.....	18
Weapons .....	18
Practical information .....	19
Where and When.....	19
Location.....	19
What’s Included .....	19
Dietary restrictions .....	20
Costuming Guidelines .....	20
The team .....	22





# The Setting in Fatal Bonds

*As the sun shines its last light and heads west over the city skyline, the shadows that have been lurking in the alleyways and corners begin to lengthen and take their hold. Some people rush home to turn on their lights and fill their lives with a few more hours of brightness and laughter, while others rush head first into the night, eager to hide themselves and their sins. But they forget it's impossible to live in either of them forever... and you know that better than most.*

*The smoke from your cigarette obscures the view as two black cars pull into the hotel drive and pause in front of the double doors. For a moment, there's no sound except for the hum of the engines and the crickets serenading the sunset. The valets rush to open the doors and stand at attention, but you catch them stealing a few glances as one by one the influential Valliers and the infamous Malones step out onto the twilight air. You know their names and faces, who in this town doesn't? For decades, these two families have sabotaged one another and done unspeakable things to tighten their grip on the city, its people, and its resources. Everyone has taken a side at this point, and those who refused... well, people disappear all the time, don't they?*

*But just as the sun is setting on this day, it seems to be setting on this war between them as well. Six months ago, the heads of the families surprised everyone by announcing a wedding between their heirs and a new alliance between their empires. Everyone wondered how long it would be before it was called off, but against all odds, the wedding weekend has arrived and it's time for these two young people to unite their familial empires in a new era of peace, no matter who, or what, may get in their way.*

*Silently, with the weight of so many bitter years and anger weighing on them all, the two families walk into the hotel with only the most furtive glances passing between them. You wait until they're gone before taking another drag on your cigarette, shaking your head as you wonder whether or not this plan for peace isn't actually a recipe for disaster.*

*But just as the sun finally disappears over the horizon and the city descends into darkness, a third car pulls into the drive. As it stops, the Carter twins step out into the shadows and slam the car doors shut, staring silently at the building in front of them. The crickets around you quiet, as if choked by the tension that's fallen over the scene and the smoke burns in your lungs as you hesitate to exhale. They turn and glare at one another in silence before stalking into the hotel side by side, the chill between them as tangible as the ice in the cocktail you're suddenly craving.*

*The Carter Company, with their rapidly growing numbers and their impressive bank account, have as much a stake in this city as everyone else, even if their slice of the pie has been much smaller thanks to the other two powerful families. You're not surprised to see them here; there's no way that they ever would have passed up the opportunity to use this wedding as a way to benefit themselves and their company somehow. But who invited them here? And for what purpose?*

*As you drop your cigarette and put it out beneath your heel, you have more questions than answers, more theories than facts. And as the shadows and light make their merry foxtrot over the next few days and the clock ticks towards a new world of these families' making, you can't help but wonder, at the end of this, where will these people find themselves: allied together in the light of day, or bonded together in the shadows?*

## Game Design

Fatal Bonds is a Nordic-style larp. The scenario is a noir-inspired family drama set in an unnamed city in history-adjacent America during the late 1940s, and will run from April 2<sup>nd</sup>-April 4<sup>th</sup>, 2021 at the St. Regis Hotel in Houston, Texas.





It designed to have 30-40 players, all of whom have been invited to, or who are participating in, the society wedding of the decade between two families who have long been at odds with one another.

After generations of conflict, the wealthy Vallier family and the crafty Malone family have finally come together to unite their families by joining the heirs to their respective dynasties in marriage. To celebrate, they have invited their families, friends, important political leaders, and even representatives from the troublesome and unpredictable Carter Company to bear witness to this new era of peace and prosperity.

A mixture of high society, blue collar workers, crafty opportunists, and seedy characters will come together for a weekend of rehearsal dinners, social mingling, and eventually a wedding. During this time they will take the opportunity to drive their agendas forward, settle old debts, reconfirm alliances, and possibly forge new ones.

Who knows what the shadows hold once the light of day sets?

## **What Fatal Bonds Is About**

### **Noir Inspired**

Noir films have a treasured place in American cinematic and cultural history. As a snapshot in time, they encapsulate many aspects of American culture between the 1930s-1950s. However, as they are products of their time, they have many problematic features. As Journeys & Tales operates under a banner that does not allow for these in play, we have taken some aspects of noir into this scenario and left others behind.

### **The Characters**

In noir there are no lily-white heroes; even the best of characters are shaded with gray and shadowed by their decisions. As such, many of the characters in Fatal Bonds follow archetypes present in many noir films: the anti-hero, the femme fatale, the criminal mastermind, and the reliable, unappreciated sidekick. These archetypes existed well before noir film, and continue to perpetuate themselves in modern story telling because of their compelling nature. But as Journeys & Tales has an inclusive policy towards people of all gender identities and sexual orientations, we have flexibility to adapt these archetypes to fit a modern audience.


### **The Tropes**

The very word “noir” inspires visions of rainy nights in a dirty city, flashbacks, and double-crosses. Fatal Bonds allows and provides many of these situations for our players, as well as others that transcend the genre. As such, there will be elements of violence and threatening situations at different times in the scenario, as well as opportunities for betrayal, secrets being revealed, and life-or-death decisions.

### **Family Drama**

At its core, Fatal Bonds is about the relationships characters have with their families, both the ones they are born into, and the ones they choose for themselves. All characters, even those who are “Friends of the Family,” will have deep connections to others in play and long histories with one another. And, in





true noir style, how one character views a relationship might be very different from the way the other person perceives it.

By giving our characters long histories with one another, we want to create a rich history full of love, anger, decades-long resentments, and long-overdue romantic declarations. However, we also endeavor to make sure all players have opportunities to work with others they have connections with, in order to deepen their stories if they wish.

### **History Adjacent**

The universe in which we have set Fatal Bonds is similar to America in many ways. Our characters will have the same technology, popular culture, and costuming that many Americans did in the 1940s. However, there are key differences that need to be addressed. For example, World War II was an integral part of the development of noir as a genre. While some characters in Fatal Bonds may have been involved in “The War” or mention it to others, WWII itself will not play a large part in the scenario. Additional information regarding many of the societal inequalities of the time will be listed below in the “What Fatal Bonds is Not About.”

### **Consent**

Fatal Bonds is a rules light game, with heavy consent mechanisms. Nothing can happen to your character that you do not want to happen. We have a longer section about game, safety, and consent mechanics further down in the design doc, and all of these will be addressed in pre-game workshops before the event begins.

### **What Fatal Bonds is Not About “Isms”**

As mentioned above, noir film and America in the 1940s had obvious societal issues and discrimination. The noir genre often features many “isms” such as, but not limited to: racism, sexism, ableism, and anti-Semitism and these are exemplified in many character tropes, the femme fatale among them. We acknowledge that these exist in the genre and society, but we do not plan to make them a central theme of the story in Fatal Bonds. However, it is possible that some of these issues may influence character development, and when that is the case, we will work with each player to make sure that these topics are handled in a careful, considerate manner. Characters may be played regardless to their race, gender identity, or sexuality. For more questions about this topic, please see our non-discrimination policy.

The only “ism” that is overtly present in this scenario is the topic of classism, as issues with money, influence, and power are central to the Fatal Bonds story and will be dealt with in a manner that is period appropriate.

### **Heavy Rules or “winning”**

Journeys & Tales operates our events with a variety of safety mechanics and check-ins. But beyond that, Fatal Bonds is not a rules heavy larp, and not focused on “winning.” All guidelines and safety mechanics will be discussed and practiced before the event for the safety and comfort of all players, and can also be found in details later on in this document, as can our info on our “Play to lift” philosophy.





## The Concept of Shadow and Light

One of the most striking features of noir cinema is filmmakers using various illumination techniques to create sharp contrasts between shadows and light. Half-hidden faces, silhouettes against a foggy background, and mysterious figures disappearing down dark alleyways invoke a sense of mystery and the thrill of these hidden secrets waiting to be revealed once and for all.

It's these feelings and moments that we want to capture in our game. To create this sense of uncertainty, anticipation, and drama we've designed our scenario to have both "light" and "shadow" elements.

By "light" elements, we mean that each character will have:

- Facts about them that are well known to many other characters in the game
- Beneficial abilities and traits that prove useful to themselves and others
- Goals that other characters know about and may be involved in
- Friendly relationships with other characters
- Happy and peaceful moments in game

By "shadow" elements, we mean that each character will have:

- Dark secrets that are known to few, if any other characters, even those closest to them
- Self-destructive traits that cause themselves and others problems
- Secret goals and agendas that they are keeping close to their chest
- Antagonistic and hostile relationships with other characters, secret grudges, or even secret desires to see the downfall of those they claim to care for
- Sad and painful moments in game

Characters in noir films take big risks, with the potential for terrible failure and incredible reward. Happy endings are not guaranteed, and even achieving the goals that the characters began with might result in losses they never imagined.

To this end, we have designed plots and opportunities for our players to take their characters on these high-stakes journeys. This means that all decisions and actions taken by characters will naturally have "light" elements that benefit some, and "shadow" elements that negatively affect others.





# Families, Companies, and Friends

There are four player groups in Fatal Bonds: the Vallier Family, the Malone family, the Friends of the Families, and the Carter Company. The Valliers and Malones have long histories in this town, while the Carters and those who work for them are more recent arrivals. All three groups have allies and enemies within the Friends of the Families, a group made up of influential and important people who have been invited to witness the wedding.

## The Vallier Family

The Vallier Family's roots are so entrenched in the city's history that the casual observer could be forgiven for mistaking the two as the same. The first Vallier arrived with the Marquis de Lafayette and married into a prominent and powerful family whose status matched his own. Over the next hundred years, the Vallier family became involved in the highest level of politics, counting congressmen, governors, senators, and even a first lady among their numbers. They have been a part of the very making of the world as we know it today, and never hesitate to remind anyone of it.

Wealthy from time immemorial, the Valliers have invested heavily in African diamond mines as well as in shipping luxury items from South America. Their mansions are elegant beyond imagining and their name is synonymous with taste and refinement. What they wear sets the standard for the season and what they say inevitably becomes law. They are the closest thing you could find in this city to royalty, and they expect to be treated as such.

To fall afoul of the Valliers means to have your reputation shredded, your fortune decimated, and every door worth opening shut in your face. There isn't a branch of city hall that doesn't have a friend on staff, and so if you're planning on making your home here, you'd best stay on their good side.

You might want to play this family if...

- Settling for anything less than the absolute best and most perfect just isn't for you
- You like playing "society" types
- Politics and powerplays are something you enjoy.
- Complicated family dynamics are something you enjoy in your roleplay.

## The Malone Family

In 1785, a man named Edmund Malone was made the Baron of Sunderland. That same day, his bastard-brother Addis gave him a middle-finger salute, stole a handful of coins, and boarded a ship to America. Within a generation, the Sunderland baronetcy had fallen into oblivion, but the Malone family in America had prospered so well that many who knew its founder insisted it must be the devil's work.

What began as the ownership of one tavern in the most dangerous part of town quickly spiraled into an empire of saloons, distilleries, and during Prohibition, smuggling and bootleg liquor. Your favorite pub? They own it. The whiskey you purchase at your little bodega? They imported it. That woman who sells her services at the house own the road? They protect her. Whatever your debauchery, whatever your vice, they know it... and they can always get you more. But despite their wealth and power within the city, they've always been on the outside looking in, waiting for their moment to assume their rightful place in society.

As a group who lives on the fringes of what's acceptable, they live on the edge of the law. Some of their enemies end up run out of town, others end up in the gutter. But no matter the offense, their enemies





are dealt with swiftly and harshly, and rumors of what they might be willing to do, are generally enough to keep those who would offend them in line.

You might want to play this family if...

- You relish being in a tight-knit family where you know everyone's business.
- Pushing the boundaries of acceptability and propriety is fun for you.
- You're looking for a chance to show your "betters" how powerful you are.
- Leading with your heart and being emotional is something you enjoy in roleplay.

## The Carter Company

No one, not even the Carters themselves, know exactly when they arrived in the United States. If you asked them, they've always been here, working, growing, waiting for their moment to finally become what they were always meant to be. Little is known about the infamously reclusive Mr. Carter or his twin children who represent them in all his business dealings. They seem to have appeared from thin-air a decade ago and rapidly began making themselves and their company a growing powerhouse within the city.

They started by purchasing run down factories on the edge of town, updating them and adding jobs for blue collar workers suffering during the depression. They began snapping up large swaths of tenements and improving them for their employees, then shocked their fellow business owners by being among the first to support unions for their workers. Their willingness to support their employees and their families have made those who work for them fiercely, sometimes frighteningly loyal. Within the last few years, The Carter Company has been unafraid to engage in trade wars, using their union power to undercut the political influence the Valliers have made. They've also established social clubs for their employees and tenants, taking away power from the Malones, who relied on the money these blue-collar workers brought in.

As for their vengeance... that's a bit of a mystery. Some of their enemies end up in the morgue, while others come around to seeing their point of view, and even more simply vanish. Because they have so little history and there are so many rumors about regarding what they are capable of and what they're willing to do, no one is quite sure where their limit lies. They're wildcards, and there's no telling what they might do if they had the opportunity.

You might want to play this family if...

- You like playing a character who's often antagonized by other players.
- Competitive roleplay is something you enjoy.
- You revel in a feeling of "us against the world" in your roleplay.
- Being in a group of people who have come together by choice instead of by blood.

## Friends of the Families

In all honesty, "friends" might not be the best word to call these people, but this is a wedding after all, and no one is going to be uncouth enough to say otherwise. These people have worked for and helped the other groups here, some for decades, and some more recently. Though not blessed with the Vallier refinement, the Malone money, or the Carter tenacity, they have each gained power in their own way, dealing in secrets, favors, and unique tasks that only they could provide.

They come from all walks of life and from the places the families have needed them, including the highest levels of government as well as the morgue. It's because of their shady or legitimate business dealings, their station in society, or good old-fashioned nepotism that they have been invited to the







wedding. After all, there are certain things one must do to keep up appearances in polite society, and if one were ever looking for an opportunity to make new connections, or to settle an old score, a wedding isn't the worst place to find the person you've been looking for.

What allegiances they have are tenuous at best, and at a gathering like this, there's no telling whether or not the people who call them "friend" will still do so once the wedding is over. But it is certain that none of the guests would miss out on what is certain to be the event of the century.

You might want to play this group if...

- You like playing a character who has no strong allegiances to any one family.
- The idea of being someone who will have roleplay and involvement with all three other groups excites you.
- Coming from a "professional" back ground and having skill that others need appeals to you.
- Having many secrets (and as a consequence, many potential enemies) is something you enjoy in your roleplay.





# Characters

As stated before, our characters will follow many archetypes present within noir, but are not considered “cookie cutter” and will be finalized with each player in mind.

Approximately 4 months before the event, each player will receive a “blurb” containing the name of their character, the group they belong to, and a brief description for you to accept. The purpose of this is for our players to be able to connect with others in their groups and to prepare costuming for the event.

Closer to the event, we will send out a group history that contains secret gossip or skeletons in the closet that only people in your group will know. From that document, you will also be able to get a better idea about your group’s current situation, which should also help with your character development and costuming.

At least 2 months before the event, players are scheduled to receive their full character sheet. These will include:

- Your characters full name and the archetype they are based on.
- A prose section to set the scene for their place in this scenario.
- A character history and background of three to four pages.
- Roleplaying tips.
- Goals and Ambitions.
- Connections with those outside your group and insight into your relationship with others in your group.
- A “Who’s Who?” of your group.





# Plots and Activities

The plot structure in Fatal Bonds is primarily an internal tool for the organizers and game runners to be aware of when structuring the game. On an overall level our approach with plots has the following goals:

- To help structure and organize the overall story on a game, family and personal level.
- To measure and outline that all characters have enough to do so that players are entertained throughout the scenario.
- To check that all stories, relationship, connections and hooks are correctly written into the final characters and material going to the players.

It is our intention through the design structure to allow for play of certain types. We aim to accommodate both the players that are very active and seek something to do with many players, as well players who look for more introspective role play. However, two main themes of the larp: family drama and noir, will have clear impact on players' activities.

Family drama means most of the relationships and activities will be centered around the wedding, the four groups being together, and the interplay this creates. Characters will have varied and intermingled relationships that will drive their activities and play, and we will through specific events during the game create situations for players to react to that will eventually intensify as the weekend progresses. We fully expect that as secrets people hold come to light, relationships will change or be irrevocably broken, and that new ones will form.

Though each person will probably have their own thoughts on what "noir" is as a genre, we have seen it as the idea of shadows and light, dualities, and things not being what they seem, and these concepts have been a driver in our plot design. Characters' actions and motives will often be complex and shadowed by events that occur within the event. Another powerful aspect of the noir theme is the narrative tool of turning points. In noir films you often see situations where the unexpected happens, and that drives new and more urgent actions. We believe that larp is a great medium for being genuinely surprised, having to react to that and feeling the good sense of stress that comes from things escalating, and we have worked hard to incorporate that into the design and player experience.

## Play to Lift Philosophy

For most people the concept of "Play to Win" and "Play to Lose" are well known. However, especially within the Nordic larp scene, "Play to Lift" has become a popular philosophy that we encourage in all our games.

The idea is described on Nordiclarp.org as:

*"Play to lose" is thus when your main focus as a player is to create better drama. Your character is always 'playing to win' as the character understands a win: e.g. they don't want their horrible secret to come to light, they don't want to be drafted into the army, they don't want to be discovered underneath their lover's bed. By playing to lose you, the player, look for good chances to let your character lose, in a way that creates better drama. So you forget your character's diary on the porch, you get drunk and stumble into the drafting party, you make a sound so that your lover's wife notices that you are hiding under the bed.*

*In practice in Nordic Larps, however, I find that a lot of the great play that seems to be generated by Play to Lose is often in fact a product of when Play to Lose is coupled with "Play to Lift". Play to Lift means that the responsibility for your drama and your character also rests on all your co-players. You have to*





*\_lift\_ each other. You don't, off game, have to worry about delivering the best speech ever just because everyone knows that your character is the best orator in the country. The reason that you don't need to worry is because the other players will lift your character up, and applaud loudly – they will give you a win. An alternative name to Play to Lift might actually be: "Play to Let Others Win".*

*Why is this so effective? Well, it is much easier for a particular individual to lose than to win. And it is much easier for me to give you a win (I happen to spill my secret in the middle of our heated argument) than for you to carve out a win (You must out-of-game-cleverly manipulate me into spilling my secret). The drama that we both want rests on the secret coming out, however – and the easiest way for us to ensure that to happen, is for me to lift you. So trust that the other players will lift you to wins, and you can focus on losing.*

*Note that the win we are talking about is a win for the player, not for the character. It may very well be that I recognize that you clearly want your tragic character to fail horribly at the public speech she is giving. Well, then the way I would Play to Lift you is to throw a (verbal) rotten tomato at you and boo your character off the stage.*

Check out <https://nordiclarp.org/2018/02/21/play-lift-not-just-lose/> for a longer overview.

For Journeys & Tales this philosophy is a cornerstone of all our game design, and important for us that our players buy into. If you are the type who prefers to "win" a game, and don't enjoy the collaborative nature of telling a story through roleplay, this larp will probably not be for you.





# Policies and Mechanics

Journeys & Tales LLC has various policies in place to help our events be a good and safe space for our participants, facilitators and staff. By putting them in place, we also want build a framework that allows our players to “go all out” in their roleplaying. We want to build common expectations and mechanics so players can interact and have easier, safer play with each other.

For Fatal Bonds we will be using the standard J&T policies, which are outlined below. The players that participate in the event will also have them sent separately. And, like many larps of this size, we require our participants to sign a standard liability waiver from out the event check in.

## Code of Conduct and Anti-Harassment Policy

Journeys & Tales LLC provides for the safety of our players, staff, participants and partners in our events through a three-step policy setup. Together each of the policies set forth how we expect anyone involved with our event to act, and what they can expect.

The policies are:

- **Code of conduct** – This sets out how J&T expects any of our participants, players, partners or others to act at our events.
- **Anti-harassment policy** – J&T as a company and any J&T event is committed to providing a harassment free experience.
- **Consent policy and mechanics** – Larp is a medium which inherently involved feelings and pushes boundaries. Our policies and mechanics around this is created to a safe environment for our players, and tailored to each specific event.

## Code of Conduct - The quick version

Journeys & Tales operates all our events based on the “Don’t be a jerk” approach, which applies to both participants, staff, and anyone else involved in our events in any form.

Instead of writing a long explanation about what this covers, our philosophy is simple: don’t be a jerk and don’t do anything that you would not done to yourself. Bullying, harassment, other degrading and offensive behavior will not be tolerated. Respect people’s limits and speak up when you see behavior that does not match the code of conduct. Our goal is for people to create awesome experiences for themselves and their fellow players, and we cannot do that in a hostile environment.

We operate on a “one warning, one ejection” approach, meaning that if we’ve had to talk to someone once, the next situation will be an automatic ejection from our event, without a refund.

## Code of Conduct - The long version

Journeys & Tales, LLC (“J&T”) seeks to promote a safe and comfortable environment for its events that can be enjoyed by all the players and staff. To that end, we have established this Code of Conduct and anti-harassment policy to which we expect all attendees and staff to adhere. Failure to comply with it can result in ejection from our event without a refund, at the discretion of the organizers.





We expect our customers, players, and staff members to behave in an appropriate, mature, and responsible manner. We expect common sense to rule and for everyone involved to have a general sense of the safety and well-being of those around them. Customers, players, and staff members are expected to treat others with courtesy and respect. Harassment or intolerance is unacceptable.

All customers, players, and staff members are expected to abide by the laws of the land – including federal, state, and local laws, statutes, ordinances, etc.

While we understand that the nature of roleplay and acting will create in-character drama, we do not expect for this drama and any hurt feelings to spill over into the realm of out-of-character interactions. Leave the drama for your character; do not bring it into real life.

J&T or authorized staff may remove attendees from an event for any reason. We will endeavor to provide a verbal warning to you and allow you to correct your behavior before removing you from the event, when appropriate. There may be times when we immediately remove an attendee when it is determined such removal to be in the best interest of J&T, our attendees, the guest hotel, or the general public. While we imagine that the reason for such removal will be obvious, we are under no obligation to disclose the reason for removal. If you are removed from the event, you will not be entitled to a refund in any way.

While not exclusive, the following list provides examples of behaviors or actions that may constitute your immediate removal from a J&T event:

- Violating any laws.
- Failure to comply with J&T or event staff instructions.
- Physically destructive behavior.
- Endangering the safety of yourself or others.
- Cheating, threatening, or harassing others.
- Any type of sexual harassment.
- Drinking alcohol if under the age of 21 or facilitating the drinking of alcohol for the same.
- Failure to abide by hotel or event rules or safety guidelines.
- Disruption of the event.
- Violation of the J&T Harassment Policy.
- Not respecting or seeking retribution for answers given when using the safety mechanics.

Incidents that violate this Code of Conduct should be reported to J&T or authorized staff. We will take reasonable efforts to maintain the confidentiality of those reporting incidents, when requested. Please be aware that we may need to provide information to authorities in the case of violations of the law.

Journeys & Tales may modify this Code of Conduct from time to time, without notice. Any changes to the Code of Conduct will become effective when the updated policy is made publicly available or announced. Your use of our services or attendance at any of our events indicates your acceptance of this Code of Conduct.





## **Anti-Harassment policy**

Our LARP is dedicated to providing harassment-free experience for everyone, regardless of gender identity and expression, age, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, ethnicity, religion (or lack thereof), or technology choices. We do not tolerate harassment of participants in any form. LARP Participants violating these rules may be sanctioned or expelled from any Journeys & Tales event without a refund at the discretion of the organizers.

Harassment includes offensive verbal or written comments related to gender, gender identity and expression, age, sexual orientation, disability, physical appearance, body size, race, ethnicity, religion, technology choices, sexual images in public spaces, deliberate intimidation, stalking, following, harassing photography, or recording, sustained disruption of talks or other events, inappropriate physical contact, and unwelcome sexual attention.

Participants asked to stop any harassing behavior are expected to comply immediately. If a participant engages in harassing behavior, the J&T may take any action they deem appropriate, including warning the offender or expulsion from the event with no refund.

If you are being harassed, notice that someone else is being harassed, or have any other concerns, please contact a member of J&T staff immediately. Our staff can be identified as they'll be wearing branded clothing and/or badges.

Our LARP staff will be happy to help participants contact hotel/venue security or local law enforcement, provide escorts, or otherwise assist those experiencing harassment to feel safe for the duration of the event. We value your attendance and safety.

We expect participants to follow these rules at the production and at workshops.

## **Consent / Safety mechanics**


Fatal Bonds is specifically a Nordic style, rules-light larp. There are no long elaborate stats, systems or similar setup, but we do have a consent system and associated safety mechanics that we take very seriously. We believe that by creating this framework amongst the players it allows for a better experience, and to be more adventurous and immersive when roleplaying your character. We use the same "Ok" check-in and Stoplight system present in many games, and have detailed below how we implement it.

Larp is an activity and medium that by its very nature is created to create new experiences, push boundaries, and put our players in situations that they are not used to both physically and mentally.

By participating in our events we want our players and staff to understand and acknowledge that they inherently may be subject to experiences that can involve physical roleplay, romantic and sexual scenes and situations, scary and frightening content, uncomfortable ideas and scenes, and similar such content within the confines of the larp.

We believe that the reason people participate in larps is to push their boundaries and experiences that they normally would not in their everyday life. However, in order to handle these matters in a safe manner, Journeys & Tales LLC endeavors to create a comprehensive framework and setup of mechanics that will allow our players to reach out, push themselves, and experience these things in a structured and safe manner.





J&T as well as our players also acknowledge that the nature of larp of will result in residual feelings (often referred to as larp drop and larp bleed) being experienced for days and potentially weeks after the event has finished, and that this is a natural and inherent risk of participating in the larps.

To handle this in as safe, secure and efficient manner all Journey & Tales events will utilize the following consent and safety mechanics which may be modified from time to time to suit the individual event.

### **These mechanics consist of:**

- Briefings and workshops
- Pre-scene negotiations during roleplay
- Mechanics during roleplay scenes
  - OK sign / stoplight check in
  - Leaving scene / out of character mechanics.

### **Briefings and Workshops**

All J&T events will start with briefings and workshops to explain and practice the safety and consent mechanics. It is important for us that our players know what they are, understand how to use them, and have actively practiced the use.

Likewise J&T will also facilitate debrief workshop after our events to help our players deal with, tackle, understand and disconnect from the experiences they have had at the event. We and our players acknowledge that the post briefing workshop will often be an emotional experience, as we seek to understand, process, and shed ourselves of the feelings that our characters and we as participants, staff and organizers have gone through.

### **Pre-Scene Negotiations**

To allow for the best roleplay J&T believes that it is important to align expectations and negotiate scenes before they happen. This does not have to happen in every instance, but we expect our players to utilize this mechanic when something larger, more dramatic, involving more feeling, physical role play or similar may take place.

This negotiation essentially consists of the players involved in the scene going off-game and talking through what they wish to accomplish, how the scene will go, expected outcome, use of in character safety mechanics and similar. We highly encourage our players to utilize the staff and organizers to help facilitate these negotiations.

### **Mechanics During Scenes**

When a scene is taking place J&T events utilize three main mechanics to ensure our players still are able to communicate whether they feel safe or if it is necessary to leave the scene.



These three mechanics are:

#### **OK sign / Stoplight check in.**

This mechanic is used to calibrate if the roleplay taking place feels safe, and if needed, to let all involved know that it needs to end. The mechanic consists of both verbal and visual signals that can be used indiscriminately, but have the same meaning and effect.







During a scene we expect our players to check in on each other to calibrate that everyone still feels good with the roleplay that is happening in the scene, or if they wish to deescalate it, or convey that they don't like the direction the scene is taking.

The mechanics works in the manner that the person initiating the check-in flashes the “thumb and forefinger round ok signal” to the other player or ask them the question “Stoplight?” This person is expected to respond to it in one of three ways.

- Giving a thumbs up or replying “Green”  
This means “everything is ok, please continue or possibly escalate the scene.” This sign is also a good way to indicate to players and staff that are further away that everything is ok, especially in a scene where one of the players may appear to be distressed.
- Holding your hand horizontally or replying “Yellow.”  
This means that “I’m feeling a little uneasy with what is going on” or “Do not escalate it beyond this point.” This sign should be given when you’re not sure if you like what is going on, and would like a little breathing room, or if the other person hit a trigger point you do not wish to continue with. Anyone receiving this signal, should back off physically, tone down their verbal communication, and also drop any triggering subjects they may have brought up.
- Giving the “thumbs down signal” or replying “Red.”  
This means that the player is not ok with what is happening in the scene and wishes to end it. We expect any player that hears the word “red” as a response, or is given the “thumbs down” signal, and any player who gives either of these answers to immediately breakoff the scenes.

Anyone can and should initiate check ins regularly during scenes.

J&T has the safety of our players as the utmost important factor, and supports a healthy and proactive use of the “thumbs down” signal and the word “red.” We ensure all players that there will never be any repercussions in-game or off-game for the use of this mechanic, and taking care of your own safety.

## **Leaving a Scene / Out of Character mechanics**

Should a scene become overwhelming for any reason, and should use as a player at any time feel unsafe or need to leave a scene, you can immediately use the “out of character” signal and simply walk away without any questions asked or answers given.

This mechanic is done by putting your hand in a fist in front of your forehead, resembling that you’re grabbing a horn you had there. Because of this, the mechanic is popularly known as “grabbing the unicorn.” This mechanic can also be used if you need to move through an area while not in character. If any player sees someone using this mechanic, they are to pretend the person is not there.

Should you feel the need to break off a scene using this mechanic, you must come find a J&T staff member or organizer immediately so we can ensure that you are safe and sound.





## **Accessibility**

Fatal Bonds is held at the St. Regis hotel, one of Houston's premier venues, which complies with the Americans With Disabilities Act. ADA compliant rooms are available for those who need them, and we will ensure that the game space is designed so that it can also accommodate special needs.

From a design perspective the game is set in a history adjacent 1940s setting, and we've made a conscious choice to ensure that there are no issues accommodating various disabilities from that standpoint.

If you have any specific concerns and matters that you want to discuss with us, please drop us a line, and we'll be happy to talk to you about them.

## **Weapons**

We do not expect that Fatal Bonds will be a scenario with a big emphasis on bringing guns or other weapons – it is a wedding after all. However, we also acknowledge that noir is a genre that lends itself to “cold lead” and “packing a piece” and can see that it would be very suitable for a number of characters.

For the game, fake weapons will be allowed in the game areas only. They will have to be clearly marked with orange caps, and they must be approved by a J&T staff member at check-in.





# Practical information

## Where and When

The game will take place during Easter weekend 2021, which is Friday April 2<sup>nd</sup> – Sunday April 4<sup>th</sup>.

A detailed schedule will be released closer to the event, but check-in and workshops will start in the early afternoon on Friday. Dinner and the game will start early Friday evening with play the rest of the day. Afterwards, participants are welcome to relax in the hotel bar.

Saturday morning there will be brunch followed by game start before around 11 am, and we will likely play until 11 pm Saturday night. Once the game is complete Saturday evening, we will gather in the hotel bar for an official story debrief to share all the secrets and events with each other and enjoy one another's company.

Sunday morning will have our brunch and post-game workshop, and we expect to have everything wrapped up by noon.

## Location

The larp will be hosted at the St. Regis hotel in the Galleria area of Houston, about 20-30 minutes away from either airport. Flying in to either IAH – George Bush airport, or to Hobby Airport will be fine, as they are about equal distance from the venue. Participants are welcome to arrive on Friday or Saturday, and we have negotiated a special rate with the hotel for people who wish to arrive on Friday and stay through Sunday night.

## What's Included

In the total package price everything you need for the weekend is included – with the exception of costumes.

The following is included in your ticket price:

- Participation in a Nordic style, noir-inspired family drama.
- Rules light consent based game system which supports player agency and decision making.
- Two nights lodging in a 2-person shared room at the St. Regis Hotel.
- Fully catered meals for breakfast and dinner.
- Coffee and tea service at the event.
- 5-6 pages in-depth character written with full background story, goals, relations, alliances, and surprises.
- A social hour Friday evening, and afterparty Saturday night in the hotel bar.
- Saturday evening official game story debrief where you get a chance to share all your secrets.
- Pre-game group and family workshop to get you ready for the larp.
- Post-game workshop Sunday morning.
- Photo with your group, and from the event in general.





## Dietary restrictions

The hotel can handle most dietary restrictions, and this will be included as a specific question on the signup form. We encourage you to reach out to us, so we can ensure that your specific needs are considered.

## Costuming Guidelines

The setting in Fatal Bonds is centered around the Saturday night wedding event. Friday evening is the rehearsal dinner where we would expect people to dress up in a semi-formal costume, Saturday day will be the lead up to the event itself, and Saturday evening will be the wedding, where people would likely dress formally.

For Fatal Bonds, we're asking people to dress in 1940s inspired attire that would suit their character's personality, status, and line of work. Fortunately, this still gives everyone a wide range of clothing items to choose from.

One remarkable thing about the 1940s was how much fashion changed before, during, and after the war. Rationing of certain fabrics affected both women and men's clothing; women's hemlines were raised and men's suits became slimmer and the waistcoat went out of fashion.

Women were finally able to incorporate slacks as part of their normal, casual attire and brightly colored and patterned A-line skirts that could go with a variety of blouses became a standard part of many women's wardrobes.

Men's fashion also expanded during this time period. While suits were still considered a standard item for men, men's fashion also became much more relaxed and casual. Zoot suits, which were considered extravagant and wasteful during the war because of the excessive fabric, were nevertheless an important part of many communities as well.

Below are some of the looks you'd find during the period:







## The team

Journeys & Tales is a larp production company created to facilitate Nordic Style larps run in the US. We strive to create events with with a keen emphasis on adventure, excitement, and commitment, all of which are outlined in our Vision Statement.

J&T primarily consist of the husband and wife team of Meredith and Christian, but regularly bring in various staff, helpers, and creative consultants in both the idea generation, design, and execution phase of our events.

### **Christian M. Christensen**

Christian has been active in the larp community for over 20 years. He started his journey into roleplaying with tabletop games, but quickly transitioned into the world of larp and the Danish congress tradition. His early exploits were centered around participating in a number of different scenarios in Denmark, England, and the European scene. He later co-created and ran his first event back in 1999 with the production of the Vampire larps “The Veils of Intrigue I & II.”

These scenarios were followed up with more adventures into the Vampire setting through the critically acclaimed “Nightlife” trilogy which ran over a two-year period, and pushed the boundaries on simplified rules design, and campaign play within the genre in Denmark.

Christian has also designed scenarios aimed at the congress scene, initially as part of the group organizing “Do You Come Here Often?” for Fastaval 2000 and later “Surrounded” for Fastaval 2005. The latter won the audience award, “The Otto” as best larp scenario on the convention that year.

In Journeys and Tales Christian’s primary focus is on structural and organizational design of the events. He’s highly involved in the process of bringing our ideas to life, and guides most of the development and design creation.

### **Meredith Christensen**

Meredith is the driving artistic force behind J&T. She functions as our primary writer and content creator, and is the lead on story, faction, and background designs behind all of our events.

She has a Masters Degree in history and has been a storyteller as long as she can remember, whether it be within a historical or romantic setting, or a more scholarly and modern approach. She finds joy from creating a deep background for the stories we tell, and ensures that our tales are interwoven on a deep level so that all interactions and storylines come together as a whole.

Throughout her life, Meredith has been involved in costume and prop design, and brings her expertise of different time periods, setting creation, and attire into any event that Journeys and Tales creates.

Once she began larping, Meredith was quickly bitten by the bug, and enjoys bringing the quiet contemplation and subtle plotting of a character into life in the events she participates in.

