

A Journeys & Tales Production

Version 2.2

Hartwood - Player's Design Document

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General Information

Game Design

Hartwood is a Nordic-style larp, designed for 40-50 characters.

The scenario is set during the Regency period, at the end of The Season—the few spring and summer months when many of England's elite came to London to see and be seen by their peers. Our game serves as the "finale" for the social year, in that it is the characters' last chance to settle their affairs and achieve their goals before returning to their country estates until next spring.

The Duke and Duchess of Fortingall, two powerful members of the *ton,* have invited select people to Hartwood, their lavish country estate, for their annual ball. The invitation to Hartwood is coveted by many; the Duke and Duchess have a reputation for inviting the most interesting people to their annual event, no matter their social status. Because of the unusually varied crowd, the Fortingalls' ball is famous for creating the most delicious gossip and scandals. Reputations and fortunes have been gained and lost within its walls, romances have blossomed or withered away, and powerful alliances have found their footing on the ballroom floor.

Over the course of the weekend, invited guests will gossip, flirt, settle old scores, and do whatever else it takes for them to have their happy endings before The Season is done.

What Hartwood is About

Romance

At its core, Hartwood is a romance-centric game. All characters will have a goal or plotline that involves romance in one way or another.

Romance, as we treat it in game, encompasses both positive and negative feelings and emotions. Plotlines and character details could involve the mystery and excitement of a new flirtation of a budding romance, the heated passion and danger of an illicit love affair, or the tenderness and understanding of a decades-old relationship. Characters might want to reveal themselves to a crush, fix a broken relationship, or find a partner to marry.

Additionally, plots and characters might deal with the negative emotions of romance, such as being jealous of a happy couple, the anger over being passed

over for a different partner, or longing for an unrequited love. Characters might want to lie to secure a successful marriage, sabotage a rival, or even duel for someone's hand.

The Regency Period

The Regency period formally lasted from 1811 to 1820 and took its name from the fact that Prince George ruled as Regent in his father's stead. It was a time of great change, both socially and culturally. In Hartwood, we will focus on several aspects of this time period, particularly:

- An emphasis on refinement and manners.
- A strict social hierarchy.
- Social customs, mores, and behaviors.

Other major aspects of the time period, such as imperialism, will not be a part of the game. For more information about what we will not include, please see "What Hartwood is Not About" later in the document.

Scandal

The threat and promise of scandal adds to the anxiety, excitement, and drama of romantic storylines, and as such, it will be a key element in plots and character sheets. The desire to cause, or avoid, scandal, will drive many character actions and reactions.

In our game, characters of both genders and all social classes are capable of being involved in scandal. Romantic relationships, business deals or practices, or even illegal activities might create scandals that will shape individual characters and their families.

However, it should be noted that the consequences of each scandal will vary among the different social groupings, and that they will not always be even.

Consent

Hartwood is a rules light game, with clear 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 document, and all of these will be addressed in pre-game workshops before the event begins.

Sexual assault of any form will not be a part of, or tolerated in the game and there will be no plots or storylines involving sexual assault in Hartwood.

What Hartwood is Not About

"Isms"

Many of the "isms" present during the Regency period will not exist in Hartwood. In regards to relationships and personal plots, Hartwood will not have any plots that deal with transphobia or homophobia.

Additionally, many of the "isms" that defined the regency period on a political level will not be a part of our game. Though we may have characters who are former soldiers recovering from the horrors of war, or foreign diplomats trying to make inroads into English society, the concepts of Imperialism and Nationalism will not be a part of our game.

Additionally, racism in any form will not exist within the context of this game. Instead of playing as an English person, players are welcome to request that they play characters who share their ethnic background, but there will be no plots or storylines regarding any form of cultural or racial superiority.

Heavy Rules or "winning"

Journeys & Tales operates our events with a variety of safety mechanics and check-ins. But beyond that, Hartwood 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 Social Structure

There are four player groups in Hartwood: the Elite, the Wealthy, the Popular, and the Aspirants. People from each group have been invited by the Duke and Duchess because of their unique back stories or social standing, as well as their tendency for creating or escaping scandal and excitement. Each player will receive a colorful ribbon to identify which group they belong to, and these ribbons will serve as a meta-tool for players to identify which group other participants are in.

The Elite

Characters in this group have it all... including a hundred eyes on them, waiting for them to stumble and fall from society's highest perch. Characters in this group will have a great deal of social clout and wealth, and they will enjoy all the privileges that their status affords them. They will have no profession, and will have likely inherited their wealth and status from family members. However, being at the top of society means that they also have the furthest to fall, and it's no secret that many people under them would relish the chance to see one of society's elite embroiled in scandal...

In this group, you'd expect to find...

- The Bridgerton Family, *The Duke and I*
- Lady Catherine de Bourgh, Pride and Prejudice
- The Young family, Crazy Rich Asians
- The Rockefeller Family

The Wealthy

Money may be able to buy you glittering jewels and beautiful horses, but it cannot buy you respect or authority. Such is the plight of The Wealthy. Characters in this group may have earned their money, or they may have recently inherited it and are unknown in society. Additionally, you might find people here who were once part of The Elite, but have lost their social standing through scandal, yet retained their wealth. They might find themselves as "fish out of water" in that they do not understand the social guidelines of their new status, despite their fortunes. But with hard work, and no small amount of coin, these people may be able to buy their way into society's good graces...

In this group, you'd expect to find...

- Consuelo Vanderbilt. American heiress and "Buccaneer"
- Edmund Dantes, The Count of Monte Cristo
- Countess Olenska, The Age of Innocence
- The Clampitt Family, Beverly Hillbillies

The Popular

It's been said that having a good name is worth more than gold, and the people in this group can attest to that. The people here may not have much money, but they have either a good, honest reputation or a name that opens doors for them. These people may have had their money swindled from them, they may have lost it in a tragic accident, or they may simply be new in society but living off the graces of others. Like many in The Wealthy, they might feel uncomfortable in their surroundings, as they are forced to economize and make do with less than many others. Fortunately, there are people who are willing to pay to be respectable, and some of these people might be ready to make a deal...

In this group, you'd expect to find...

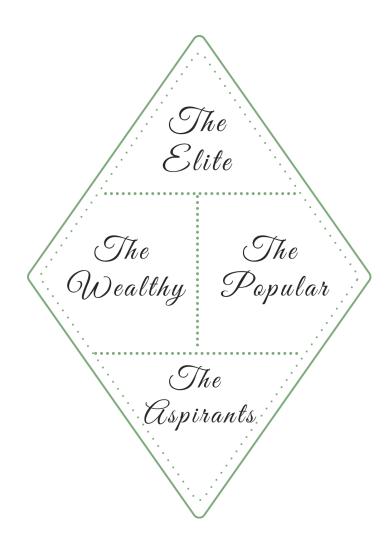
- Elinor and Marianne Dashwood, Sense and Sensibility
- Nicholas Nickleby, Nicholas Nickleby
- The Rose Family, Schitt's Creek
- Charles Richard John Spencer-Churchill, 9th Duke of Marlborough

The Aspirants

There's no shame in wanting to improve one's station in life, but there are challenges to doing so. People in this group have neither significant money nor wealth, but that does not mean that they are all servants or farmers. These people might be writers, shopkeepers, modistes, or penniless cousins living off their relatives' good fortune. These people are often invisible or overlooked in society, but as such, are privy to gossip that they hear in darkened corners when the more affluent think no one is listening. People in this group will have more to gain than they will to lose, but it will take more than a charming personality and willingness to work to move up to another social class.

In this group, you'd expect to find...

- Jane Eyre, Jane Eyre
- Becky Sharp, *Vanity Fair*
- Brantley Foster, *The Secret of My Success*
- Dolly Parton



Characters

Written Material

Before the event, each player will receive a "blurb" to accept. This will contain the name of their character, the group they belong to, and a brief description of their character. This will give players time to plan costuming, connect with others in their group, and prepare for the event.

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

- Your character's full name and titles, if applicable.
- A snippet from a gossip column about your character.
- A brief biography, as well as a summary of what your character has been doing this season.
- Roleplaying tips.
- Goals and Ambitions.
- Character connections, both those "in your favor" and "out of your favor."

Gender and Sexual Identity

Characters of all sexual orientations and gender identities are welcome at Hartwood, and same-sex couples and gender non-conforming characters will not be considered as out of the ordinary. Characters may identify as non-binary or transgender, and there will be no plot lines that deal with characters being "outed" or ostracized for their identity in any way.

We also welcome any player who wishes to portray a gender other than their own.

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.

Practical information

For details about specific runs of the larp please see the website to find the latest and most up to date information about dates, cost, covid policy, what's included, location, and similar.

Location

The larp will be hosted at The Daniel H. Caswell house, 1404 West Avenue, Austin, TX. The venue is Downtown Austin, approximately 20–30 min from Austin-Bergstrom Airport. This house is a beautiful, turn-of-the century home conveniently located near the Texas State Capitol and The University of Texas. The house exhibits influences of late Victorian, Colonial Revival, and Chateauesque style, and features a corner turret and porches supported on rusticated piers. It was recorded as a Texas Historic Landmark in 1984.

Accessibility

For our participants with disabilities it is our intention to be able to accommodate all, if at all possible. The site is in 2-floors, but has an elevator, and is ADA compliant. We do not believe the setting would create any issues that we cannot work around. If you are interested in attending and have a concern, please get in touch with us about your specific needs, and we will see what can be done.

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.

Dietary restrictions

We 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 of the Hartwood event is the final soirée of the season, the last chance to make an impression and be seen by the greater *ton*.

Though players should feel free to dress in semi-formal to formal attire for the entire event, the ball on Saturday evening should be taken as an opportunity for their characters to "pull out all the stops" and make an impression on the *ton* that will last well into next season.

We recommend period appropriate semi-formal attire for Friday and Saturday day, and period appropriate formal attire for the ball on Saturday evening.

"Period Appropriate" - Hartwood is a Regency inspired LARP, so we recommend that players wear costuming in the style of fashions popular in England between 1795-1820. This is not a reenactment, therefore costuming fitting the general aesthetics of the period is more important than precise historical accuracy.

"Semi-formal": Semi-formal would be closest to the Regency concept of "half-dress". Less elaborate trims and accessories, perhaps less delicate fabrics, and more variety in aesthetics, but still in formal silhouettes.

Some good terms to search: "regency half dress", "regency walking attire", "regency afternoon attire", and "regency morning dress".

"Formal": Formal equates to the Regency concept of "full dress". This is the time to go all out. Rich fabrics and intricate trims, elaborate and plentiful accessories, and delicately coiffed hairstyles (up-dos for long hair, and slicked back for short) are all hallmarks of "full dress"

Some good terms to search: "regency full dress", "regency ball attire", "regency evening wear", and "regency court dress".

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 to 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 form at 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 involves feelings and pushes boundaries. Our policies and mechanics around this are created to provide a safe environment for our players, and tailored to each specific event.
- **Flagging policy** a way we determine that participants to our larp are safe players to larp with.

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 do 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 a 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
 - o OK sign / stoplight check in
 - o 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.

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 de-escalate it, or convey that they don't like the direction the scene is taking.

The mechanics work in the manner that the person initiating the check-in flashes the "thumb and forefinger round ok signal" to the other player or asks

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 break off 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 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.

Flagging Policy

We operate a flagging system whereby prospective attendees can draw our attention to safety concerns that they have about other prospective attendees. We will not hesitate to exclude people on this basis.

Unfortunately, our hobby has sometimes shown that it contains people who are not safe to be around. We as organizers need your help here – we don't know the names of everyone who is a concern in this way. We also want to make sure that you feel comfortable with the people who are around you during the event.

After signups have closed, we will circulate the names of prospective attendees to all that has signed up, and you can if you wish raise the following flags:

- **Yellow flag** I don't want to be in any of the same group as this person. This is for allocation purposes only, and won't affect yours or the other person's chance to get a spot. Choose this if you don't believe that the person is unsafe, but for personal reasons you are unable to play closely with them.
- Orange flag You're unable to attend if someone else gets a spot. Choose this if you don't believe that that person is unsafe, but for personal reasons you are unable to attend an event that they're at. In this case, whichever of your or their names is allocated a ticket first will be prioritized.

• **Red flag** – choose this if you believe that the person is unsafe to larp with. Examples of this might be bullying, harassment, or abuse. We would appreciate some brief details about why the red flagging happened, but you don't have to give a reason for red-flagging a name.

We will not tell anyone who red-flagged them, or why.

Once all the flags have been collected, the final casting and lottery will take place. We understand that saying you feel unsafe around someone can be difficult, and we want to make it as easy as possible for you.

If you feel that you need to respond with one or more flags, then you can do so confidentially. We will need, for administrative purposes, to share with the organizer group the fact that someone has been flagged. But the name of the person giving a flag will be kept confidential, as will any reasons for flagging that you choose to share with us.

We are happy to further discuss any individual concerns about flagging someone – please do get in touch if you have any questions.