

INTER-CHARACTER CONFLICT

GMs and players can have a lot of fun with inter-character friction. This may come from mutually incompatible goals or priorities, competition for favor or resources, embedded prejudices, historical grievances, or simply obnoxious personal habits such as hyperactive

manic enthusiasm. As play progresses, some PCs may actively work against each other, rather than simply failing to cooperate. It can add a great deal of richness and interest to the game, whether they ultimately manage to work together and succeed, or if they find themselves dealing with failure. Even Miles didn't always win – and when he lost, it had permanent consequences. Players can and will generate their own plots involving each other's characters, and should be encouraged to do so.

COMPLICATIONS

Problems are what make life interesting. In the Vorkosigan novels, it is the characters' handicaps and problems that make them truly great. Miles would not be as interesting without his brittle bones, his Vor sense of honor, his duty to the Emperor, and his manic-depressive swings. Character disadvantages and cultural restrictions add a great deal of the fun to roleplaying in this universe – the heroes succeed *despite* who they are and what they have to contend with, not because they were perfect in the first place.

Certain complications are common in the Vorkosigan universe, and frequently cause problems for the people who encounter them. They can become themes to be explored in the course of a campaign, viewed from different perspectives each time.

DUTY

Duty is related to, but distinct from, honor. Put in its simplest terms, honor is the trait that requires you to do your duty. Duty is the set of everyday tasks and obligations that most characters labor under; ranging from the trivial (data input, saluting superior officers) to the extreme and unexpected (apprehending a spy, guarding a wormhole, sacrificing your life for the Emperor). Duty rarely comes as a surprise; if you don't want the duties of a Service life, don't sign up for a career in the military.

Betrayal of one's duty is likely to lead to consequences ranging from the social (ostracism for actions unbecoming a Vor) to civil and military (imprisonment for betrayal of the haut). Duty is what a person signed up for – either by birth or by conscious assent – and must now fulfill. It is not unknown for duty and honor to pull in different directions . . .

HONOR

A person may be able to evade his duty, but he cannot escape his own sense of honor. Honor is intensely personal, even if it is often broadly delineated along cultural line; many Vor disagree on questions of personal honor, even when they agree on the general duties of the Vor caste. Equally, honor may drive a person to disobey his duty. If Miles Vorkosigan is ordered by a superior officer to stay out of a fight, but feels honor-bound to involve himself to save his clone-brother's life, which will he obey? Duty or honor?

If a Cetagandan ghem-lord has his life saved in a spaceport brawl by a Barrayaran, and is later ordered to kill the Barrayaran to protect a haut secret, what will he do? When Count Aral Vorkosigan refused to sanction a mission to rescue the baby Miles during the Vordarian rebellion, he was acting from a personal sense of honor; he could not favor his own son when he would not mount a similar mission for other hostages. If someone acts contrary to his honor, other people may never know it, but he may have irrevocably wounded himself. It then becomes his choice whether to continue in the same way, with betrayal after betrayal, or to try to admit his fault and start again . . .

FAMILY

Family mingles questions of affection, duty, and honor, bringing trouble from all three sides. What is a young Vor woman to do if her parents have arranged a marriage with a "nice young man" whom she's never heard of before, and who turns out to be exactly the sort of old-fashioned Vor bore she'd never consider marrying in her worst nightmares? How is a rising non-Vor officer in the Barrayaran Service supposed to cope when he finds out that his family, back home in a remote District, has joined some sort of *democratic* party? Will a Jacksonian escapee leave the rest of his clone-family behind – or will he go back to bring them out as well? Families provide some of the most reliable allies that anyone could hope for, but they also bring problems. A Barrayaran may have overcome his distrust of Cetagandans to befriend a ghem-lady, but his father may not be as understanding. So what will the Barrayaran do about it?

Reputation is what other people know about you. Honor is what you know about yourself.

*– Count Aral Vorkosigan,
A Civil Campaign*