



The Promise of Sleep

An American Freeform for 5-15 players

By Jason Cox



Time

About two hours.

Requires

At least one pillow and mask per player. A coffee mug (liquid is optional).

Introduction

The Pillow Fighters. A proud culture of feudal warrior clans who are allowed to openly wield pillows, the fluffy instrument of the sleep that awaits us all. Once there was an Adult who maintained order among The Pillow Fighters, but that person has been gone so long that they have almost been forgotten. Honor has been questioned, tempers have risen, duels have become common, and open pillow war threatens all. Now one among the characters must be announced to be the new Adult, the One who may drink of The Coffee and forestall the Promise of Sleep.

Character Creation

During the game players will wear masks to represent the clans of their warriors: The Clowns, The Animals, The Heroes, The Royals, and The Spooks. At the beginning of the game, read the description for all of the clans listed below. After all the clan descriptions are read, the masks are offered in the order above, one mask and one clan at a time. A player must volunteer to assume the mask and mantle of the clan. The order may not advance until a mask has been chosen, thus a Hero mask cannot be passed out before an Animal mask. Once every mask has been chosen, begin the process again in reverse order until every player has a mask.

Once everyone has a mask, players choose an appropriate name for their character. They should take a few minutes to decide how their character moves and speaks to echo the values of their clan. During the game, they can (and should) create and play

complex relationships with the other characters. They should telegraph their emotions and intentions to some degree, as overt displays are often more interesting than those that are kept secret.

Pillow Fighting

Pillow fighting is a formal duel between two characters. They begin when one Pillow Fighter offers a challenge, and another accepts it. To not accept a challenge is seen as dishonorable, but is not a choice that will provoke further challenges on its own. Pillow fights occur in slow motion, and a player who is hit is the one who decides if they have been put to sleep. No more than two pillows may be wielded by a character at a time during a duel. A fighter can accept dishonor and yield to their opponent to try and avoid their sleep, but the attacking pillow fighter may choose to continue. A character who puts another character to sleep collects their mask to carry on their person.

Sleep

Once a player is asleep, the person who put them there is given their mask. Should a character put themselves to sleep, their mask passes to someone of their choice. The sleepers move to the area set aside for The Coffee, watch the proceedings, and discuss those who are still among the Awake. The Sleepers will be integral to The Inquisition of the Sleeping later on,

The Nomination

For one hour, the Pillow Fighters talk amongst themselves who will reach for Adulthood. To be a nominee, a character needs at least one other character to support them. They may promise favors, offer threats, or draw on any other form of coercion to secure support. A supporter may not also be a nominee. There must be at least two nominees, or Adulthood becomes unattainable.

The Inquisition of the Sleeping

The first person who fell asleep is the leader of the Inquisition of the Sleeping. When the discussion hour is over, they call for nominations. As the nominees are called, they come to stand before the Inquisition of the Sleeping. At this point, only the Sleepers and the nominees are permitted to talk. Each sleeper asks one question, which must be answered honestly and without equivocation. At the end of the Inquisition, all the characters may speak once more.

The Vote & The Drinking of the Coffee

The leader of the Inquisition of the Sleeping will separate the nominees into distinct areas. To vote, a Pillow Fighter moves to stand by their nominee. The leader of the Inquisition of the Sleeping decides who wins in cases of a tie. Once a leader has been chosen, they are permitted to drink the Coffee and ascend to Adulthood.

Once the coffee is drunk the leader of the Inquisition of the Sleeping calls for everyone to bend a knee and shout "All Hail the Adult!" Theoretically, open pillow fighting could also result. In such a case, it continues until the fighting stops or only one person is left. If the elected person drinks the coffee, they cannot be put to sleep. If a person was not voted for, they may not drink the Coffee, and sleep is inevitable.

Alternate Character Creation Rules

If the group desires, after choosing a clan each player can create their own mask instead of choosing one that has been bought or made ahead of time. This will give them a chance to tailor their look to the character they have in mind and create more investment in the mask and the game.

The Clans

The Clowns



The Clowns have a knowledge of the human mind that is almost magical. They use this knowledge to get their way at court and on the battlefield, swaying moral up and down on a wild emotional ride. Sometimes even The Clowns aren't even sure what they are aiming for, but they trust it will all work out in the end. They get along well with the Animals, who enjoy the break from drudgery the antics of the Clowns offers, and they ruthlessly mock the self-importance of The Heroes. Clown masks tend towards exaggerated features, large red noses, and the appearance of facial make-up.

Example Clown Names:

Bonzo, Chuckles, Professor Funnybone

The Animals



The Animals are honest, hard-working, and versatile, and their warriors are often naturally gifted in strength or speed rather than well-studied. Because the clan can do so much on their own The Animals value their independence, but they also often lack the direction needed to achieve large-scale goals. They look up to the epic acts committed by The Heroes, but feel like the Royals are awful pushy for people that don't do much. Animal masks eschew human features for those of the animal kingdom.

Example Animal Names:

Rocking Raven, Corny Cat, Hefty Horse

THE HEROES



Noble bastions of strength, The Heroes are believed to be the most accomplished Pillow Fighters in the land. They strive never to be the first to reach for their weapons, though they will almost never back down from a fight, and are very concerned with their reputations. The Heroes don't like to worry about long-term planning, which they leave to The Royals, and dislike The Spooks, who they feel are only around when you don't want them to be. Hero masks represent icons drawn from many different legends.

Example Hero Names:

Shift Z, Captain Army, The Cortextrian

The Royals



The Royals look at the big picture, as strategists and bureaucrats, and excel at organizing others to make things happen. They feel that their vision is what makes good things happen for everyone, so naturally they should be the first to see the benefits. The Royals don't like The Clowns, who shirk work and belittle their achievements, but find the Spooks useful as spymasters and tools to keep everyone in line. Royal masks represent faces of leadership, passed down through generations.

Example Royal Names:

General Space Mom, President Patriot, Old King Cole

The Spooks



Spooks are notoriously crafty and are known for their skills in stealth and trickery. They are not very trustworthy, but their ability to create and evade cunning traps and ambushes means they are indispensable allies. The Spooks love to work with The Clowns, who they see as kindred spirits, but they sneer at the complacency of The Animals, who they never tire of disrupting.

Example Spook Names:

The Haunt, Dr. Hackenslash, Skeletina