

THE CONCLAVE OF 1492: A GAME OF FAITH AND POWER

This game is a hacked version of *Beastfucker* by Alexa Kirchner, Wendy Gorman (2017) as part of a submission to the 2023 Golden Cobra Contest. The author of this version is Shawn Roske.

Content Warning: Political intrigue, moral dilemmas, historical religious practices. Note: This game may involve intense debate and strong opinions.

Materials:

- Cut out character cards and chapel scene script.
- Paper, pens, and a bowl to cast ballots for voting
- Chairs for the conclave, and the chapel
- Character Name tags are recommended
- Optional red blankets to simulate the robes of the cardinals as a costume
- Mood music suggestions: Gregorian chants / Catholic mass music
- Additional Options: some bibles and other church paraphernalia for players to reference during play

A 2 hour, historical committee larp For 3 - 5 players.

Always include Rodrigo Borgia and Giuliano della Rovere

Set-Up

- **Conclave Room:** This is where you all gather for discussions and voting. It's a common area, and everyone should be seated.
- **Chapel:** This is a separate space for solitary prayer and contemplation. Only one chair should be placed here. Consider lighting candles or incense to set the atmosphere.

[Read the script together. Use whatever safety tools typically enjoyed by your playgroup.](#)

The Papal Conclave of 1492 was not just a religious event but a political spectacle that involved various European powers. Each cardinal entering the conclave was a complex figure with a history of actions that made them both influential and contentious. This game aims to immerse players in the gravity of the event and the moral complexities of the characters involved.

Principles

- **Everyone must enter the Conclave and pray in the Chapel:** You are a cardinal, and your presence in the conclave is mandatory. The future of the Church depends on your participation.
- **Entering the Chapel changes you:** As you engage in this secretive process, your perspectives and alliances may shift.
- **One person must become the Pope:** The end goal is clear. One among you will be chosen to lead the Church, taking on immense spiritual and political responsibilities.

You all gather in the Conclave Room. Read each character description aloud. Each player selects a character they want to play. Take a moment for each player to leave and re-enter the

conclave with pomp and grandeur. For each, the stakes can't be higher.

Procedure of Play

- **Discussion:** Now, you discuss what the Church needs and what you seek in the next Pope. This is the time to gauge alliances and rivalries.
- **Solitude and Revelation:** One at a time, each of you will leave the Conclave Room and enter the Chapel alone. Inside, you'll contemplate what you or the Church stand to gain depending on who becomes Pope.
- **Return and Share:** After your time in the Chapel, you return to the Conclave Room. You share your revelations but keep your choice for Pope a secret.

Selection

- **Voting:** Now comes the moment of truth. Each of you writes down the name of your choice for Pope and places it in a bowl in the center of the room. If a two-thirds majority is not reached, you will need to discuss and vote again.

Epilogue

- **Future Paths:** As the game concludes, each of you takes a moment to describe what happens to you or what you do after the conclave. The new Pope will outline his vision for the Church and the world.

Cut out the following. Each player reads this to themselves while isolated in the Chapel

The Silence and Your Inner Beast: As you step into the Chapel, you are immediately enveloped by an eerie silence, a void that seems to amplify your inner thoughts and conflicts. Here, in this sacred space, you are compelled to confront your "inner beast"—your deepest fears, ambitions, and moral failings. This confrontation will change you, either strengthening your resolve or sowing new doubts and vulnerabilities. When you emerge from the Chapel, you will be visibly altered, carrying the weight of this inner confrontation into the voting process. Choose wisely, for the silence has a way of revealing truths you may not be prepared to face.

Cut out the Character cards. Review together and each player chooses one.

GIULIANO DELLA ROVERE

You are known for your piety and your intense rivalry with Rodrigo Borgia. You believe you should become Pope to counter the influence of the Borgias. However, your intense rivalries and alliances could divide the Church.

- **Controversies:** Accused of manipulative alliances and misuse of Church funds. Known for your military campaigns, earning you the nickname "The Warrior Pope."
- **If Elected Pope:**
 - **Negative:** Could divide the Church due to intense rivalries.
 - **Positive:** Pious and could bring spiritual focus.
- **Motivations:** You believe you should become Pope to counter the influence of the Borgias and to reform the Church.
- **Passions and Hatreds:** You despise Rodrigo Borgia and will go to great lengths to undermine him. Passionate about Church reform and rooting out corruption.

RODRIGO BORGIA

You have been a cardinal for over 30 years, known for your political acumen and luxurious lifestyle. You believe you should become Pope, but your lifestyle and the existence of your children are against Church teachings. You are embroiled in accusations of simony (the act of selling church offices and roles or sacred things), nepotism, and maintaining a mistress. You are a Spaniard in an Italian world, and you've clawed your way up the ranks through cunning, bribery, and strategic alliances.

- **Controversies:** Accused of simony, nepotism, and maintaining a mistress. Rumored to have fathered multiple children, including the infamous Cesare and Lucrezia Borgia. Accused of poisoning your rivals.
 - **If Elected Pope:**
 - **Negative:** Likely to engage in nepotism, further corruption.
 - **Positive:** Politically savvy, could strengthen Church's influence.
 - **Motivations:** You are driven by a lust for power and the desire to elevate your family to the highest echelons of society.
 - **Passions and Hatreds:** You have a deep-seated rivalry with Giuliano della Rovere.
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ASCANIO SFORZA

You hold significant political sway and are more interested in the benefits your family can gain from the new Pope. You think Rodrigo Borgia should become Pope. Your focus on family interests over those of the Church could lead to nepotism and corruption. You are known for your political opportunism. You are a member of the powerful Sforza family and have a reputation for being a shrewd diplomat.

- **Controversies:** Known for political opportunism. Accused of putting family interests above those of the Church.
 - **If Elected Pope:**
 - **Negative:** Risk of nepotism and corruption.
 - **Positive:** Politically influential, could broker strong alliances.
 - **Motivations:** Your primary goal is to ensure the Sforza family's continued rise to power.
 - **Passions and Hatreds:** You are indifferent to religious matters but are passionate about politics and power. You dislike anyone who threatens your family's interests.
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OLIVIERO CARAFA

You are a respected cardinal known for your piety but also criticized for accumulating wealth. You believe you should become Pope, but your luxurious lifestyle could tarnish the Church's image. You've been accused of accumulating wealth contrary to your vows of poverty. You are Neapolitan and have strong ties to the Kingdom of Naples.

- **Controversies:** Accused of accumulating wealth contrary to vows of poverty.
 - **If Elected Pope:**
 - **Negative:** Could tarnish Church's image due to luxurious lifestyle.
 - **Positive:** Respected and could bring a degree of stability.
 - **Motivations:** You believe you should become Pope to bring stability and piety to the Church.
 - **Passions and Hatreds:** You are passionate about maintaining the Church's wealth and influence. You dislike anyone who challenges the Church's traditional structures.
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GIOVANNI DE' MEDICI

You are young and inexperienced, from the powerful Medici family. You think Giuliano della Rovere should become Pope. Your youth and inexperience could make you a puppet Pope. Your family's banking interests have been a point of criticism. You've been groomed for ecclesiastical power from a young age.

- **Controversies:** Family's banking interests criticized. Accused of lavish spending and accumulating debt for the Church.
- **If Elected Pope:**
 - **Negative:** Risk of becoming a puppet Pope.
 - **Positive:** Backed by a powerful family, could bring financial stability.
- **Motivations:** You believe that the Church needs a fresh, youthful perspective to navigate the challenges of the day.
- **Passions and Hatreds:** You are passionate about the arts and humanism. You dislike those who are overly dogmatic and resistant to change.

