

The Regency Committee on Decorum and Punchbowl Poop Prevention

A freeform LARP for 4-6 players

The brief:

Members of a self-selected social Committee in Regency England must meet to resolve the problems plaguing their party set — including the one they cannot bring themselves to speak of. At the neighborhood's most recent ball, newly arrived aristocrat Lord Archibald Lethe-Bywood, the present Earl of Camber, drank to excess and performed a shocking public impropriety on the punchbowl. But heaven forfend you be forced to address the issue, given that there is no decorous way to speak of it.

Before play:

- Each player should select a character based on the characters' titles, without reading them first. The Judge and the Vicar must be in play.
- Name your character. Any character can be played by and as any gender, or without stated gender.
- Players have 15 minutes to choose their characters, read through them, and informally begin their conversation. Once Lord Lethe-Bywood is first mentioned, the game proceeds for 60 minutes.

Beginning play:

- **The Judge** should call the meeting to order and remind everyone why they're present: to report any breaches of community etiquette Committee at the recent ball at the local assembly hall, and discuss whether action should be taken.
- Starting with **The Judge** and otherwise proceeding in order of social standing (**The Baron**, then **The Martinet**, **The Rake**, and **The Ingenue**), each character should introduce themselves to the others in obnoxious "As you all know, of course, I am..." fashion to establish identities and roles. Then each character should introduce one minor, petty trouble from the recent ball that they hope the Committee will address.

Some sample troubles:

- The Barringtons come from new money, and will not stop boring other people with talk of their investment in a bicycle factory, and with the details of bicycle construction.

- Edward Percher, the Perchers' youngest, made his first solo trip to London, and keeps speaking over more experienced people to tell them how things *actually* are in London.
- The Landsey girl says she's heard that visiting landsman Montgomery Elsworth does not have an income of £20,000 a year as he claims, and that he is in penury, and no one is certain who is telling the truth.
- Mrs. Davies-Wright insists on having her own personal footman in the ballroom to polish her shoes in case they get scuffed, and now many others among the gentry are thinking they may need to follow suit or look as if they are behind the times.

Once all other characters have introduced themselves and briefly laid out one such problem for the Committee, **The Vicar** should press the others to address the trouble they have all been ignoring: Lord Lethe-Bywood, whose impossible behavior goes above and beyond all other breaches of decorum. Among his many other offenses, the man drank to excess, climbed onto a table, lowered his trousers, and shat in the punchbowl. Surely this is precisely the kind of thing the Committee is meant to address?

Rules for Lord Lethe-Bywood:

Any character may introduce other troubles Lord Lethe-Bywood has caused since his arrival in the community. Those actions may be vapors-inducing, hardly fit to mention in polite society, but they should never include behavior that would make the game uncomfortable or unenjoyable for players, e.g. sexual assault (beyond the Regency level of "He asked Lady Pequod if she would describe her ankles as well-turned!"), or significant physical harm to others.

The Committee has the option to Do Something About Lord Archibald, which could take many forms, from a Sternly Worded Letter to Sending Someone To Have A Talk With Him to disinventing him from all future gatherings where the Committee has a say. They also have the option to ignore the question and stick with minor infractions. From the moment the Vicar first mentions him, the Committee has 60 minutes to make the decision.

The complication:

As an Earl, Lord Lethe-Bywood is an aristocrat, of higher social standing than anyone on the Committee. He is also rich, commanding a newly purchased local country estate of significant value. It is to be expected that once he's further established in the community, he will begin to throw galas himself. There are many reasons Committee members might not wish to alienate him. There are also many reasons to rein him in if possible, before he gets even further out of hand and blackens the community's good name.

Favor:

- Every player starts with one Favor from each other player, representing their social standing among the group. Each player also has three additional Favor to grant.
- At any time, other players may give another player Favor or withdraw their Favor, due to something the active player said or did. This should only be done for the most serious breaches of decorum, or on an arbitrary selfish whim.
- For in-person games, each player should use a set of more or less identical items to represent their Favor: dice, game beads, or poker chips of a single color; coins of a single denomination; or some small unique item, like buttons or scraps of colored paper.
- For remote games, each player should track their own Favor. It can be represented to others via chat updates or in your screen names, using initials for the characters' titles and numbers to represent Favor, like so:

Father John / Vicar / he/him / I3 / R0 / J1 / M1 / B1

In this example, the Vicar still has their original Favor from the Judge, Martinet, and Baron. The Rake has withdrawn their Favor, and the Ingenue has granted the Vicar 2 extra Favor.

- A player who has lost the Favor of all other players is considered Shunned, and will not be invited to future Committee meetings. They may continue with the game, but must preface all interjections with a suitably demure apology for speaking up.
- Players may choose to re-grant their Favor to other players who still have at least one other character's Favor, but once they are Shunned, anyone favoring them is risking their own social standing by supporting them, so bringing a player back from Shunned status should only be done carefully and thoughtfully, or on an arbitrary selfish whim. The Vicar, due to their unique clergy status, is immune from Shunning. All Favor can be withdrawn from

them, but they do not suffer ill effects, apart from possibly feeling forlorn at the rejection.

- Players may negotiate for Favor with each other, but should keep negotiations in-character. (e.g. "I would look unkindly on you continuing this line of discussion" or "It seems we should form an alliance of mutual respect against the others.")
- All players should seek each other's Favor, since it represents social standing and mutual respect, but some characters may value specific characters' Favor more than others.

How play ends:

15 minutes before the allotted discussion time elapses, the Judge should remind everyone that they have other engagements to attend, and that time is running out.

- The Judge should again warn when there are five minutes left, and if the Committee has not already agreed on a course of action or inaction, urge them to reach one.
- When time is up, if the Committee has agreed on a plan, the Judge may summarize it and send people forth with whatever Favor and satisfaction they've managed to accrue.
- If the Committee has not agreed on a plan, each player has one minute to declare what their character is secretly planning to do on their own, without Committee support. After everyone has declared their action, players may discuss how they think the individual secret actions will resolve or interact, but those discussions should not happen in character. The fallout is for a Committee meeting yet to come.

After the game is over:

Players are welcome to spend time discussing their characters' personal agendas, whether they fulfilled them, and how the game went for them. Or just trade favorite Regency trivia and slang, if you like. Did you know a gentleman's pants were sometimes referred to as "calf-clingers"?

Individual character descriptions follow. Players should not read past this point. For in-person play, print these sheets and cut each page in half to form two character sheets. For remote play, copy the pages from the PDF, crop them to form individual character sheets, and mail them to the players or send them via private chats.

The Blushing Ingenue

You are 18 years old, and this is your first social season, just past your coming-out in society. You are by far the youngest and newest member of the Committee. As the child of wealthy landowners, you have some social clout, but you think some of the other Committee members see your service here as a learning experience they are kindly providing for you, and they can be a bit condescending.

You are: *young, bright, idealistic, full of solutions and ideas, eager but a bit shy about asserting yourself*

You fear: Being seen as foolish, forward, or out of step with convention and decorum.

You want: People to respect your opinion and see you as wise beyond your years, which may involve holding back to make sure you're in step with what your elders think about the situation.

You need: To end the game with Favor from at least half the other committee members. (If an odd number, round up.)

Depending on their personality and behavior, you may find **The Rake** dashing and intriguing, or arrogant and in need of taking down.

You are a bit awed of **The Judge's** experience and education, but may sometimes find them stuffy or overbearing.

You must pretend to respect **The Martinet** or risk a boring, windy lecture, but it's fun to subtly mock or undermine them.

You suspect **The Baron** is hiding a number of secrets that would lower their social standing, and you are curious to learn those secrets.

The Vicar is sweet, but perhaps a trifle too earnest, and clearly out of touch with the modern world.

You are reluctant to castigate Lord Archibald because he is *extremely eligible*. His behavior is atrocious, but he's rich, handsome, high-status, and single. If you were engaged, you could set him to rights before the wedding.

The Patrician Judge

You are the oldest member of the Committee, and the most educated, and it's important that everyone remains aware of that. People were so much better behaved when you were a youth, but you'll do what you can to discipline these libertine new generations and teach them proper decorum.

You are: *confident, intelligent, domineering, organized, never willing to admit fault in your logic or decisions*

You fear: The younger Committee members laughing at you behind your back, and the older ones challenging you for control or making you look weak or foolish.

You want: People to respect you and defer to your authority and superior organization skills.

You need: To prove your value as a leader. See to it that all sides are heard and everyone is permitted to speak. Push for definitive action, whether that means censuring Lord Archibald or ignoring his antics, but try to ensure the Committee members are satisfied with any compromise.

The Ingenue is bossier than one so young should be. Put them in their place, but be gentle and parental about it, so you don't look rude.

The Rake is a bit of a brat who could also stand a humbling, but you're secretly a little jealous of their youth, energy, and charm.

The Martinet is your greatest rival. They would happily take over the Committee or bore everyone endlessly with their opinions. Don't let them take control.

You should defer to **The Baron**, who has a title and is therefore your natural social superior. They bring prestige to the Committee, and you gain status from associating with them, so see to it that no one offends, disrespects, or discomfits them.

You are reluctant to castigate Lord Archibald because he is of *high social rank*. If he were to blame you for any censuring, and speak ill of you to other members of the aristocracy, it could be ruinous to your reputation among those you admire. Then again, if you seem indecisive or too fearful to take action, your reputation could suffer from that as well.

The Preening Martinet

This Committee was your idea, and everyone should remember that. You are one of the older members of the Committee, and likely both the most observant and the most well-mannered person in the neighborhood. Everyone should listen to your thoughts and learn from your experience and wisdom, especially about how to behave. Teach these prattling ninnies some proper manners.

You are: *bossy, proud, scornful, certain of yourself, unfailingly polite unless ill-mannered people make stronger words necessary*

You fear: People ignoring or disrespecting you. The Judge and the Baron may have higher social standing, but see to it that they know you're their superior in other ways.

You want: For people to behave properly. The nonsense people get away with these days. Hmpt.

You need: To get your way. Whatever you decide needs to be done about Lord Archibald, give everyone a piece of your mind and make sure they know who's leading the decision.

The Ingenue could be a proper pillar of the community someday, if they're smart enough to follow your lead and learn from you. Educate them, and make sure they know they still need education.

You've heard rumors about **The Rake's** scandalous behavior away from this Committee that make you think they could use some harsher lessons. Can you get them to confess and repent?

The Judge thinks they're in control of this Committee. Your Committee. Acknowledge their uses as a moderator and timekeeper, but don't let it go to their head.

While **The Baron** is technically your social superior, and it's a mark of your influence and regard that they come to Committee meetings, they're clearly weak-willed, and you owe it to England's good name to straighten them out and stiffen their spine.

You are reluctant to castigate Lord Archibald because on a level you would rather not admit, he may be too rich, admired, and socially powerful to control. If you attempt to chide him and bring him in line and you fail, it could weaken the Committee and reflect badly on you. At the same time, he needs addressing. Tread cautiously.

The Devilish Rake

At age 23, you are meant to be making a decision about marriage and your future, but your rich, indulgent landowner parents and significant allowance have you thinking it would be ridiculous to settle down just yet. There's still plenty of fun to be had, including by charming the members of the Committee, who are stodgy and sincere, but a good route into all of the neighborhood's best gossip. Playing along with their ideas of decorum while manipulating them can be great fun.

You are: *charming, attractive, used to getting your way, deferential when it benefits you, subversive, and a libertine*

You fear: Being bored or being humiliated.

You want: To flatter the Committee and stay in their good graces, and to learn the amusing secrets of everyone else in the neighborhood, while manipulating them away from taking any actions that would make the local balls and parties duller.

You need: To end the game with two or more Favor from the Ingenue, who seems promising if you can pull them away from the rest of these fuddy-duddies.

You find **The Ingenue** entertaining and full of possibilities — they're young enough to be malleable, and could be an ally or an entertainment if you play your cards right.

The Judge is like the stuffy, boorish parent you never had, and never wanted. Take them down a peg, if you can do it without turning all the others against you.

The Martinet is hilarious. Flatter them endlessly and see if they ever catch on that you're being insincere. You've bet yourself two bob that they won't.

You find **The Baron** a bit of a mystery — shouldn't they be using their status to lord over you all a little? What scandals are they trying to cover up?

You are reluctant to castigate Lord Archibald because he is *highly entertaining*. You don't want him censored or disinvited because you want to see what nonsense he'll get up to next — but admitting that might get you booted off of the Committee.

The Earnest Vicar

Lord love these squabbling, gossipy, judgmental fools. They all care so very much, about matters that count so very little. Can you temper their silliness and self-absorption and persuade them to do something useful?

You are: *idealistic, filled with conviction, kind, as nonjudgmental as you can be under the circumstances, brave, determined to be a good role model*

You fear: The Committee committing to picking over petty scandals while ignoring its ability to do good.

You want: To pin them down to making a meaningful decision about Lord Archibald.

You need: To end the game with at least one Favor and a firm, actionable decision about Lord Archibald.

It's clear that **The Ingenué**'s heart is in the right place, and that they want to earn their place among the adults. Be kind, but don't spoil them.

There's good in everyone, so surely **The Rake** is hiding *some* positive qualities? Somewhere?

You understand that **The Judge** feels a need to be in charge. As long as you don't flout their authority, they could be a helpful ally.

The Martinet is one of those smug moralists who'd be the first to quote scripture to tell others how to behave, and the last to actually follow their own advice. The good Lord gives us all our burdens, and The Martinet is one of yours.

You sympathize with **The Baron**'s troubles — their estate no longer makes enough to support itself, and its decline troubles them endlessly. Unfortunately, you live on that estate, and your salary comes from The Baron, so if they fall, you fall as well.

You are not reluctant to castigate Lord Archibald, even though everyone else clearly is. His behavior is beyond the pale, he's providing a terrible role model to the whole community, and prompting them to gossip, snipe among themselves, and justify their own failings because of everything he gets away with. For the good of the community, he has to be stopped.

The Forlorn Baron

As the only member of the Committee with a hereditary title, you are its highest-ranking member. But as with so many aristocrats, your estate's income has dwindled and it's falling into disrepair. If anyone finds out, your social status will suffer. Staying close to the Committee and hearing the neighborhood gossip helps you follow and control the narrative.

You are: *impoverished but high-status, anxious, fragile, a bit officious, aware of your privilege and willing to wield it as a weapon, hungry for validation*

You fear: People learning your secret, or your social status dipping for any other reason.

You want: To keep the neighborhood distracted from your situation, and keep in everyone's good graces.

You need: To end the game with the Vicar's Favor and a plan to turn the Committee's decision to your favor.

The Ingenué is sweet and naïve, but solicitous and prying in a way that makes you nervous. Keep them at arm's length and lull any suspicions they have.

You're positive that if **The Rake** learned what you're hiding, they wouldn't hesitate to spread it everywhere. That one's a viper in sheep's clothing.

It's ironic and laughable how much **The Judge** respects you. But social climbers are useful. Don't trust them, but take advantage of their sycophancy.

The Martinet is a tiresome scold and an endless gossip. Keep up appearances, and recognize that they could be a ruthless enemy if provoked.

You are responsible for paying **The Vicar** from your estate's funds. They know about your penury, so you desperately need their good will and silence. Support them if you can without risking yourself.

You are reluctant to castigate Lord Archibald because he is of your social class. His adolescent behavior reflects badly on you and the rest of the aristocracy, but suggesting the gentry have a right to discipline him could be seen as gauche, and could grant them power over you as well.

Also, Archie has been a guest in your home and has seen how shabby it's become. He even had the nerve to comment on it in a slighting fashion! You would love to see him punished, but you must tread cautiously or he might expose you. He could be the perfect distraction, or your personal downfall.