

# Renaissance Marriage: Honour, Piety, & Subterfuge

Conceived and developed by Frank Klaassen  
with Courtney Konshuh, Mark Geldof, and Sharon Wright.

Creative Commons Copyright. Frank Klaassen. Share alike. Attribution required.

The rules that follow are complicated and meant to be both an introduction to the game and also a guide as you play it. It will make *much* more sense when you begin to play, but it is critical to have a rough sense of how the game works in advance of the first period of play so that you can quickly establish a strategy for your family. How will you work with the resources you have to advance your family interests?

As you read this you will want to refer to the *Possible Actions Table*, *Description of Families*, and *Forms* documents for clarity (or for more information) as you read these instructions.

## 1. Summary and Win Conditions

This is a simulation of the complex social world of pre-modern marriage negotiations and the acquisition and loss of honour connected with it. The goal is to work with whatever conditions you have inherited in your family to increase your honour and piety ratings through finding advantageous marriages for your children and through charitable works or patronage.

The family with the most combined honour, piety, and handicap points at the end of the game wins. The game is still in developmental stages so we may adjust the handicap points. We will also recognize those families which made particularly colourful contributions.

## 2. Conditions at the Start of the Game

At the start of the game you will have been assigned to a particular family or to the role of the Archbishop.

Each family will have

- Parents and other elderly members (who may serve as godparents)
- Children with certain kinds of characteristics (who will need to be married or found suitable offices)
- A status (High, Middle, or Low) which will not change during the course of the game
- A certain number of piety points (which can be gained or lost through the game)
- A certain number of honour points (which can be gained or lost through the game)
- A set amount of money
- A family story

The conditions will not be equitable. Life is not fair. (But handicaps will also be assigned to the luckier families to try to compensate for this for the sake of gameplay.)

## 3. Equipment

Each family will be provided a range of materials for game play:

- Forms for godparent and marriage agreements
- A form to fill out your participation and all other actions (Ricordanze)
- A set of honour and piety tokens which you can give to others as a result of your actions

- A sheet describing all the other families, including their virtues and failings, status, finances, and children
- A sheet describing all possible actions
- A sign to post by your family table
- Nametags for each family member
- A set of envelopes for keeping these in between periods

The Archbishop will have nothing but honour and piety tokens.

#### **4. Stages of Game Play** (Bolded terms are explained more fully in 5. Aspects of Game Play.)

##### ***Stage One: Establishing your strategy and setup (15 minutes)***

In this stage you will strategize with the other members of your group about what your strategy will be. Keep in mind that you not only have to gain honour and piety to win, but you must also try not to give too much advantage other families through your actions, since they may win instead.

Before game play begins, set up your family sign by your home desk and put on your family name tags. Lay out the pre-assigned piety, honour, and handicap points assigned to you in your family description. You *must* add any **honour and piety tokens** you receive from other families to these lines so that other families may see and count them. *Do not* lay out the **honour and piety tokens** with your family name on them.

Assure you have the amount of money assigned to you in the description of your family.

##### ***Stage Two: Godparents and other positioning (40 minutes)***

In this stage you will attempt to get one **godparent** for each of your children, a man for a boy and a woman for a girl. Failure to do so will result in their ineligibility for any marriage or office. The agreement must be recorded on a godparents form and signed by a witness from a third family (who will receive honour points for the service).

Keep in mind as you do this that your children will not be able to marry into the family of their godparents since this would constitute incest. Getting a **godparent** from a family of high status, piety, or honour will bring honour or piety points to your family. In a similar, way being chosen as a godparent also brings points to your family.

At this stage you may attempt to increase your honour or piety level in other ways. Families with low piety or honour points (bottom 33%) will have more difficulty finding spouses or offices for their children. Honour and piety can be gained through charitable donations or civic patronage. Keep in mind *everyone else* will be seeking to position themselves favourably as well.

If you do not have sufficient funds, you may take out **loans** from the **Game Coordinator**. Financially disadvantaged families may seek assistance from the **Confraternity of the Blessed Mary Magdalene** for help with a **dowry**.

You *may not* finalize **marriages** in this stage of the game, although you may enter into negotiations, but you may spread **rumours** about other families or attempt an **assassination**.

##### ***Stage Three: Marriage and other positioning (50 minutes)***

The Game Coordinator will have tallied the honour and piety points gained in the previous stage of the game. Those families with the highest number of piety and honour points (top 33%) will be identified as high honour or piety families. Those families with the lowest numbers (bottom 33%) will also be identified.

In this stage you must negotiate marriages for your children with other families or purchase offices for them from the Archbishop or admission as monks or nuns to the Convent (**Game Coordinator**). Parents of daughters must pay a **dowry** which will go with her into her marriage. The minimum acceptable **dowry** for a **marriage** is the one listed on the potential husband's family.

Financially challenged families (generally those of low status) can request financial support for a **dowry** from the **Confraternity of the Blessed Mary Magdalene**. They may also negotiate **loans** from the **Game Coordinator**.

The **marriage** must be recorded on a marriage form and signed by a **witness** from a third family (who will receive honour points for the service). Marriages may add or subtract honour or piety points depending on who the families are and how the contracts are negotiated. (See the actions table.) However, children who remain unmarried or do not have an ecclesiastical office will result in significant dishonour.

You may also further advance your honour or piety through acts of charity or patronage. (See the actions table.) However, after finalizing the marriages or achieving offices for all your children you may no longer make such contributions.

Finally, you may spread **rumours** or attempt an **assassination**.

#### ***Stage Four: Final Scoring and Debrief (20 minutes)***

Points and handicaps will be totalled (including loss of honour for unmarried children). We will then turn to a discussion of the game.

You are part of the game development, so your input will be useful. This will include the ways in which the game did and did not reflect the period or how it might be improved. It will also give players a chance to argue for why their family should have been given a different handicap.

## **5. Aspects of Game Play**

### ***Piety and Honour Rankings: High and Low***

The piety and honour rankings will change *only once* after the end of stage two and just before the marriage negotiations begin. Keep in mind that you have a chance to alter your rankings in stage two but also that others will also be attempting to position themselves more advantageously.

### ***Giving, Getting, and Displaying Honour or Piety: The Tokens***

Every family will have a cache of honour and piety tokens with their names on them. *They cannot give these to themselves* (since honour and piety are socially ascribed) but will give them to the families with whom they negotiate relationships.

All tokens of piety and honour gained during the game including handicap tokens must be displayed on your family desk for everyone to see.

### *Witnesses*

Each godparent and marriage contract must be witnessed by a member of a third and different family. The witness must

- check the status, honour, and piety of both parties,
- assure the points assigned are correct according to the rules of the game,
- record the amount of the dowry for a marriage,
- sign the form indicating assent, and
- remove any honour or piety tokens that either of the families may have lost in the process (giving these to the Game Coordinator).

Witnesses will be paid one honour token by each of the two families who have negotiated the contract for their services.

### *Marriage*

Arranging marriages is the critical element in the game as it assures both honour and the continuation of the family. They must be contracted in the presence of a witness from a third family. There are very few hard and fast rules in this case, but you may not marry your children to the children of their godparents.

If one partner dies, the marriage is considered dissolved. Since there will not have been enough time for there to be children, if the husband dies, the wife will return to her parents home with her dowry. (Her family may retrieve the dowry.)

### *Dowries*

A dowry must be paid by the family of the bride to the groom's family. It would be dishonourable to accept less than the required amount (the amount listed on the groom's family description) but there may be reasons to pay less or more. For example, a dishonourable marriage may be compensated through a larger dowry.

The groom's family *may not* use the money from the dowry during the game. It must be kept intact in the dowry envelope. (In reality, dowries were often squandered, but we won't let it happen for the purposed of the game.)

### *The Confraternity of the Blessed Mary Magdalene*

If you are low status or a very financially challenged middle status family, you may apply for funds to assist giving your daughters adequate dowries. Generally, honourable and pious young women have a better shot at getting this assistance.

Any families who make a donation to the Confraternity (for which they will gain points as well) will be able to vote on whether applicants are given the money. The Batista family (who founded the Confraternity) have two votes automatically.

### *The Archbishop, ecclesiastical positions, and rumours*

Some Archbishops certainly were pious and honourable, but this one is burdened by neither of these virtues. He took on fl. 10M in loans to pay for his position and needs to pay off these loans so he can begin

to make some real money. He doesn't care how the cash comes in. If he gains at least fl. 1M from this community by the end of the game, he also wins.

Ecclesiastical positions for your sons may be purchased from him. He will also spread rumours on your behalf for a fee. (See rumours.) He can charge whatever the market will bear.

### *Loans*

Loans are available to a limit of 25% of your available money. Keep in mind these will be accompanied by a certain level of dishonour.

### *Rumours*

Rumours can inflict significant damage on the reputation of a family particularly if they are aimed at the daughters. You may spread a rumour for free by telling it to the Game Coordinator who will then roll a die to determine the effect. 1-2 indicates success in which case the target family will lose honour and piety points. 3-4 indicates that the rumour was not successful, but remains anonymous. 5-6 indicates that the rumour fails and rebounds on instigator.

You may also bribe the Archbishop to spread a rumour on your behalf. Again a roll of the die is necessary. 1-3 will be successful. 4-6 will be unsuccessful.

### *Assassination*

You have the option to attempt to assassinate a member of your opponent's family in the game. It is, however, very dishonourable to assassinate a woman and therefore is simply not done.

A successful assassination will give you no honour or piety points but may have other uses. An assassination attempt will cost fl. 10K. payable to the Game Coordinator who will then roll a die to determine the effect. 1-2 indicates success in which case the target will be killed and removed from the game. 3-4 indicates that the assassination was not successful, but the perpetrators remain anonymous. 5-6 indicates that the assassination was not successful and the perpetrators names will become public.

The Medici may assassinate whom they want without cost and almost without impunity. If they roll a six the attempt is deemed unsuccessful. If they roll a six a second time, they provoke a coup and the whole family is ejected from the city and cannot win the game.

Deaths open up the remaining partner for marriage.

### *Game Coordinator*

In general, the Game Coordinator will be the course instructor.