

KING AND COUNTRY 2

By Mark A. Hart

King and Country previously introduced nationality as a type of character background. The article listed thirteen different kingdom backgrounds, each based on a common fantasy theme, and provided two examples: Crusader Nation and Arcane Dominion. Here are four more realms for use as backgrounds - the Confederacy of Feuding Houses, the Lost Civilization, the Regime of the Dark Overlord, and the Savage Land.

Confederacy of Feuding Houses

You understand the value of family and bloodline above all else. You grew up in a realm splintered into dozens of factions, each one vying for power and wealth. You learned to watch for hidden daggers and poisoned food at an early age, and your first lessons taught you how to read people and manipulate them for your family's benefit. Perhaps you belonged to a lesser house—one forced to serve a larger and more infamous family. Or you could have belonged to one of the great houses, living a life surrounded by both luxury and the constant threat of betrayal. Regardless, you understand the complexities and allure of courtly intrigue.

Skill Proficiencies. Deception, Persuasion

Tool Proficiencies. Forgery kit, poisoner's kit

Equipment. A steel mirror, a signet ring (with hidden compartment), a set of traveler's clothes, a dagger, and a belt pouch containing 15 gp

Feature. The Black Market

When you enter a town or city, you only need a few conversations with locals to find the best dealers in illegal goods and services. Whether you want to buy poisons, hire an assassin, or purchase classified information, you can uncover whom to talk to, where to go, and how best to approach them.

Suggested Characteristics

A citizen who lived his life among the feuding houses may prove slow to trust and difficult to decipher. When they speak, they seem incapable of giving a straightforward answer. Although these folk appreciate the value of allies and friends, they understand the dangers of lowering one's defenses. They guard their words and actions, even around friends.

d4	Personality Trait
1	I don't like leaving my back exposed in public places.
2	Until I know someone, I watch them for signs of betrayal.
3	I try to uncover the secrets of both friends and enemies. Such information always proves invaluable.
4	I'm constantly searching for an angle or leverage over everyone I meet.
d4	Ideal
1	Respect. Never forget your place, and make certain your inferiors remember theirs. (Lawful)
2	Family. Nothing is more important than family. I would die for them, and I would kill for them. (Any)
3	Knowledge. Never enter a fight or negotiation without proper information, and always have an escape plan. (Neutral)
4	Vengeance. If you hurt my friends or family, your parents will wish you were never born. (Evil)
d4	Bond
1	I escaped an arranged marriage, so now two furious families and one determined betrothed hunt for me.
2	I've lived my life serving others. Now I seek the freedom to make my own choices.
3	I will return my family to its rightful position of power, and punish those who forced our downfall.
4	I must atone for the crimes I committed in my family's name.
d4	Flaw
1	Lying comes naturally to me. I struggle to tell the truth, even when I want to.
2	When someone slights me, I always repay the favor.
3	I failed my family in every possible way, and now they seek my destruction.
4	I don't mind using my allies as bait, with or without their approval.

Lost Civilization

You come from a legendary realm, a place filled with magic or technology unknown to the outer world. You grew up around alien creatures, lived in a city of glass and steel, and used artifacts that most people consider impossible. Whether you abandoned your homeland by choice or necessity, you may never find your way back.

Skill Proficiencies. Arcana, History

Tool Proficiencies. One type of exotic musical instrument

Languages. One of your choice

Equipment. A walking staff, a necklace or other family heirloom of unusual metal, a set of traveler's clothes, and a belt pouch containing 20 gp of coin from your homeland

Feature. Stranger in a Strange Land

Your origin grants you celebrity status. You attract the curiosity of commoners, nobles, sages, and fools alike, but not all of this attention is benevolent. When you seek audience with an individual of note, such as a famous wizard or local noble, you can mention your place of origin to entice their interest and earn an invitation. Often, they may offer advice and knowledge in trade for stories about your homeland. If you need a larger favor, your host may demand something exceptional in return, such as technological secrets or a mag-ic item from your realm.

Suggested Characteristics

A citizen from a Lost Civilization feels misplaced and disconnected from the outer world. Because they grew up in such a different setting, their distinctiveness goes beyond strange clothing and a foreign accent. When interacting with locals, their unfamiliarity with customs, traditions, and superstitions often confuses people or angers them.

d4	Personality Trait
1	Everything I discover in this new world fascinates or horrifies me.
2	I won't let my ignorance hinder my curiosity, even if it upsets someone.
3	No matter how hard I try to fit in, I alienate everyone around me.
4	I enjoy collecting trinkets and tokens everywhere I travel.
d4	Ideal
1	Knowledge. I want to learn this world's secrets to take back home. (Neutral)
2	Secrets. My people unleashed a horror that consumed my realm; I will not allow my new home to suffer that fate. (Good)
3	Destiny. I hear the chorus of alien gods. Their voices tell me who must live and who must die. (Any)
4	Generosity. I possess skills unknown to this world. Honor and duty require me to share these talents. (Good)
d4	Bond
1	I will find a way back home, even if it takes a lifetime and costs a fortune.
2	My people intend to conquer the outer world. I can't let them succeed.
3	I must discover who abducted me from my realm and why.
4	I stole a piece of forbidden technology. It tells me to learn its secrets before its owners find me.
d4	Flaw
1	My inexperience with local customs and traditions often gets me into trouble.
2	When stressed, I speak in cryptic metaphors that no one understands.
3	I feel superior to everyone around me, but I hold them blameless for their ignorance.
4	This land is not my home, and it will never be my home, no matter how long I remain stuck here.

Regime of the Dark Overlord

You grew up in the bloodthirsty regime of the world's most tyrannical overlord. Trapped in a hellish domain, your family existed without hope or faith. Although you escaped, by night you suffer nightmares of torture and imprisonment. When you awaken, you realize those weren't nightmares, but rather memories of your suffering.

Skill Proficiencies. Stealth, Survival

Tool Proficiencies. One type of artisan's tools

Languages. One of your choice

Equipment. A quarterstaff, a set of common clothes, a homemade talisman to ward off evil, and a belt pouch containing 10 gp

Feature. Social Invisibility

You perfected the art of avoiding notice and never drawing attention. When someone first meets you, they later struggle to recall your appearance, your voice, or anything significant about you. Likewise, you blend into a crowd, making it difficult for pursuers to identify you.

Suggested Characteristics

Those who escape the Regime of the Dark Overlord often fall into two personality types: those strengthened by their experiences, and those forever scarred by them. Either way, individuals from this regime understand how brutal, dangerous, and unforgiving the world can be. They understand how to endure, when to hide, and how to fight when cornered. A survivor of this domain often carries a perpetually haunted look in his eyes.

d4	Personality Trait
1	I hate being the center of attention, and I don't like to be noticed.
2	Nothing fazes me. Once you've survived my homeland, everything else seems quaint by comparison.
3	Everywhere I go, I scope out the nearest escape routes.
4	I abandoned everyone I ever loved. I will never do so again.
d4	Ideal
1	Survival. If you stop fighting, then you've let the villains win. (Neutral)
2	People. I'll protect my friends, but I don't believe in causes. (Neutral)
3	Rebellion. We must liberate the enslaved and overthrow their masters. (Good)
4	Strength. Strength and power are everything. Without strength, you are helpless to protect yourself. With it, you can dominate those around you first. (Evil)
d4	Bond
1	Nothing would ever convince me to abandon my allies.
2	I swore to those who helped me escape I would return and save them.
3	I swear to destroy the overlord and free my land.
4	I have seen how true evil corrupts a kingdom. I will not allow it to spread here.
d4	Flaw
1	I am both a pessimist and a fatalist.
2	I do what I'm told out of habit.
3	Hurting people to get what I want doesn't bother me.
4	When bloodshed begins, my first instinct is to hide.

Savage Land

From the moment of your birth, the Savage Land wanted you dead. Monsters and beasts lurked at the village's edge, eager to devour you like a delicious meat snack. The land conjured up blizzards, floods, drought, and tempests to flatten, drown, and otherwise destroy you and your folk. For all its murderous intent, however, you give thanks to your homeland. As the harshest place in the world, it taught you to survive. It forced you to grow strong. You learned the value of helping others and enduring together, even if it meant sharing the last of your food.

Skill Proficiencies. Nature, Survival

Tool Proficiencies. One set of artisan's tools

Languages. One of your choice

Equipment. A knife, a talisman or token of strength from your clan, tinderbox, a set of traveler's clothes, and a belt pouch containing 10 gp

Feature. Hunter's Instinct

When you travel in the wilderness, you sense when someone—or something—has caught your trail or scent. Although you lack the details, you instinctively recognize when your pursuers are within an hour or less of your position and from which direction they approach.

Suggested Characteristics

The people of the Savage Land retain a mystical link to their homeland, even when they travel beyond its borders. Infused with a love of danger, they often show bravery and fierce determination no matter the odds. At the same time, they understand that—sooner rather than later—the spirit of the homeland will hunt them and kill them.

d4	Personality Trait
1	I do not seek death, but I do not flee its embrace.
2	I dislike spending time in civilization; it weakens me and dampens my instincts.
3	Possessions and wealth are temptations luring you to an unmarked grave.
4	Life tastes sweetest when something tries to kill me.
d4	Ideal
1	Might. Only the strongest deserve to live. (Evil)
2	Wanderlust. I go where I want to, when I want to. (Chaotic)
3	The Land. The spirit of the land guides my actions, even as it tests me. (Neutral)
4	Hunter. When I see my prey, it's as good as dead. (Neutral)
d4	Bond
1	My family—by choice or by blood—are all I have left. I will not fail them.
2	The thrill of danger is more addictive than any civilized vice.
3	My clan banished me, and now I must earn my way back.
4	I collect songs, stories, and folklore to bring back to my people.
d4	Flaw
1	I live every day as if it were my last, and to hell with the consequences!
2	My kindness to strangers makes me an easy mark.
3	My entire village perished thanks to my cowardice.
4	I dislike trusting gods or their priests.

Author - Mark A. Hart

Editor - James Haeck

Artists - N.C. Wyeth

Layout - Justin Buell