

General Setting

Potential Premises to Prove

1.) Unity leads to oppression. 2.) Pluralism leads to chaos. 3.) Tribalism leads to fulfillment. 4.) Lack of community leads to lack of empathy. 5.) Shared suffering leads to communal bonds. 6.) Finding community leads to exclusion of outsiders. 7.) Inherited community leads to close-mindedness. **8.) Personally forged community leads to healthy personal and societal growth.**

The Background

A medieval world is upturned within a decade by a magical discovery comparable to the industrial revolution in our own world. The Lords of Industry figure out how to harvest the mana that lies dormant in all beings and harness it toward social progress--more reliable crop growth, healing the sick, powering new machines, entertaining the masses, and generally making life easier and safer. But there is a cost. Only a select few develop the advanced skills to focus and direct harvested mana; the majority of human beings are nothing but husks that need to have the mana sucked out of them for the greater good. The Lords of Industry are all too happy to give a fraction of their profits and some bedazzling bread and circuses to secure the raw resource of the human spirit.

The old stewards of power, the religious leaders, abhor the mockery of the human soul that this revolution has brought. Sure, life might have been harder and more dangerous before the magical revolution, but righteous rewards were earned and human beings looked out for each other. Communities knew what and who to believe and they knew that looking after their brothers was a holy, life or death affair. They also knew that suffering the presence of a dissident could be a life or death affair. The Lords of Industry have found that any kind of strongly felt devotion--be that political, familial, romantic, or religious--dilutes the raw, untapped mana within human beings by way of connective transfer, and they are using everything in their power to isolate the citizenry from such devotion. This is the clergy's greatest grievance, at least politically speaking. In truth, they fear their own demise as they watch the youth flock to easier lives in the city and their devoted numbers dwindle. They see foreigners from countless nations flocking to the industrial cities for work offered by men that care nothing for national culture. The masters of the past millenia won't idly watch their grasp on power slip away.

Meanwhile, the King and his aristocracy play both sides. The clergy have been their right hand for as long as anyone can remember, but the revolution has brought economic gains beyond anything ever imagined. They give a speech of the week depending on the public temperament but they're fully aware that their monopoly on sanctioned violence lets them play any card they want at any time. They show no conviction beyond maintaining the grip on power they've known for generations.

The powder keg finally erupts when the clergy overplay their hand and try to snuff out the Lords of Industry before their power grows too great. A dark ritual (perhaps by divine intervention) goes unexpectedly wrong and the coup is exposed too soon. The civil war erupts and our protagonist is there for the start of it, just trying to survive in the world and find her place among the Great Men and other sons of bitches playing chess with human lives.

Potential mechanics/systems to consider based on this setup

- As a way of reflecting the exclusive nature of community, whatever potential companions you don't take into your party should go on to become a named enemy.
- As a way of reflecting the interconnected spirituality/magicality of us all, the protagonist should become weaker as an individual every time they take on more party members, or alternatively, weaken their party member as they individually grow in strength. This would necessitate the ability to excommunicate party members for the good of the tribe, but it would reinforce a notion of magic being an interconnected spiritual resource between people that can be used to strengthen or weaken each other. The select few (wizards, warlocks, magic-users, etc) are in control of how they leverage that connection.