

In our Burning wheel game, I discovered that I put a lot of focus on social skills and interpret them as something more than just ordinary, friendly speech.

Context

I'm the game leader. There are three players, two new ones (who seem to know each other) and one I have run different kinds of D&D with before, but who has no experience with this game or character drama game, as far as I know. The gaming world is Scandinavia in Viking times. The game takes place in a city or two and we have been careful about time and place.

The characters are twenty years or younger, with three life paths. They are climbing a mountain (Ívidiafjall) to fetch elves, which provide wealth and happiness, or tell stories. The way to get a sheep is to throw some metal over it and it will follow you back home. Three characters with three fine knives (so that the elves do not get angry over the trade). Rolling the dice to throw the knives fails and the outcome is that they get two sheep, but also an elf shepherd. The character, Steinar, who has bad luck, of course gets the shepherd, named Friðr. No good luck to him.

Elven psychology

Since Steinar, as a character, is polite and practical, I decided to have the elf be modest, because the bond with man means that an elf should not try to violate their situation. Now Steinar faces the choice: be rude and ask the elf's opinion about the bond, even if she did not want to say it either, or let it be a mystery. So far he has chosen not to express much.

During the game I started to be explicit about this: of course she does not want to talk anymore, but if you demand it, we can roll the dice here, but you know that you do it against her will and violate friendly behavior. So far, the player has chosen not to make such breaks, but this was the end of the last game, so we will see what happens in the future.

Dice against courtesy

In the context of playing Burning Wheel, it seems to be a good idea that all social skills are some kind of manipulation or use of coercion. The game tries to roll the dice only when there is a conflict there, but there is no consistency to be found. Perhaps this idea is a way of interpreting Vincent's advice to roll the dice if and only if there is conflict.

I am interested in experiences other people have with social skills, coercion, and manipulation. How strong is the connection among them?