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WELCOME TO BENTARIA

a role playing game
on safeguarding transhumance in Bentaria

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WORKSHOP INTANGIBLE HERITAGE

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CONTEXT BRIEF
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However, the **balance between nature conservation, agriculture and cultural heritage has become increasingly fragile**. The re-appearance of **wolves** – once exterminated but now protected under EU and national biodiversity policies – has brought renewed tension to rural communities. Farmers and shepherds report severe losses of livestock, while environmental groups celebrate the wolf's return as a triumph of rewilding.

The (fictional) region where this case takes place – **Bentarea** – has become a symbolic battleground between these views. The area's pastoral landscapes are maintained by a **small number of shepherds** who still practise traditional transhumance as a livelihood on communal and privately-owned land. Their work sustains the open grasslands that attract hikers, photographers and eco-tourists. Yet frequent wolf attacks have made their practice fragile and their livelihood uncertain.

Local authorities face challenging questions: How can traditional pastoralism be maintained while respecting ecological and bio-diversity commitments? How can heritage, environment and economy reinforce rather than oppose each other? Can safeguarding measures under the UNESCO 2003 Convention provide a framework for coexistence?

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ROLE CARD

SHEPHERDS ASSOCIATION REPRESENTATIVE

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

You represent the families of Bentaria's traditional shepherds who move their flocks seasonally through the mountain routes. You defend transhumance as living heritage, vital for local identity and sustainable use of the land.

OVERVIEW OF CHARACTERISTICS & ATTITUDES

- Represents Bentaria's pastoral families maintaining ancient transhumance routes.
- Advocates for legal recognition and safeguarding of the practice as living heritage.
- Feels under pressure from economic change, land restrictions, and declining youth interest.
- Worries that new infrastructure will fragment grazing lands and disrupt knowledge transmission.
- Values collaboration with artisans, cultural officers, and environmental allies.
- Tends to mistrust political promises or industrial motives.

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ROLE CARD

THE SHEEP (COLLECTIVE VOICE)

GENERAL DESCRIPTION



You are the poetic, collective voice of the animals and the landscape. You speak for the non-human world and invite others to think about balance, care, and interdependence.

OVERVIEW OF CHARACTERISTICS & ATTITUDES



- Symbolic, creative role embodying animals, nature, and the land itself.
- Observes and comments on human decisions that affect ecosystems and welfare.
- Reminds participants that heritage is not only cultural, but also ecological.
- Advocates for compassion, continuity, and interdependence.
- Often uses humour, emotion, and metaphor to shift perspectives.

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ROLE CARD

ECO-ACTIVIST FROM WOLF NGO

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

You are an environmental activist campaigning for biodiversity and coexistence between wolves and people. You question large infrastructure projects that fragment ecosystems and threaten traditional life.

OVERVIEW OF CHARACTERISTICS & ATTITUDES

- Works for a small NGO promoting biodiversity and the reintroduction of wolves.
- Supports coexistence models between wildlife and traditional herders.
- Opposes industrial expansion and road construction through natural corridors.
- Sees shepherds as potential allies, but distrusts industrial agriculture.
- Uses data, media, and advocacy to influence public opinion and government policy.

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ROLE CARD

LANDOWNER / LAND MANAGER

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

You manage extensive rural property in Bentaria and try to balance economic, ecological, and community interests. You believe in progress — but only if it's well managed.

OVERVIEW OF CHARACTERISTICS & ATTITUDES

- Owns large tracts of land used for grazing, forestry, and tourism.
- Interested in improving infrastructure and access, which could increase property value.
- Concerned about potential conflicts with herders and environmental groups.
- Believes in compromise: economic development with compensation and regulation.
- Thinks landowners' voices are often ignored in cultural and environmental debates.

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ROLE CARD

COMMERCIAL CHEESEMAKER EUROCHEESE LTD.

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

You represent a large company seeking to industrialize cheese production while using the image of traditional shepherding as a marketing asset. You argue that innovation and scale are essential for national prosperity.

OVERVIEW OF CHARACTERISTICS & ATTITUDES

- Represents a national company seeking to integrate Bentaria's milk production into a large-scale export chain.
- Believes modernization is essential for economic growth and youth employment.
- Uses 'traditional heritage' narratives in marketing, sometimes accused of appropriation.
- Wants cooperation with shepherds but prefers efficiency and technological innovation.
- Faces criticism from local producers and NGOs for prioritizing profit over authenticity.

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ROLE CARD

ANIMAS INTERNATIONAL

(Animal Rights Organisation)

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

You defend animal welfare and ethical treatment across all farming systems. You are critical of both intensive industry and certain traditional practices but value respectful relationships between humans and animals.

OVERVIEW OF CHARACTERISTICS & ATTITUDES

- Global NGO focused on ethical treatment of animals in all production systems.
- Questions both industrial and traditional practices that may cause suffering.
- Recognizes that respectful, small-scale herding models can inspire good practice.
- Advocates for education, transparency, and humane certification systems.
- Often finds itself isolated between rural and corporate interests.

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ROLE CARD

URBAN CRAFTSPERSON

(Wool Artisan)

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

You are a creative artisan from the capital, working with Bentaria wool. You promote fair trade, local collaboration, and heritage-based innovation connecting rural and urban economies.

OVERVIEW OF CHARACTERISTICS & ATTITUDES

- Member of the Urban Crafts Association, producing sustainable textiles.
- Uses wool from Bentaria and values collaboration with shepherding communities.
- Promotes short supply chains and heritage-based innovation.
- Sees the planned road and industrial complex as a threat to raw material quality and local identity.
- Aims to show that tradition and creativity can strengthen each other.

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ROLE CARD

CULTURAL OFFICER OF THE REGIONAL POLICY

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

You represent the regional government of Bentaria, responsible for culture and tourism. You see transhumance as a pillar of sustainable regional identity and oppose national projects that threaten it.

OVERVIEW OF CHARACTERISTICS & ATTITUDES

- Works in the Bentaria Regional Government, responsible for culture and tourism.
- Defends transhumance and its related practices as key to regional identity.
- Opposes national economic projects that could endanger heritage landscapes.
- Strives for dialogue but insists on respect for regional competencies.
- Believes safeguarding heritage is also safeguarding sustainable development.

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ROLE CARD

OFFICER OF THE NATIONAL DEPARTMENT FOR ECONOMY

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

You are a senior civil servant from the national level, promoting a major industrial investment seen as vital for Sulakia's economy. You must also ensure UNESCO obligations are respected while pursuing growth.

OVERVIEW OF CHARACTERISTICS & ATTITUDES

- Senior policy officer coordinating the industrial investment and infrastructure project.
- Focused on national economic growth, employment, and international cooperation.
- Sees the regional opposition as a threat to unity and progress.
- Tries to maintain good standing with UNESCO by framing development as compatible with heritage.
- Balances diplomacy, pressure from investors, and obligations to cultural policy.

NOTES