

## **Adorned**

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The two Flags were finally convinced that meeting on neutral ground to discuss the arrangements for adornment would help settle the matter.

“Stripes and stars and circles? Is this all?” asked the first Flag to the Mediator-in-Station.

“No. Of course, there are bars to be had as well,” was his reply, “and color, do not forget the color. This is where the truth takes on life, in color.”

“Yes. Yes, I know the mysteries of color on one’s subject’s psyches,” said the first.

“I don’t know what to make of bars,” said the second. “How exactly do they work? How are they different than stripes?”

“Yes. Yes, I too would like that answer,” said the first.

The Mediator-in-Station responded, “Bars are unlike stripes as they fit inside of you, rather than run your length. Can you imagine that? Understand that power? They are flexible, as they can be placed vertically, horizontally, even diagonally for varieties of implications, and of course there is the choice of color in the bars...”

“Yes! We know the importance of color,” the two Flags declared in sonorous and synchronized tones, despite differing tongues, both implying that color is what had kept them from this point for so very long.

“Well, there are weights, too. Bars can alternate thickness. Can you imagine this?” the Mediator-in-Station asked to make certain all could comprehend the concept. His tone additionally leveled for gravitas.

“Like stripes can?” asked the second Flag.

“Yes, like stripes may, though often they do not,” reminded the Mediator-in-Station.

“So,” started the first Flag, “am I to understand there’s relatively no difference between bars and stripes, except for whether they float within me or simply cross my vastness? And beyond that, and color, because yes, I know the importance of color..”

“As do I,” interjected the second.

“...that beyond that all I have to work with is stars?” finished the first.

“Yes!” seconded the second. “I too want to know if these are our limits.”

“Well,” began the Mediator-in-Station, “there are other options for adornment that we can most certainly discuss. However, they are not universally recognized, nor do they come on the cheap. Crests and animals we strongly recommend against as the artists’ costs are prohibitive, their personal history or reputation potentially overtakes yours, and furthermore, the archetypal vetting process is extensive, unwieldy, and comes with no guarantees. For example, in a meeting very similar to this one, with two honorable and respectful players such as yourselves, one of the respectful players drudged on incomplete for months on end until finally he became satisfied and convinced of the impenetrable interpretations of his mark, that no implications remained...”

“We have been at it for months over color, this means nothing to us,” interrupted the second.

“Yes. Yes, we have,” seconded the first.

“This I know, and I am only here as a simple Mediator-in-Station, To facilitate and not to convince you otherwise is my sole duty. But we do strongly recommend against these other steps for all, not because of your individual histories,” assured the Mediator-in-Station, as it was his duty.

“And the respectful player in your story...” asked the second, “was it worth it?”

“The story did not end well,” said the Mediator-in-Station, his voice sinking to a whisper. “The day after the decision of *impenetrable-inter-pretations-without-implications*, the day he was raised, one of his subjects was quoted in the press as ‘wondering if we had all just pledged allegiance to an illusory vagina.’”

“My Lord,” gasped the first.

“Easy to do,” said the second, “Circles and sticks, penises and vaginas, it only takes one comment and your masses may never see it any other way.”

“And of course, there are animals with their own particular sets of considerations and frankly they tend to come in and out of vogue,” said the Mediator-in-Station. “That’s why we respectfully recommend the stripes and stars and bars and circles, and an occasional portion of circle. These with the spectrum of mediated colors offer an impressively and perhaps not obvious amount of options that even still present formidable considerations and liabilities.”

“I’ll steer away from circles,” insisted the second. “Vaginas.”

“I need only be strong,” said the first. “And I am prepared to spend days with my adornment to get it right.”

The second continued, “Besides my circle decision, just made, I was sent with only two requirements: To mean more than him,” he said pointing at the first. “And to not return resembling a bedspread.”

