

Blackbirds: Chapter I

Sisters, Fair and Wild



The human kingdom of Tallahm has signed an armistice with the Fair Folk dwelling in the forests of Coilteleitha, ending their costly war but leaving no clear victor. Two faerie sisters, representing the Seelie and Unseelie Courts, are headed to the human capital of Adomein in the hopes of brokering a delicate peace.

While traveling cross-country under the protection of a small honor guard, the diplomatic delegation is set upon in the dead of night by a team of goblin assassins. The attack fails, and all of the assassins are killed, save one.

The goblin Graluach reveals that his orders to kill the delegates came from Sir Bhantim, a knight belonging to the Order of the Compass. Bhantim and his conspirators hope to reignite the war, waiting only for ships bearing foreign mercenaries to reach the port city of Dorcaith before resuming hostilities.

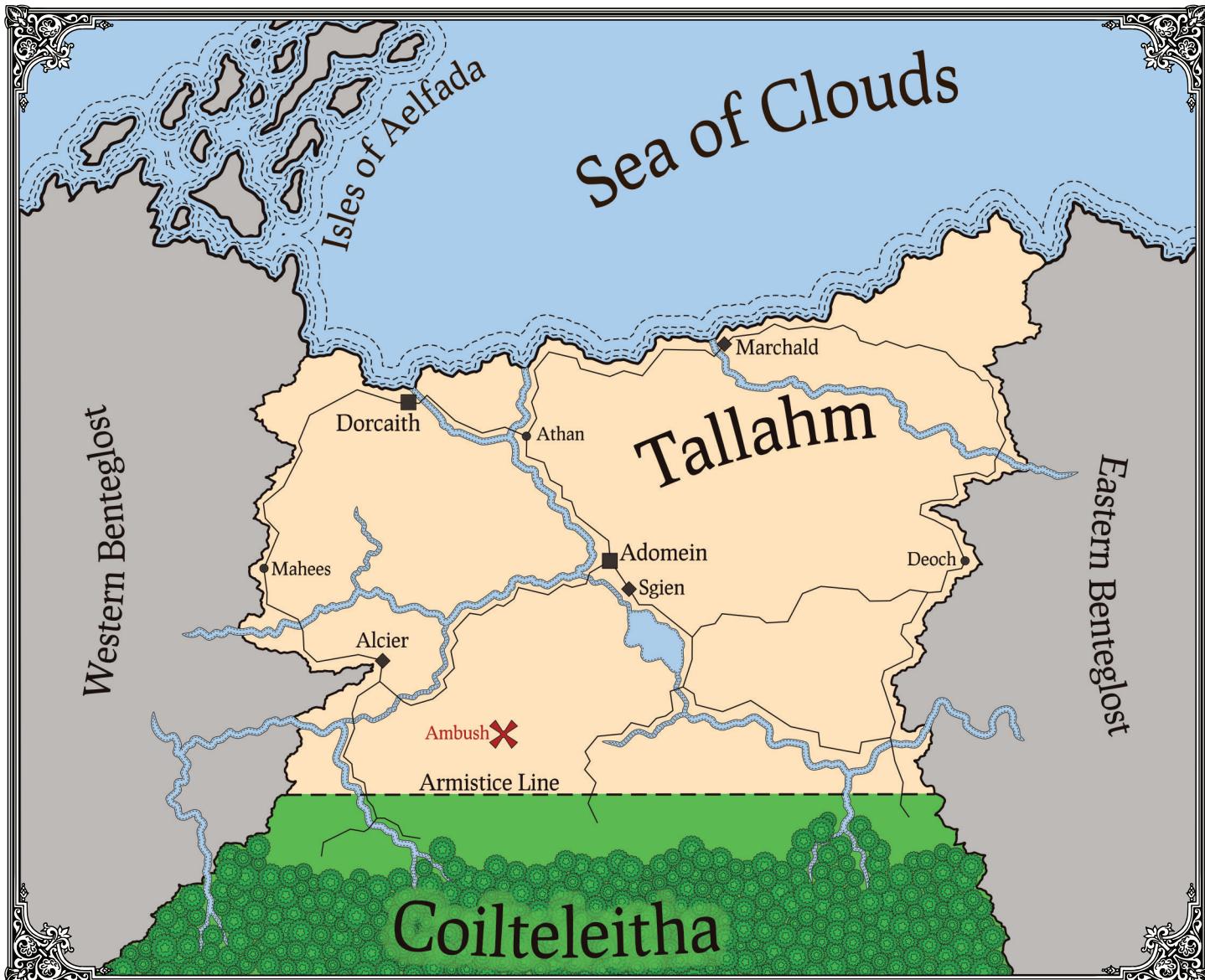
HOW FAR DOES THE CONSPIRACY REACH? WHAT DO THEY HOPE TO ACHIEVE BY RESUMING THE CONFLICT? DOES BHANTIM HAVE ALLIES AMONG THE FAIR FOLK?

WHAT WILL THE DELEGATION DO WITH THEIR PRISONER? CAN HE BE TRUSTED?

KNOWING ASSASSINS ARE ON THEIR TRAIL, WHERE WILL THEY GO? WILL THEY WARN THE COURT, OR TAKE ON THE CONSPIRACY THEMSELVES?

CAN THEY STOP THE WAR? WILL THEY WANT TO?





The Kingdom of Tallahm

Tallahm is small, hemmed in by mountains, but it is prosperous. Its artisans are famed for their fine weapons and armor. Beneath the mighty Benteglost, miners extract beautiful gemstones and arcane ores. This great mineral wealth has made Tallahm a power to be reckoned with.

As its towns and navy grew, its insatiable appetite for wood brought logging crews to the fringes of Coilteleitha. When the warnings of the Fair Folk fell on deaf ears, war was inevitable. The nation is now at a crossroads, and must decide whether an end to bloodshed is worth curbing its ambitions.

Adomein

The seat of the royal court atop a broad hill, Adomein is also a center of culture, tradition, and scholarship. Because of its fine library, it is home to many of the kingdom's wizards and their apprentices.

Dorcaith

Tallahm's center of mercantile power is raucous and cosmopolitan, with sprawling warehouses, crowded taverns, and miles of docks. Its unique character is often credited to its large enclaves of foreigners and Fair Folk.

Fortresses

- **Alcier:** A high-walled castle on a crag, charged with protection of the kingdom's most important mining towns. Seat of Sir Maddox.
- **Sgien:** A fortified city, home to the nation's army, and charged with the defense of Adomein and its surrounding farmland. Seat of Sir Fraes.
- **Marchald:** A bastion charged with the protection of the coastline from seaworn invasion. Seat of Sir Bhantim.

Towns

Beyond its metropolitan areas, Tallahm also dotted with towns. A few are poised to growing rapidly now that the war is over: Athan, known for brewing; Mahees, known for jewelry; and Deoch, known for its hot springs. Other towns are scattered throughout, many little more than a few shops and homes nestled around a public house.

Coilteleitha

The vast forest realm of Coilteleitha lies on Tallahm's southern border. None can say how far it extends, because distance and direction have no clear measure within its depths. Its evergreen trees grow to fabulous heights, and many monsters dwell within it as well. It has few cities or fortifications, and most Fair Folk live sparsely, embedded in the fabric of the forest. Among the towns closest to the edge of the forest are Prilin, Dreinire, and Leireh.

Its two greatest cities are Samharad (home of the Seelie Court, to whom summer-seeming faeries owe fealty) and Gheimirid (home of the Unseelie Court, to whom winter-seeming faeries owe fealty). The Courts unendingly bicker, but almost never war with one another, since seemings are not hereditary and faerie families are large. Spring-seeming and autumn-seeming faeries owe fealty to neither Court, and often leave the forest to seek their fortunes elsewhere.

The Benteglost

Forbidding and ice-capped, the Benteglost are mountains to the east and west of Tallahm. No nation lays a firm claim to them, and no passage over them has ever been discovered. Untold mineral wealth lies beneath them, as do vast cave systems. In its way, it is as mysterious as Coilteleitha, home to strange magic and fierce monsters. It is dotted with communities of prospectors, as well as outlaws who do not recognize Tallahm's sovereignty. Many Fair Folk live in the Benteglost as well, particularly trolls and goblins.

Foreign Powers

Pirates in the Sea of Clouds often hide among the Isles of Aelfada, which are sparsely populated. Increasingly, though, many of the isles now recognize Tallahm's authority, as its navy has grown stronger.

Across the Sea of Clouds lies Tallahm's main trading partner and ally, the kingdom of Frionny. It is unmatched in its mastery of alchemy, making it an eager market for Tallahm's more exotic ores.

Tallahm also trades with the more distant nation of Abokan. Recognizing no king, it is ruled by philosophers. Outsiders find its culture to be preoccupied with death, and rumors swirl about strange rituals and dark spiritual practices.

Lore

Social Order in Tallahm

Tallahm has a long history of hereditary feudalism, with a small number of noble families owning the land, all loyal to the nation's king and queen. Most nobles remain in Adomein's royal court, rarely visiting the tracts of land that they own.

Like most such kingdoms, its citizenry consists largely of peasants who don't own the land they work on, and who rarely travel far from the village they are born in. Peasants live hard lives, and most are superstitious and illiterate.

Guilds

Above the peasantry is a robust class of merchants, scholars, and artisans, organized into a complex system of guilds. With guild membership come greater right and protections. Although the king remains sovereign, the direction of the economy is largely decided by the guild masters.

Guild families are more cosmopolitan than the peasantry, with high rates of basic literacy. Although most settle where they were born, most have travelled to other parts of the kingdom, and a fair number have spent time at sea or abroad.

Knights

The will of the nobility is exercised by Tallahm's knights. Knights may or may not be of noble birth, and titles are not hereditary. Each knight must be elevated to their station by the king. Most knights train their successors (sometimes, but not always, their children) as squires, so the title typically comes with a lifetime of preparation.

Knights have considerable, but not unlimited, power over peasants. Although of higher station than guild members, knights cannot generally interfere directly in guild business without a royal writ.

The highest-ranking knights are the Castellans, who administer Tallahm's fortresses on behalf of whichever noble family owns the land. They have command over the soldiers stationed in their respective fortress, but cannot take those soldiers to war without a royal decree. Tallahm has many such fortresses — only the three largest fortresses are noted on the map.

On the Varieties of Fair Folk

It is traditional among humans to speak of various "races" among the Fair Folk, but this is misleading. In practice, every faerie is unique, and most bear little resemblance to their parents. Furthermore, a faerie body can change dramatically during a lifetime, as a function of experience, mood, and trauma. Certain 'types' pop up again and again, mostly due to tradition, but many faeries, especially those from the Courts, defy classification.

What all faeries have in common is that each is born into a seeming, tied to the season of its birth. This impacts a faerie's overall mood and disposition. Summer- and winter-seeming faeries owe fealty to the Seelie and Unseelie courts, respectively.

Dryads

Dryads are faeries who have fallen in love with a particular tree, grove, or parcel of land. This intense devotion can make them solitary or paranoid, and most would sooner use violence to protect their homes than flee if threatened.

Goblins

Goblins are mischievous and gregarious, usually gathering in loosely organized gangs. They are especially well suited to city living. The bodies of goblins are especially malleable, and most favor an exaggerated, caricatured appearance.

Pixies

Pixies are the smallest of the faeries, growing no larger than a small child. Some use their small stature to deceive humans, but when cornered they reveal the skills and experience of a savvy adult.

Sidhe

The sidhe are striking and ethereal. They are enthralled by history, art, and literature, and value aesthetics and refinement above practical concerns. While not nobility in a political sense, their behavior and mannerisms resemble those of human nobles.

Trolls

With powerful builds, pronounced fangs, and gnarled horns, trolls are the mountains personified. Most take discipline, honor, and self-sufficiency very seriously. While trolls are most famous for their warrior tradition, many are also accomplished artisans.

Advice For Players

Players Get First Say, The GM Gets Final Say

If the GM asks you a question you don't know the answer to (such as what a character's childhood was like), you get to make the answer up. Consider what you've learned (from the source material, your character sheet, and from play) and propose what you think would be a compelling answer. Everyone makes the story together, and it's not entirely up to the GM to invent the world.

However, not everyone will agree with every creative decision. Although it is the GM's job to incorporate player input, it is also the GM's job to keep the world from becoming self-contradictory. Once the GM has made a ruling regarding in-game reality, that ruling stands.

The Systems Of The World

Above and beyond the facts of the world, the GM may be called upon to extend or develop the rules beyond what is on the page. If a player gains the Summoner Trait, how are summonings performed? How costly are rituals, in terms of time and materials? How risky are they? Are they taboo, and if so, why?

The GM has wide latitude to rule on these questions. Players should ask questions about the tasks they are attempting, especially supernatural ones. In answering, the GM should keep in mind that characters may have limited or false information. For example, a spirit who made a deal to teach the player magic may have deliberately omitted its risks.

The GM should also try to keep things consistent. If the world worked a certain way once, it should continue to do so, even (or especially) if this creates interesting obstacles.

What's My Motivation?

When deciding how a character should react, the most important thing to consider is how the situation relates to their Keys. These provide a map of a character's current values.

However, characters change, and change keeps a story moving. As opportunities arise to satisfy a Key's buyoff condition, consider whether the character's recent experiences might have changed their thinking or perspective. Let the story mold your character into one you find interesting to play.

A character's skills also provide clues to how they have tended to approach problems in the past. For example, Dunmore has probably solved many more past problems by strength of arms than Carden (who would gain advantage by a more underhanded means) or Bhan Lorna (who may never have had to rely on violence in the past).

Reading Between The Lines

If you have a question about the characters or the world, you should always feel free to ask. However, in addition to asking, look for clues in the player materials. What world would have given rise to these characters? What knowledge of the world should players assume their characters have? How is Tallahm different today from how it was in the past? What are the cutting edges of magic and technology?

The answers to these questions should emerge from play, and can be very different from one play-through to the next. Far more important than finding the answer to any of these questions is for the players and the GM together to tell a story they enjoy, with the answers to these questions following from the story that is told.



Bhan Lorna



A maiden of the Seelie Court, wise beyond her years. Sister to Dubh Tosia.

Intuitive

6

Keys

Charming

Beautiful — Etiquette — Persuade — Motivations — Negotiate — Protocol — [Weave Glamour] — [Bind Oath]

Healer

Anatomy — Diagnose — First Aid, Surgery — [Essence] — [Apothecary] — [Dissection]

Noble

Refined

Educated — Culture — History — Languages — Lore: Faeries, [Tallahm] — [Reproach] — [Seal Pact]

Auspex

Aware — Arcane Sight — Hunch — Read Aura — [Prophecy] — [Astral Projection] — [Scrying]

New Traits

Resolve Pool

The Key of Compassion: You live to nurture other living things. Hit your Key when showing kindness or generosity to those less fortunate, especially at personal cost. Buyoff: Ignore the suffering of others.

The Key of Nobility: You are a courtier, a cut above the rest. Hit your Key when you show your superiority or when your refinement overcomes a problem. Buyoff: Renounce your courtly title.

The Key of Envy: As a paragon among faeries, you deserve the best. Hit your Key when you prevent another from enjoying a better outcome than yourself. Buyoff: Accept that you need not be the favorite.

Special Abilities

Summer-Seeming: Yours is a spirit of plenty. You can intuitively judge the health of plants and guess at what ails them. You may speak to and understand animals, although many have a very limited perspective and must be persuaded to offer assistance.

[Fearsome Nobility:] Once per refresh, you briefly become impossible to ignore. Your voice carries hundreds of feet, and eyes are drawn toward you. You get +2d to social rolls during this brief pronouncement.

Injured



Drained



Incapacitated



Dead



Angry



Shaken



Swayed



Dominated



Rolling the Dice

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Finally, add any number of dice from your **resolve pool** to your roll. These are a limited supply, but fear not. You can get resolve pool dice back later.

Roll all the dice. Each 4, 5, or 6 is a **success**. Each 1, 2, or 3 is a **miss**. The more successes, the better your character performs.

If you do well enough to pass the obstacle, discard all the dice you rolled (including any resolve pool dice used).

If you don't pass, you don't yet achieve your goal. However, if the GM allows, keep the pool dice you rolled and **add another die from your resolve pool**. The GM will escalate the danger of the situation and may inflict a **condition**.

PC vs. PC: If you contend with another PC or a major NPC, you both roll and compare your outcome levels. Based on the situation, the GM determines if both parties achieve their outcomes as rolled (they happen in **parallel**, as in a foot race), or if the actions interfere with each other (they're **perpendicular**, as in a wrestling match). If they interfere, the outcome for the winner is equal to the difference of the rolls. So, a Superb (4) roll vs. a Fair (1) roll would result in a Great (3) outcome for the winner.

Helping: If your character is in a position to help another character, you can give them one die from your resolve pool. Say what your character does to help. The outcome of the roll affects both of you.

Conditions

When events warrant (especially when a roll fails), the GM may impose a **condition** on your character. Conditions may be "physical" (Injured, Drained, Incapacitated, Dead) or "mental" (Angry, Shaken, Swayed, Dominated). They might impede performance (-1 or -2 outcome level) or may restrict your choice of action (you can't be reasonable if you're angry). Note: "Dead" condition just means "presumed dead" unless the GM says otherwise.

Keys & Experience

When you hit a Key, take an **experience point** token (XP). Each key can be hit once per scene.

If you go into danger because of your Key, you get 2 XP. When you have accumulated 5 XP, you earn an **advance**. You can spend an advance on one of the following:

- Unlock one of your bracketed [Tags] or [Special Abilities].
- Increase your maximum **resolve pool** size by one (and add a die right now). Your pool size cannot increase beyond 7.
- Add a new **Key** (you can never have the same key twice).
- Add a new **Trait** or **Special Ability** (if you have the means to).

You can save advances and spend them at any time, even during an action.

Each Key also has a **buyoff**. If the buyoff condition occurs, you have the option of replacing the Key with a new one and earning **one advance**.

Refresh

You can restore your resolve pool back to full by playing a **refreshment scene** with another character. You may also remove a **condition** (other than Dead) and regain the use of your **special abilities**. Each player asks the other a question about their character. Say how the answers are revealed in the scene, either explicitly in conversation or subtly.

Refreshment scenes can also be flashbacks.



Dubh Tosia



A thaumaturge of the Unseelie Court, who has glimpsed the mysteries. Sister to Bhan Lorna.

Cunning

4

Keys

Compelling

Alluring — Deceive — Cajole — Presence —
[Negotiate] — [Seduce] — [Weave Glamour]

Cryptic

Uncanny — Confuse — Contortionist — Intimidate —
Stealth — [Claws] — [Change Appearance]

Raveler

Initiated

Willpower — History — Rituals — [Knife] —
Lore: Arcane, Faeries, [Tallahm], [Abokan], [Spirits]

Sorcerer

Attack, Defend, Create, Sense, [Control] —
Frost, Shadows, [Pain], [Essence], [Rot] — [Fly]

New Traits

Resolve
Pool

The Key of the Mysteries: The greatest knowledge is that which has been hidden from you. Hit your Key when you learn a secret known to few, the lesser known and more impactful, the better. Buyoff: Turn your back on the unknown.

The Key of Power: The power of the gods will be yours. Hit your Key when your studies or your schemes put you in a more powerful position than you started. Buyoff: Settle for a mortal life.

The Key of Obsession: You became who you are by ignoring trivial things. Hit your Key when you favor your current passion over other distractions, especially at a cost. Buyoff: Start taking life as it comes.

Special Abilities

Winter-Seeming: Yours is a pragmatic spirit. Your embrace can draw the warmth from a person. If they fail to resist, you may (1) take a die from their resolve pool and add it to your own, (2) cause them to become Drained, or (3) put them into a sleep of unpredictable duration, during which they are immune to cold and hunger, and will not age.

[Adept:] You get +1d to rolls using the Sorcerer trait. Once per refresh, you may reroll your misses when using the Raveler identity.

Items: Inky black robes — Hexed filleting knife.

Injured



Drained



Incapacitated



Dead



Angry



Shaken



Swayed



Dominated



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Successes	Outcomes
0	Bad, Weak
1	Fair
2	Good
3	Great
4	Superb
5	Incredible
6+	Epic

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Sir Maddox

A knight of the Order of the Opal. Castellan of Alceir.

Steadfast

Hardened

Athletic — Intimidate — Survival — Tough —
[Fearless] — [Willpower]

Veteran

Attack, Defend, Maneuver — Disarm — Swordplay —
vs. Faeries, [Monsters], [Spirits]

Castellan

Educated

Accounts — Connections — History — Law —
Mediate — Riding — [Archery] — [Nobility]

Commander

Heraldry — Leadership — Military — Strategy —
Tactics — [Conscript] — [Maps] — [Rally]

New Traits

5

Resolve
Pool

Keys

The Key of Chivalry: As a knight of the order, you have sworn an oath to uphold the laws of the realm. Hit your Key when witnessing injustice compels you to action. Buyoff: Abandon the Order of the Opal.

The Key of Lordship: The common folk depend on your leadership. Hit your Key when you act to put the needs of the many above the needs of the few. Buyoff: Renounce your title.

The Key of the War-Weary: After many years of fighting, you have seen enough of war. Hit your Key when you act to preserve the peace and prevent further warfare. Buyoff: Embrace renewed conflict.

Special Abilities

The Wisdom of Age: In your many years of war and administration, you've seen it all before and have learned a few tricks. You get +1d on any roll against an opponent who is younger than yourself.

Lordship: As Castellan of Alceir, you may arrest criminals and prosecute the law. Peasantry who do not belong to a guild are required to fulfill your requests, provided they are reasonable; unreasonable requests (e.g. theft) may be grounds for censure and loss of title.

Items: Suit of armor — Heirloom long sword — Shield — Signet ring.

Injured



Drained



Incapacitated



Dead



Angry



Shaken



Swayed



Dominated



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Carden



A resourceful youth with a checkered past. Squire to Sir Maddox.

Outcast

6

Keys

Brash

Climb — Dance — Deceive — Haggle — Underdog —
[Poetry] — [Reckless] — [Unpredictable]

Survivor

Lockpicking — Scavenge — Stealth — Underworld —
[Brutal] — [Pickpocket] — [Tough]

Squire

Attendant

Alert — Inconspicuous — Riding — Servants — [First Aid]
— [Gossip] — [Repair]

Fighter

Blades, Fist, [Wrestling] — Crossbow — Dirty Fighting —
[Improvised Weapons] — [Skirmisher]

New Traits

Resolve
Pool

The Key of Ambition: You came from nothing and are now on your way to a title. Hit your Key when your actions leave you substantially better off. Buyoff: Give up on knighthood.

The Key of Loyalty: Sir Maddox has done right by you. Hit your Key when you choose loyalty to Maddox over personal gain. Buyoff: Betray the lord's trust.

The Key of the Schemer: You've made it this far on high-risk schemes. Hit your Key if you undertake a secret, deceptive, or illegal plan. Buyoff: Renounce the criminal life.

Special Abilities

Flin-Flam: Once per refresh, you may (1) add +1d when telling a lie, (2) add +2d when telling a substantial and risky lie, or (3) add +3d when telling an outrageous and perilous lie.

Knight in Training: You get +1d when acting in concert with Sir Maddox. Once per refresh, you may reroll your misses when either assisting or defending him.

Items: Nondescript clothing — Short sword — Crossbow — Lockpicks.

Injured



Drained



Incapacitated



Dead



Angry



Shaken



Swayed



Dominated



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Refreshment scenes can also be flashbacks.



Dunmore

A troll of mercenary allegiance.

Troll

Mighty

Athletic — Endure — Intimidate — Powerful — Tough —
[Stone Body] — [Tireless]

Wise

Mason — Lore: Faeries, Tallahm, [Spirits], [Wilderness] —
Patient — Rituals — Willpower — [Countermagic]

Mercenary

Experienced

Blacksmith — Languages — Tactics — Tracker —
[Carpenter] — [Underworld]

Battler

Attack, Defend, Maneuver — Axes — Use Terrain —
vs. Humans, [Faeries], [Monsters], [Spirits] — [Overrun]

New Traits

5

Resolve
Pool

Keys

The Key of the Guardian: You are Oathbound to protect the faerie sisters until they return to Court. Hit your Key when you prevent them from coming to harm. Buyoff: Break your oath **or** get them home.

The Key of the Balance-Breaker: You love being on the winning side, whomever that might be. Hit your Key when you tip the balance in favor of victory. Buyoff: Graciously accept defeat.

The Key of the Builder: Your troll nature revels in standing structures. Hit your Key when you build something that could withstand a week of harsh weather. Buyoff: Sever your tie with the land.

Special Abilities

Spring-Seeming: Yours is a spirit of possibility. Once per refresh, you may add your entire resolve pool to a single roll without spending them.

Faerie Oath: You get +1d on rolls to protect the faerie sisters. If you fulfill your oath, you lose this ability and gain an advance. If you break your oath, you lose access to one trait of the GM's choosing, and all of its tags, until you atone for your transgression.

Injured



Drained



Incapacitated



Dead



Angry



Shaken



Swayed



Dominated



Rolling the Dice

When you try to overcome an obstacle, you roll a pool of dice. Take a die if the action falls under one of your **identities** (Example, Example). Add another die for **each Trait** under that identity that applies (Example, Example). Then choose one of those Traits and add **+1 die for each of its Tags** that apply (like Example—Example, etc.). If a Tag is in *italics*, it counts for +2 dice. If a Tag is shown as a list (with commas) choose one Tag from within that list — you can't apply them all at once. **Tags in [brackets] are not available** until you unlock them with experience.

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Successes	Outcomes
0	Bad, Weak
1	Fair
2	Good
3	Great
4	Superb
5	Incredible
6+	Epic

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Shaelan

A Frionnese traveler and wilderness guide.

Keen

7

Quick

Acrobat — Evasive — Reflexes — Run — Witty —
[Blades] — [Bluff] — [Counterattack]

Perceptive

Alert — Aware — Barter — Incisive — See Ghosts —
[Speak With Ghosts] — [Speak With The Land]

Pathfinder

Hunter

Ambush — Archery — Herbalism — Stealth —
Survival — Tracker — [Camouflage] — [Trick Shot]

Traveler

Connections — Culture — Languages — Riding —
Lore: Wilderness, [Faeries], [Spirits] — [Storytelling]

New Traits

Resolve
Pool

The Key of Surprise: You love to get the drop on others. Hit your Key when your actions surprise or astonish another, especially your prey.
Buyoff: Make your plans known in advance.

The Key of the Wanderer: You become restless if you stay in one place for long. Hit your Key when you leave for a new place, especially somewhere you've never been before. Buyoff: Settle down.

The Key of Fascination: The supernatural and nonhuman fascinate you. Hit your Key when you grow further from the realm of humans and close to other realms. Buyoff: Embrace humanity as your home.

Special Abilities

True Bearings: You almost never get lost, unless influenced by magic. You always know which way is North. You may travel through faerie realms without becoming disoriented.

[Medium]: You have awakened a bridge within you to beyond the veil. Once per refresh, you may let a spirit speak through you and, if you permit it, perform actions using your body.

Items: Warm clothes — Composite bow — Survival gear.



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New Traits and Tags

Alchemist

Black Powder — Botany — Medicine — Minerals — Ores — Poisons — Potions — Purify — Salves — Transmute

Bandit

Dirty Fighting — Camouflage — Contacts — Crossbow — Knife — Looting — Survival — Underworld

Brutal

Arson — Hide Evidence — Poisons — Sabotage — Torture — vs. Faeries, Humans, Monsters, Spirits

Duelist

Agile — *Blades* — Intimidate — Reputation — Attack, Defend, Evade, Maneuver — Reflexes — Tactics

Intuitive

Alert — Aware — Epiphany — Lucky — Nimble — Quick Study — Reflexes — Steady

Miner

Dim Light — Endure — Hold Breath — Laborer — Ores — Pickaxe — Resist Cold — Strong — Tunnels

Philosopher

Geometry — History — Languages — Logic — Medicine — Lore: Abokan, Frionny, Tallahm — *Rhetoric*

Sailor

Carpenter — Climb — Fishing — Gamble — Knots — Lookout — Navigation — Signals — Swim

Tenacious

Endure — Forage — Outdoors — Resist Cold — Scavenge — Survival — Tunnels — Traps

Artisan

Brewing — Carpenter — Dyer — Jeweler — Mason — Painter — Sculptor — Smith — Tailor — Tanner — Weaver

Bard

Acting — Culture — Dancing — Gossip — History — Drums, Pipes, Strings — Memorize — Singing — Storytelling

Dashing

Charming — Cover Story — Forgery — Gamble — Gossip — Haggle — Seduce — Sleight Of Hand

Hedge Mage

Attack, Defend, Create — Fire, Stone, Water, Wind — Apothecary — Hex — Lore: Faeries, Spirits — Medicine

Landseer

Dowsing — Longsight — Rituals — Speak With Plants — Speak With The Land — Weather Sense

Peasant

Farming — Cooking — Folk Music — Herbalist — Hatchet, Sickle, Scythe — Laborer — Livestock

Priest

Accounts — Connections — History — Law — Lore: Tallahm, Spirits — Rituals — Smite

Summoner

Banish, Bind, Conjure, Seal — Willpower — Lore: Arcane, Faeries, Monsters, Spirits — Rituals

Wealthy

Bribery — Connections — Credit — Heraldry — Law — Management — Negotiate — Reputation — Riding

Note: When you buy a new Trait, you don't start with any Tags. You need to buy them separately with advances.

Character Details

Human Names

FEMALE: Ailis, Aove, Barabala, Cait, Dorin, Evir, Flori, Gwin, Hawen, Jeela, Lairown, Maighread, Milread, Mor, Niamora, Oorna, Panaih, Rowoa, Sheena, Sorcha, Teerih, Uwe, Vanvia, Xian.

MALE: Alpin, Aulay, Artair, Cole, Cormac, Doncan, Ellar, Edmund, Fearghas, Frang, Graeme, Jomhar, Luthais, Marckis, Ohdock, Para, Pol, Ristern, Ruisart, Seoc, Sim, Tahg, Ulan, Yortim.

COMMON SURNAMES: Cair[father's name] (e.g. CairSeoc) or Linn[mother's name] (e.g. LinnDorin); occupational names (Barber, Cartwright, Cooper, Draper, Fletcher, Glover, Mason, Miller, Tapper, Shepherd, Smith, Weaver).

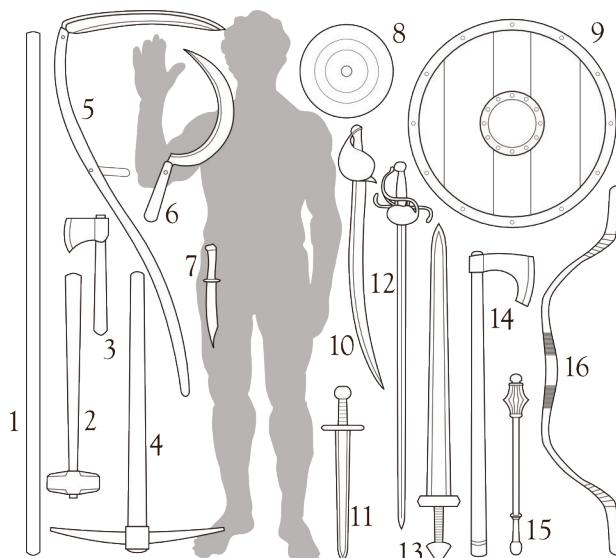
NOBLE SURNAMES: Aeton, Bercromb, Carghim, Dannatyne, Gorroway, Harrapin, Kirkaldo, Lunsim, Ruthern, Wrollo.

Faerie Names

FEMALE: Aoife, Avrawn, Banba, Catriona, Clodah, Darerka, Etain, Eynah, Glinni, Isleen, Jiara, Keevuh, Maeve, Meera, Mwanot, Noolig, Orisee, Orla, Ranigah, Saive, Sheersa, Sorka, Tressa, Uxia

MALE: Abban, Arnmire, Aveluf, Ardahl, Booack, Caolan, Cathal, Darrah, Diarmuid, Enda, Ferdia, Fiokra, Fintan, Garvan, Lorcan, Malakai, Mwail, Ohdran, Rueree, Ruus, Tieguh, Turlock, Usheen

NOBLE TITLES: Bhan (white), Dherg (red), Dubh (black), Gaef (purple), Galce (green), Garm (blue), Raist (yellow).



PEASANT TOOLS: (1) Staff (2) Sledge (3) Hatchet (4) Pickaxe (5) Scythe (6) Sickle (7) Knife.

WEAPONS OF WAR: (8) Buckler (9) Shield (10) Cutlass (11) Short Sword (12) Rapier (13) Long Sword (14) Bearded Axe (15) Mace (16) Composite Bow.

New Keys

The Key of the Ascetic: You derive solace and serenity from freeing yourself from base pleasures. Hit your Key whenever you pass up a comfort that you can do without. Buyoff: Treat yourself.

The Key of the Comedian: You're pretty funny, and you know it. Hit your Key when your character says something that makes the other players laugh. Buyoff: Everyone groans at your joke instead.

The Key of the Gladiator: You fight as much to impress as to win. Hit your Key when you successfully use your fighting skills in a showy, flamboyant way. Buyoff: Pass up a chance to show off.

The Key of the Imposter: You have shed your old identity and now live a new, very different life. Hit your Key when someone is persuaded by your cover story. Buyoff: Reveal your true identity to someone you fooled.

The Key of the Outcast: Branded as a villain, you now live at the fringe of society. Hit your Key when your status causes trouble or impacts a scene. Buyoff: Receive a formal pardon for your crimes.

The Key of the Pragmatist: You have little time for emotion, and less for art. Hit your Key when you cause logic to prevail over sentiment. Buyoff: Have an experience that leaves you beside yourself.

The Key of the Romantic: Life without love, or its promise, holds little meaning for you. Hit your Key when you take risks out of infatuation or romantic devotion. Buyoff: Give up on love.

The Key of the Scoundrel: Honesty and rules are for suckers. Hit your Key when you get ahead by lying or by acting unscrupulously, especially toward people who trust you. Buyoff: Commit to a code of ethics.

The Key of Temptation: You love to talk people into things they shouldn't do. Hit your Key when you inspire someone to indulge or to act recklessly. Buyoff: Persuade someone to exercise caution.

The Key of Vice: Be it drinking, smoking, or gambling, you indulge a variety of vices. Hit your Key when you put these needs above other concerns, especially at personal cost. Buyoff: Quit cold turkey.

The Key of the Broker: You like to wheel and deal. Hit your Key when you strike a bargain, make a trade, or gain a favor to be cashed in later. Buyoff: Cut yourself off from your network of contacts.

The Key of Family: The safety and wellbeing of your family is central to who you are. Hit your Key when you put family first, especially at personal cost. Buyoff: Forsake your family.

The Key of the Host: Even when just gathering some fine folks around a campfire, you want everyone to be comfortable. Hit your Key when you take care of your companions. Buyoff: Let people fend for themselves.

The Key of the Oracle: You feel powerfully about the future. Hit your Key when a prediction you have made about a future event comes to pass. Buyoff: Spend time considering the past instead.

The Key of the Pirate: No mere thief, you seek infamy for your dastardly deeds. Hit your Key when your performative criminality adds to your reputation. Buyoff: Abandon the criminal life.

The Key of the Reformer: Injustice is everywhere, but it is not inevitable. Hit your Key when your efforts change a community for the better, even in a small way. Buyoff: Focus instead on your own interests.

The Key of Ruin: You've done terrible, unspeakable things. Hit your Key when the shadows of your past overwhelm you and force you to turn away. Buyoff: Make peace with the past.

The Key of the Soldier: You find meaning in loyalty to a clear chain of command. Hit your Key when you play your part, both following and giving orders. Buyoff: Desert those to whom you swore loyalty.

The Key of the Trickster: Life a play, and you are its cannier player. Hit your Key when you deceive someone, especially if it results in deserved embarrassment. Buyoff: Be open and honest with someone.

New Special Abilities

Banality: Your essence is anathema to magic. Magical effects either fail or are reduced, at the GM's discretion. In opposed rolls against magical forces, you receive two free successes. This applies to all magic, both beneficial and harmful. Requires: Consume essence of cinnabar.

Enchanter: You carry the spark needed to imbue objects with permanent magic. The GM determines if an effect is possible, and what ingredients and rituals are needed. Requires: Eat of the World Tree's fruit.

Famous: In any populated area, your name and deeds are widely known. People will only vaguely know your appearance, but most can be persuaded of your identity. This will garner all sorts of attention, good and bad. Requires: Perform a celebrated (or reviled) feat.

Lifeweaver: Once per refresh, you can gain one physical condition (e.g. Drained) to remove a condition from another character (e.g. Dead). This requires an extended ritual. If interrupted, you fail, and gain the condition you were trying to remove. Requires: Training by a Lifeweaver.

Living Weapon: Through intense, mystical training, your punches and kicks now land like hammers. Bare-fisted, you can split wood, bend metal, and cause grievous harm. Requires: Training under a master.

Mentor: You have taken on an apprentice. You may add +1d when assisting their rolls without spending your own resolve dice. Requires: Mastery of a relevant skill set.

Nighttouched: You can see well enough that a full moon seems as bright as the sun. By the light of the stars alone, you see as others do at dusk, and in total darkness, you see as if by candlelight. Daylight is painfully, blindingly bright. Requires: Enter into a pact with a night spirit.

Rabble Rouser: Once per refresh, while in a town, you can recruit some layabouts. This mob won't act against their interests, but will reward sensible leadership with loyalty. Requires: Experience with leadership.

Revenant: You died with unfinished business. You have returned with a singular obsession, having gaunt features, fearsome strength (+2d), and a greatly muted sense of pain. Requires: The Dead condition.

Stonetouched: In your bare hands, raw stone is pliable. Softer stone (e.g. sandstone) has the consistency of mud, while hard stone (e.g. granite) has the consistency of thick clay. You always speak and move slowly, a brisk walk at most. Requires: Enter into a pact with a mountain spirit.

Suntouched: Plants near you grow rapidly, just fast enough to be seen with the eye, and roughly as your will directs them. Your skin is unpleasantly warm and glows like a hot ember. Without precautions, overnight growth can smother you. Requires: Enter into a pact with a forest spirit.

Willworker: If you focus, you can move small items (under 10 lbs.) with your mind. Doing so, you may perform any action, even while bound, albeit with a penalty of -2d. Requires: A near-death experience.

Obstacles & Difficulties

Ambushed by Bandits

Bandits are lying in wait. There seem to be quite a few of them, and they've had time to set up hides and traps. How did they know you were coming this way?

OBSTACLES: Take cover from arrows: 4. Fight one bandit: 3. Fight multiple bandits: 5. Bargain with them: 4. Pull a dirty trick to turn the tables: 3. Track the fleeing bandits back to their camp: 4. Creep into the camp without being detected: 5.

ESCALATION: Someone is grabbed and held at knifepoint. An unseen crossbow trap is triggered. The fleeing bandits are actually leading the party into another ambush!

Sneak into a Castle

The gate is up and the soldiers inside are hostile. Inside, a renegade lord's correspondence will no doubt reveal his role in the conspiracy. How will the party infiltrate the inner sanctum to retrieve the proof they need?

OBSTACLES: Approach the wall unseen: 2. Get a grappling hook firmly anchored: 4. Scale the wall without a rope: 6. Steal a guard's outfit: 4. Deduce the patrol patterns: 4. Pick the lock to the master suite: 3. Pick the lock quickly and quietly enough to avoid detection: 5. Translate a letter in a foreign tongue: 3.

ESCALATION: Drifting off to sleep, you've lost several precious hours of darkness. A patrol notices unexpected movement. The alarm has been raised!

Track Down Clues at the Docks

In a city this big, someone has to have seen or heard something. It's all down to asking the right people the right questions. But you might need to call in some favors, or even find yourself in debt to some shady folks.

OBSTACLES: Gossip with the fishwives: 2. Stake out a dive bar: 3. Tail a suspicious character: 4. Cozy up to a drunken gangster: 3. Bluff your way into a private game of cards: 4. Win the pot: 5.

ESCALATION: Someone is sowing doubts about you. You've been framed for a crime you didn't commit. A gang of thugs are closing in and this alley has no exits!

Navigate a Royal Masquerade

All these nobles have something to hide, but someone here isn't who they say they are. Then again, neither are you. It's going to take a delicate touch to suss out what's happening without making waves and offending your host.

OBSTACLES: Pass as a foreign noble: 3. Pass as a member of local nobility: 5. Make a good impression on your host: 4. Perform moving impromptu oratory: 4. Read lips from a few feet away: 3. Read lips across the room: 5. Detect which chalice has poison in it: 5. Switch the chalices without anyone noticing: 4. Switch while someone is creating a distraction: 3.

ESCALATION: The guests are murmuring about you. Someone is making pointed comments to the host. The captain of the guard is approach, and he looks angry!

Walk the Faerie Roads

There can be no maps of the faerie roads, because they twist differently for each who walks them. But this cuts both ways: Strong enough minds can bend them to their will.

OBSTACLES: Prevent the road from ejecting you from the forest altogether: 3. Straighten a crooked path by sheer will: 5. Battle a bridge troll: 5. Solve the troll's riddle instead: 4. Get to where you need to be, rather than where you had intended to go: 6.

ESCALATION: You've passed this tree before. The road has trapped you in a closed loop. Those seem like unnaturally large wolves in the shadows. And they have human faces!

Clash with a Sorcerer

Sorcerers are at their most dangerous when you challenge them in their place of power, but countless evils will be unleashed if his dark ritual isn't interrupted!

OBSTACLES: Subdue the horde of imps protecting the tower: 4. Untangle the magical wards holding the doors shut: 5. Delay the completion of the ritual: 2. Disrupt the ritual without regard to consequence: 4. Reverse the ritual entirely, undoing its intended effect: 6. Dodge the sorcerer's bolts of pure darkness: 3. Maneuver a blade past his protective shell of swirling debris: 5.

ESCALATION: Your arms become sluggish and leaden (Drained). The furniture comes alive and attacks. The ritual is completed and something unspeakable is emerging from the portal!

Running The Game

Listen & Ask Questions, Don't Plan

When you are the GM, don't try to plan what will happen. Instead, ask questions — lots and lots of questions. Point them toward the things you are interested in. For example:

"That sounds like a bold plan. What's the first step?"

"Does the city have an outer wall? Are its gates guarded?"

"How does the bridge handle having so many people on it at once?"

"Have you met the prince before? What was your last interaction like?"

"Do you know anything about the Order of the Compass? What are they like? Is it normal to see one of their patrols here?"

Part of the GM's job is listening to what the players say, catching it, and deciding whether something more that can be done with it.

Say Yes, Look For the Obstacles

By default, characters can accomplish things covered by their traits. They're competent and effective people. If there is no obstacle, say yes to the action, listen, and ask questions as usual. Call for die rolls when you spot an obstacle as the action develops.

Obstacles can be people (bandits, assassins, nobles), weather, animals (wolves, bears), monsters (wyverns, manticores), situations (fire, falling, rains of arrows), or even inexperience (a character doing something not covered by their traits). Anything that presents challenge and uncertainty, is worth rolling dice to resolve.

When die rolls fail, the typical consequence is more obstacles, keeping the action moving.

Conditions

A condition constrains what the player should say about their character. It's also a feature that the GM and the player can incorporate into the unfolding story. Conditions often provide interesting ways to present players with obstacles, which require rolls to overcome (e.g. maintaining composure when Angry, avoiding bloodhounds when Injured, and so forth).

Conditions are either physical (Injured, Drained, Incapacitated, Dead) or mental (Angry, Swayed, Shaken, Dominated). Although characters may not remove the Dead condition during a refreshment scene, there are several ways that this condition may be removed. Doing so may be a quest in its own right. The GM and player should approach this as an opportunity to take the story in a new direction.

Using Graluach

Unlike most NPCs, Graluach is presented as a full-fledged character. This makes him a more effective antagonist, because the GM can clearly see how many dice he would receive for opposed rolls. He also provides a template for characters with a more villainous skill set. However, players may be tempted to use him as a PC.

Whether Graluach is a playable character is ultimately the GM's decision, but allowing it comes with some risk. The other players may decide, for example, that Graluach should be executed for his crimes, which could lead to hard feelings among players. As an alternative, the GM may keep Graluach off the table until such time that (a) the other characters are persuaded of Graluach's loyalty and (b) one of the other characters dies. In that case, Graluach can be used as an alternate character.

Graluach

A goblin assassin and denizen of the night.

Goblin

5

Keys

Sneaky

Agile — Contortionist — Night Vision — Quick —
Stealth — Teeth, Claws — [Warp Body]

Crafty

Alert — Explosives — Jury-Rig — Lockpicking —
Sabotage — Tinkerer — [Mechanist] — [Countermagic]

Assassin

Deceptive

Bluff — Disguise — Distraction — Inconspicuous —
Sleight of Hand — [Mimic Voice] — [Warp Shadows]

Deadly

Attack, Defend, Maneuver — Blades — Blowgun —
Poison — vs. Faeries, [Humans] — [Improvised Weapons]

New Traits

Resolve
Pool

The Key of the Killer: Taking lives makes you feel powerful. Hit your Key when you end a creature's life. Buyoff: Come to cherish life.

The Key of the Magpie: You love material wealth, the more opulent the better. Hit your Key when you make something of value your own. Buyoff: Give up a valuable possession.

The Key of the Listener: You love stories and histories. Hit your Key when you hear a new story for the first time. Buyoff: Stop listening to a story midway and never learn its ending.

Special Abilities

Autumn-Seeming: Yours is a spirit of change. Once per refresh, you may, with concentration and effort, change the state of a touched inanimate object no bigger than a fist. Examples include melting or freezing water, causing wood to rot, forming sand into sandstone, or igniting a flame no larger than a candle.

Coup de Grace: If you achieve at least a Great outcome (3 successes) when attacking, you may choose one physical condition (Injured, Drained, Incapacitated, Dead) to apply to your opponent.

Items: Stealth suit — Twin fighting knives — Blowgun — Paralytic poison.

Injured



Drained



Incapacitated



Dead



Angry



Shaken



Swayed



Dominated



Rolling the Dice

When you try to overcome an obstacle, you roll a pool of dice. Take a die if the action falls under one of your **identities** (Example, Example). Add another die for **each Trait** under that identity that applies (Example, Example). Then choose one of those Traits and add **+1 die for each of its Tags** that apply (like Example—Example, etc.). If a Tag is in *italics*, it counts for +2 dice. If a Tag is shown as a list (with commas) choose one Tag from within that list — you can't apply them all at once. **Tags in [brackets] are not available** until you unlock them with experience.

Finally, add any number of dice from your **resolve pool** to your roll. These are a limited supply, but fear not. You can get resolve pool dice back later.

Roll all the dice. Each 4, 5, or 6 is a **success**. Each 1, 2, or 3 is a **miss**. The more successes, the better your character performs.

If you do well enough to pass the obstacle, discard all the dice you rolled (including any resolve pool dice used).

If you don't pass, you don't yet achieve your goal. However, if the GM allows, keep the pool dice you rolled and **add another die from your resolve pool**. The GM will escalate the danger of the situation and may inflict a **condition**.

PC vs. PC: If you contend with another PC or a major NPC, you both roll and compare your outcome levels. Based on the situation, the GM determines if both parties achieve their outcomes as rolled (they happen in **parallel**, as in a foot race), or if the actions interfere with each other (they're **perpendicular**, as in a wrestling match). If they interfere, the outcome for the winner is equal to the difference of the rolls. So, a Superb (4) roll vs. a Fair (1) roll would result in a Great (3) outcome for the winner.

Helping: If your character is in a position to help another character, you can give them one die from your resolve pool. Say what your character does to help. The outcome of the roll affects both of you.

Successes	Outcomes
0	Bad, Weak
1	Fair
2	Good
3	Great
4	Superb
5	Incredible
6+	Epic

Conditions

When events warrant (especially when a roll fails), the GM may impose a **condition** on your character. Conditions may be "physical" (Injured, Drained, Incapacitated, Dead) or "mental" (Angry, Shaken, Swayed, Dominated). They might impede performance (-1 or -2 outcome level) or may restrict your choice of action (you can't be reasonable if you're angry). Note: "Dead" condition just means "presumed dead" unless the GM says otherwise.

Keys & Experience

When you hit a Key, take an **experience point** token (XP). Each key can be hit once per scene.

If you go into danger because of your Key, you get 2 XP. When you have accumulated 5 XP, you earn an **advance**. You can spend an advance on one of the following:

- Unlock one of your bracketed [Tags] or [Special Abilities].
- Increase your maximum **resolve pool** size by one (and add a die right now). Your pool size cannot increase beyond 7.
- Add a new **Key** (you can never have the same key twice).
- Add a new **Trait** or **Special Ability** (if you have the means to).

You can save advances and spend them at any time, even during an action.

Each Key also has a **buyoff**. If the buyoff condition occurs, you have the option of replacing the Key with a new one and earning **one advance**.

Refresh

You can restore your resolve pool back to full by playing a **refreshment scene** with another character. You may also remove a **condition** (other than Dead) and regain the use of your **special abilities**. Each player asks the other a question about their character. Say how the answers are revealed in the scene, either explicitly in conversation or subtly.

Refreshment scenes can also be flashbacks.

Sisters, Fair and Wild

WRITING, LAYOUT, & ART

Greg Jensen

Illustrations adapted from works by Simon Fokke (circa 1760) and Linda Salzman (circa 1972).

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Lord of the Rings, Changeling: The Dreaming, A Game of Thrones, Brian Froud & Alan Lee,
The Books of Magic, Andrew Lang, Countess d'Aulnoy, A Heart in Sun and Shadow

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