

Fate's Edge: Player's Guide

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Fate's Edge: Player's Guide

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Chapter 1

Welcome to Fate's Edge

A world where every choice carries weight, every spell risks backlash, and every legend is written in the shadow of consequence.

Welcome to **Fate's Edge**, a tabletop roleplaying game where narrative drives mechanics, and every decision shapes not only your character's path—but the world around them. This is not a game of perfect successes or clean victories. It is a game of risk, drama, and legacy.

What Is This Game?

Fate's Edge is a narrative-first RPG where:

- Every roll introduces potential for triumph *and* complication
- Magic is powerful—but dangerous
- Choices ripple outward, shaping character arcs and the setting
- Growth is meaningful, earned through experience spent on skills and assets

This guide helps you build a character, understand the setting, and step into a world where your actions matter.

Core Principles

The game is built on four key ideas:

Narrative First Mechanics serve the story. Rules reward descriptive play and creative problem-solving.

Risk Creates Drama Every roll carries tension. Even success may come at a cost.

Meaningful Growth Experience is a currency of choice. Invest in yourself or your influence on the world.

Consequences Matter No action is free. Every choice changes the fiction.

Style of Play

Expect cinematic, collaborative storytelling:

- Stories driven by character choices
- A world that reacts to your decisions
- Themes of legacy, sacrifice, and moral choices

Whether you're a lone duelist, a scheming mastermind, or a spirit-touched outlander, your path is yours to forge.

Guide Structure

This Player's Guide contains:

- **Core Mechanics** — Action resolution, experience spending, consequences
- **Character Creation** — Attributes, skills, paths, and archetypes
- **Magic and Talents** — Dangerous arts and unique abilities
- **World and Lore** — Lands, peoples, and cultures
- **Assets and Allies** — Building influence beyond yourself
- **Appendices** — Quick references and generators

How to Use This Book

Read cover to cover or jump to relevant sections. Each chapter stands alone while connecting to broader themes.

Use with the *System Reference Document* for full mechanical support.

Getting Started

This is a game of bold choices and lasting consequences. Your story is written in decisions—not dice rolls.

Welcome to the Edge. The world is watching.

What will you risk to reshape the world?

Flavor is Free

Players: Remember that **flavor is free!**

Add descriptive details, cultural elements, and atmospheric touches without spending resources or requiring rolls. Want to parry with a traditional technique? Go ahead! Want to describe seasonal festivals during a social roll? Perfect!

Flavor enriches the narrative without changing mechanical outcomes. Describe your character's background, customs, or scene details. The Game Master should encourage this and reciprocate. Mechanics determine success or failure, but flavor determines the story we tell.

Narrative-Heavy Gameplay Options

For groups that prefer strong narrative focus, consider these optional approaches:

Collaborative Scene Framing: Players may suggest scene elements (weather, NPC reactions, environmental details) that fit the established fiction, with GM approval.

Intent-Driven Resolution: For non-combat actions where success is reasonably assured, the GM may ask players to describe *how* they accomplish their goal rather than rolling dice.

Flashback Declarations: Players can declare a flashback scene to establish that something happened in the past (acquiring an item, making a connection, learning information) by spending 1 Boon and describing the scene.

Descriptive Assistance: Players can assist each other by providing vivid, helpful descriptions of the action, granting a +1 die bonus to the primary actor's roll.

Narrative Control Points: Each player starts each session with 1 Narrative Control Point. They can spend it to:

- Introduce a minor NPC who provides useful information or assistance
- Establish that they have a useful item on hand (within reason)
- Create a favorable environmental detail

These points refresh each session and encourage proactive storytelling.

Chapter 2

Core Mechanics

In this game, every action matters. The dice don't just tell you if you succeed—they shape the story by introducing tension, risk, and consequence. Fate's Edge is designed to keep the story moving forward, even when things go wrong. This chapter covers the core resolution system and how every roll changes the narrative.

2.1 Basic Dice Mechanics

When you attempt a significant action, you roll a pool of ten-sided dice (d10s). The size of your pool is determined by two factors:

$$DicePool = Attribute + Skill$$

Attribute (1–5) Broad traits like strength, wit, or charm.

Skill (0–5) Training or expertise in a specific area.

Reading the Dice

Each die that rolls **6 or higher** counts as a **Success**. Each die that rolls a **1** generates a **Story Beat (SB)**.

| Die Result | Effect |
|------------|--------------------|
| 6–6 | +1 Success |
| 1 | +1 Story Beat (SB) |
| 2–5 | No effect |

Example: Lyra the rogue has Agility 3 and Stealth 2. Her dice pool is 5 dice. She rolls: 6, 4, 3, 1, 6. That gives her 2 Successes and 1 Story Beat. The GM sets the Difficulty Value at 2. Lyra succeeds at sneaking past the guards, but the GM now has 1 SB to spend—perhaps the guards hear something faintly and become suspicious.

2.2 The Description Ladder

Players can enhance their actions through detailed descriptions, which can reduce Story Beats generated by 1s:

Basic Action Roll the pool as-is. All 1s remain as Story Beats.

Detailed Action A clear, descriptive flourish allows the player to re-roll one die showing 1.

Intricate Action A richly described, multi-sensory action allows the player to re-roll all dice showing 1, and add one positive narrative flourish to the scene if they succeed.

Rule: Re-rolling 1s does not remove the Story Beats already generated by those dice. If any re-rolled dice show 1 again, they generate additional SB as normal.

2.3 Difficulty Value (DV)

Before rolling, the Game Master sets a **Difficulty Value (DV)**—the target number of Successes needed.

| DV | Situation |
|----|------------------------------|
| 2 | Routine action, no pressure |
| 3 | Pressured, mild opposition |
| 4 | Difficult, active resistance |
| 5+ | Extreme, high stakes |

Tip for Players: A DV of 3 is the most common challenge. Assume that if the GM asks you to roll, there is something at stake—whether it is your safety, your resources, or your reputation.

2.4 Outcome Matrix

Compare your Successes against the DV:

| Outcome | Effect |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Clean Success | Goal achieved cleanly |
| Success & Cost | Goal achieved with complication |
| Partial | Progress but with difficult choice |
| Miss | No progress; complication occurs |

Player-Facing Example: A fighter swings her sword to disarm a bandit. She rolls 3 Successes against DV 2—a Clean Success. The bandit’s blade clatters away. Later, the same fighter tries to kick down a reinforced door with 4 dice against DV 4. She rolls only 2 Successes. This is a Partial. She cracks the door frame, but the noise attracts attention. The story moves forward either way.

2.4.1 Critical Success

Rolling a **10** on any die indicates a critical tier of success. Each 10 adds weight to the outcome:

- **One 10:** Strong success with a free boon, improved Position, or other narrative flourish.
- **Two 10s:** Exceptional success; choose two benefits or a single powerful effect.
- **Three 10s:** Legendary success; the action transcends mortal limits and resolves the conflict dramatically.
- **Four+ 10s:** Mythic success; the GM and table agree the result reshapes the scene or story outright.

If no 10s are rolled, resolve the action normally by the highest die result.

2.5 Boons

Boons are narrative currency that players can spend to influence the story in their favor. You can hold up to 5 Boons at a time.

Earning Boons

You gain Boons through:

- **Partial Success:** When you achieve a Partial outcome (successes $< DV$ but > 0), you gain **1 Boon**
- **Missed Actions:** When you miss entirely (0 successes), you gain **2 Boons**
- **Bond-Driven Actions:** When you take an Intricate action that meaningfully engages a character bond, you may gain 1 Boon (once per bond per session)
- **GM Award:** The GM may award Boons for creative solutions, spotlighting bonds, or meaningful sacrifices

Requirements for Action Awards

Boons from Partial/miss outcomes are awarded only if:

1. Procedure was followed correctly (intent declared, DV set, roll resolved)
2. Stakes were clearly stated (what changes on success/failure)
3. Consequence actually occurs (GM spends or banks SB, applies condition, or advances thread)

Important Note: Rehearsal/null-risk probes and repeated identical attempts in the same scene do not award Boons. If it feels like an obvious fishing attempt, don't award a Boon.

Spending Boons

You can spend Boons to:

- Re-roll a single die in a pool
- Activate an on-screen Asset
- Power a Rite or magical ability
- Improve Position by 1 step
- Convert to XP (2 Boons = 1 XP, once per session during downtime, max 2 XP via conversion per session)

Carryover Limits

At the end of each scene, reduce held Boons to a maximum of **2**. Excess Boons are lost. This encourages you to spend them rather than hoard.

Why This Matters: The system rewards engagement with risk. Even when you don't fully succeed, you gain resources to help push the story forward. Failures become opportunities, and partial successes still offer chances to turn the tide.

2.5.1 Position

Every action in Fate's Edge takes place from a **Position** that reflects the character's advantage or disadvantage in the scene. Position sets the tone for the roll, narratively and mechanically. It comes in three states:

- **Dominant:** You act from a place of control, leverage, or overwhelming advantage.
- **Controlled:** The standard state of play. Outcomes are uncertain but balanced.
- **Desperate:** You act from dire straits, cornered or overmatched, with everything at stake.

Re-roll Mechanic. Position modifies the dice pool through simple re-rolls:

| Position | Narrative Frame | Mechanical Effect |
|------------|--------------------------|----------------------------|
| Dominant | You press your advantage | Re-roll one <i>failure</i> |
| Controlled | The balanced norm | No re-rolls |
| Desperate | You act under duress | Re-roll one <i>success</i> |

2.6 Story Beats (SB)

Story Beats are narrative tools the Game Master uses to introduce twists and tension. They keep the story alive with complications and surprises.

What SB Can Do

The GM may spend SB to:

- Introduce new threats or complications
- Drain resources (time, gear, position)
- Reveal hidden dangers
- Cause collateral damage

SB Spend Examples

- **1 SB** — Minor complication, noise, trace
- **2 SB** — Moderate setback, alarm raised
- **3 SB** — Serious trouble, reinforcements arrive
- **4+ SB** — Major turn, scene shifts dramatically

Player Advice: Don't fear Story Beats—they're not punishment. They are fuel for drama, ensuring the spotlight never dims.

2.7 Harm and Fatigue

Physical injury and exhaustion are tracked through two systems:

2.7.1 Initiative and Turn Order

Fate's Edge does not use fixed initiative. Turn order follows the fiction and the GM's facilitation:

- **Narrative Fiat:** The GM frames spotlight order based on circumstances, tension, and narrative flow.
- **Player Input:** Players may suggest acting when it makes sense in the fiction.
- **Surprise:** Ambushers act first; targets respond after the opening exchange.
- **Flexibility:** Spotlight may shift mid-scene if fictionally appropriate (e.g., reacting to a falling ceiling, seizing a moment).

This ensures pacing and drama guide the sequence of actions, not rigid turn structures.

2.7.2 Turn Economy (Quick Rules)

Two Actions. Each character takes *1 Action and 1 Move* on their turn. Actions and Moves may be taken in any order; repeating the same Action is not allowed unless noted.

Move. Traverse up to your normal movement. *Disengage:* move without provoking; your next offensive action is **Controlled**. *Dash:* move again this turn; your next defense is **Desperate**.

Attack. Make a melee or ranged attack versus DV set by the GM and fiction. Teamwork/Assist costs 1 Boon.

Observe / Change Position (+1). Take a beat to read the field or set angles; gain **+1 Position** for one action this turn (e.g., Controlled→Dominant). Limit: once/turn; cannot exceed **Dominant**.

Activate an Asset. Use gear, symbol, tool, or feature per its text/tags (e.g., torch, grapnel, smoke vial, rune focus). Items with [Action] consume one Action; [Free] do not.

Setup (Teamwork). Create advantage for an ally; on success, grant their next action **+1 Position** or step up Effect (GM's call).

Assist (Teamwork). Spend 1 Boon to give an ally *+1 die* on their current roll; you share appropriate risk/consequence.

Defend / Protect. Adopt a guarding stance or body-block. Choose a nearby ally; until your next turn you may intercept one hit on them and roll to resist it. On success, reduce/negate Harm; you take any fallout the GM assigns.

Channel / Weave. Runekeeper/ritual flow: *Channel* (prime power) then *Weave* (shape/release). Disruption or engagement may worsen Position; if *Interrupted*, the casting fails.

Cast Rite / Song (Cantor). Perform a Rite/Song per its write-up. You may *Push* to accelerate or empower at the cost of Fatigue/Corruption per class rules.

Interact. Lift, pull, flip a lever, shove a foe, break an object, apply a poultice, reload, draw/stow, etc. GM sets DV/Effect.

Free Items. Short shouts, dropping an item, quick glance. Longer or tactical assessments require *Observe / Change Position* or *Interact*.

Reactions (Out of Turn). *Protection* may trigger when an ally is hit and you are in position. Class/Asset reactions fire as written (e.g., counter-runes, ripostes).

Position Caps. Bonuses cannot raise Position above **Dominant**; penalties cannot drop below **Desperate**. Beyond these caps, adjust DV or Effect instead.

Fatigue Track

Each character has a Fatigue Track equal to their Body attribute. Mark Fatigue for:

- Physical exertion
- Magical strain
- Travel stress
- Mental pressure

2.7.3 Fatigue

Track: Each character has a Fatigue track equal to **Body**. Mark Fatigue for exertion, strain, or backlash.

In Play: Each Fatigue step worsens your **Position** by one level (Controlled → Risky → Desperate). If you are already **Desperate**, instead apply a **−1 die** penalty per Fatigue to that roll.

Overflow: When your Fatigue track fills, immediately increase **Harm by 1 step** and clear all Fatigue to 0. If this raises Harm to a level that incapacitates you, you fall out of the scene as normal for Harm.

Recovery: Short rest clears 1–2 Fatigue; a full night’s rest clears all Fatigue.

Harm Levels

| Harm Level | Effects |
|---------------|--------------------------------------|
| Harm 1 | -1 die on related actions |
| Harm 2 | -1 die on most actions until treated |
| Harm 3 | Incapacitated or dying |

Recovering Fatigue

- **Short Rest** — Remove 2 Fatigue with food/water
- **Full Night** — Remove all Fatigue

Recovering Harm

- **Minor treatment** — Downgrade Harm with time/rest
- **Proper medical care** — Remove Harm levels
- **Extended recovery** — Heal severe injuries

Example: Jorin the mercenary takes a sword cut (Harm 1). He suffers -1 die to physical actions until treated. After binding the wound and resting, the Harm fades.

2.8 Assistance

Characters can help each other. One helper per action may provide assistance by spending 1 Boon or 1 Stress, adding +1 die to the primary actor's roll. Maximum +3 dice from assists.

Example: Two thieves cooperate to pick a complex lock. The lead thief has Dexterity 3 + Tools 2 = 5 dice. The helper spends 1 Boon to add 1 die, making 6. Cooperation often turns failure into tense success.

2.9 Weapons & Armor

2.9.1 Weapons by Weight Class

- **Light (4 XP)** — fast, concealable.
- **Medium (8 XP)** — balanced, battlefield standard.
- **Heavy (12 XP)** — punishing, slow.

Melee

| Weight | Close | Near | Notes |
|--------|-------|------|--|
| Light | +2d | +1d | Quick, tight quarters |
| Medium | +1d | +2d | <i>Set</i> 1/scene or -1d first attack |
| Heavy | -1d | +3d | <i>Set</i> 1/scene or -2d first attack |

Ranged & Tempo

| Weight | Tempo | Close | Near | Far |
|---------------|----------|-----------|------|-----|
| Light (4 XP) | Fast | Risky | +1d | — |
| Medium (8 XP) | Standard | Desperate | +2d | +1d |
| Heavy (12 XP) | Slow | Desperate | +1d | +3d |

Tempo: **Fast** = Move+Shoot. **Standard** = Move or Shoot, Aim +1d/Effect. **Slow** = Set/Brace, full reload, cannot Move+Shoot.

2.9.2 Weapon Tags (Optional, +4 XP each, max 2)

Reach, Close, Accurate, Brutal, Hook, Concealable, Quickdraw, Two-Handed, Off-Hand.

2.9.3 Shields (Optional)

| Shield | XP | Benefit | Tradeoff |
|---------|----|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| Buckler | 4 | +1d Defend vs melee or +1 DV | Off-hand |
| Heater | 8 | +1d Defend; 1 Harm→Fatigue | -1d Ranged |
| Pavise | 12 | <i>Plant</i> : heavy cover cone | Bulky, immobile |

2.9.4 Armor

| Armor | XP | Conversion | Penalty |
|--------|----|------------------|-------------------------|
| Light | 4 | 1 Harm→1 Fatigue | — |
| Medium | 8 | 2 Harm→1 Fatigue | −1d physical |
| Heavy | 12 | 3 Harm→2 Fatigue | −2d physical, no sprint |

Notes: Conversion applies per Harm instance before Fatigue is marked. You may still Resist first.

2.9.5 Condition & Upkeep

Neglected Weapons −1d; **Armor:** conversion worsens by 1 step.

Compromised Weapons −1d first attack/round; **Armor:** no conversion.

Fix: Short Rest/tools remove Neglected. A scene/Smith removes Compromised.

2.10 Ranged Options

- **Aim:** +1d or +1 Effect.
- **Volley:** Extra ammo +1d (max +2).
- **Suppress:** Zone fire, foes −1d/Limited Effect.
- **Overwatch:** Ready a Controlled shot on trigger.

2.11 Assets and Allies

Your character’s resources, contacts, or gear—called **Assets**—can tilt the odds in your favor.

- **On-Screen Assets** — Companions, hirelings, or allies who stand beside you in danger
- **Off-Screen Assets** — Taverns, estates, titles, or networks of informants
- **Activation** — Spend 1 Boon to activate an on-screen Asset

Narrative Use: Assets are more than bonuses—they’re hooks for roleplay. A friendly tavernkeeper, a noble’s signet, or a trusty horse might tip the balance at the perfect moment.

2.12 Game Structure

Time Scales

Moment A heartbeat, a single action

Some Time A few minutes, a short activity

Significant Time Hours, extended effort

Days Large-scale endeavors

Game Units

Scene Basic narrative unit, covers specific conflict

Player Turn Individual action within a scene

Round Simultaneous actions in combat

Session One game session (3–6 hours)

Campaign Entire story arc

Player Perspective: Think in scenes, not minutes. Every scene is a chance to shine. Every session builds toward the long arc of your campaign.

2.13 Action Resolution Steps

1. Describe your intent and method
2. Build dice pool: Attribute + Skill (+ gear, assists)
3. Roll d10s, count **Successes** and **Story Beats**
4. Compare Successes to **DV**
5. Apply outcome from **matrix**
6. Game Master spends **SB** if applicable
7. Earn **Boons** for failure.

Quick Reference

Dice Pool: Attribute + Skill d10s

Success: 6 on each die

Setback: 1 on any die gives SB to GM

DV: 2 (easy) to 5+ (extreme)

Harm: 3-level system with penalties

Boons: 2 on miss, 1 on partial

2.14 Narrative Suggestions

Collaborative Scene Framing: Players may suggest scene elements (weather, NPC reactions, environmental details) that fit the established fiction, with GM approval.

Intent-Driven Resolution: For non-combat actions where success is reasonably assured, the GM may ask players to describe *how* they accomplish their goal rather than rolling dice.

Flashback Declarations: Players can declare a flashback scene to establish that something happened in the past (acquiring an item, making a connection, learning information) by spending 1 Boon and describing the scene.

Descriptive Assistance: Players can assist each other by providing vivid, helpful descriptions of the action, granting a +1 die bonus to the primary actor's roll.

Proactive Storytelling: Players can suggest minor favorable details about their character's circumstances by:

- Introducing a minor NPC who provides useful information or assistance
- Establishing that they have a useful item on hand (within reason)
- Creating a favorable environmental detail

These suggestions are subject to GM approval and should enhance rather than overshadow the main narrative.

2.14.1 War Mount Examples

Characters with the **War Mount** asset and the **Cavalier** talent gain unique bonuses when fighting from horseback or equivalent mounts. These examples illustrate typical play.

Mounted Charge (Melee). Sir Aven, a Vhasian Knight (Body 4 + Melee 3 = 7d10), spurs his warhorse from Far to Near range against a bandit line. Because of *Cavalier*, he rolls +2d (total 9d10). The charge succeeds with Great Effect, smashing through the bandits and inflicting Harm 2. The GM spends SB to complicate: the horse's barding cracks, requiring repair before the next battle. This demonstrates the mount's ability to convert distance into overwhelming melee impact.

Ride-by Shot (Ranged). Later, Aven switches to bowfire. He retreats from Near to Far range while loosing arrows (Body 3 + Ranged 3 = 6d10, +2d from *Cavalier* = 8d10). A clean success deals Harm 1 to a pursuing marksman. The GM spends SB to draw from the Deck, introducing an arcane dust ward that raises DV for further ranged attacks until repositioned. This shows the mount's ability to keep pressure on enemies while maneuvering, at the cost of potential environmental complications.

Summary. The War Mount grants mobility and offensive momentum:

- Melee charges gain +2d when crossing from Far to Near.
- Ranged volleys gain +2d when moving from Near to Far.

GMs should introduce fatigue, supply cost, and environmental complications to balance the tactical advantage of mounted combat.

2.14.2 Small Folk of the Threshold (Aelaerem & Aelinnel)

The Aelaerem and Aelinnel are diminutive peoples attuned to liminal spaces and hidden ways. Their stature grants them agility and subtlety, though at the cost of bearing heavy arms or armor.

- **Restriction:** Cannot use *Heavy Armor* or *Heavy Weapons*.
- **Bonus:** Gain +1 *Position* when Dodging or Resisting Knockback, and +1 die on *Hide* or *Evasion* rolls made while in cover.

Their presence in the world is often underestimated, but their knack for slipping unseen through thresholds and enduring where others falter has earned them a quiet reverence.

Chapter 3

Character Advancement

In this game, growth isn't just about numbers—it's about defining who your character becomes. Advancement through **Experience Points (XP)** lets you shape your capabilities, influence, and legacy in the world. Every choice you make with XP is a statement about your character's priorities and the mark they leave behind.

3.1 Earning Experience Points

XP represents learning through action. You earn it by engaging meaningfully with the world and its challenges, whether that's by triumph, failure, or bold experimentation.

Session Breakdown

At the end of each session, the Game Master awards XP based on:

- **Base Participation:** +2 XP for attending and contributing
- **Major Objectives:** +2–4 XP for completing significant story goals
- **Discoveries:** +1–2 XP for uncovering important lore, locations, or secrets
- **Difficult Choices:** +1–2 XP for making hard moral or strategic decisions
- **Story Engagement:** +1–3 XP for embracing complications and narrative twists
- **Personal Goals:** +1–2 XP for pursuing your character's individual storylines

Example: At the end of a session, the party rogue earns +2 XP for participation, +2 XP for helping the group retrieve an artifact, and +1 XP for pushing a personal rivalry subplot—5 XP total.

Game Pace Options

The GM can adjust advancement speed to match the campaign tone:

| Mode | XP/Session | Tone |
|----------|------------|---------------------------|
| Gritty | 4–6 XP | Hard choices, slow growth |
| Standard | 6–10 XP | Balanced progression |
| Epic | 10–14 XP | Heroic, rapid development |

Player Tip: If you want a sweeping, mythic tale, suggest an Epic pace. For a long, hard road where each gain feels hard-earned, lean into Gritty.

Arc Completion Bonus

When you finish a major story arc (typically 3–6 sessions), everyone receives +8–12 XP. One player may earn an additional +2 XP for a particularly memorable contribution. This celebrates the story’s milestones, not just individual rolls.

3.2 Spending Experience Points

XP is your currency for growth. You can invest it in three broad areas, each representing a different approach to becoming more capable.

1. Personal Improvement

Invest in your core capabilities—what you can do yourself.

Attributes Cost = New Rating \times 3 XP

- Raising Body from 2 to 3 costs $3 \times 3 = 9$ XP
- Raising Spirit from 4 to 5 costs $5 \times 3 = 15$ XP
- Requires downtime equal to new rating in days

Skills Cost = New Level \times 2 XP

- Improving Lore from 1 to 2 costs $2 \times 2 = 4$ XP
- Advancing Melee from 3 to 4 costs $4 \times 2 = 8$ XP
- Requires downtime equal to new level in days

Example: Kara wants to improve her Swordsmanship from 2 to 3. She saves 6 XP and spends three in-game days training with her mentor. This creates roleplay hooks and a sense of lived growth.

2. Resources and Influence

Build your worldly presence—what you can command.

Minor Resource (4 XP, 1 week)

- Small shop, minor contact network, basic workshop
- Provides small but reliable benefits
- Example: A trusted informant who gathers rumors

Standard Resource (8 XP, 2 weeks)

- Decent-sized business, skilled followers, specialized equipment
- Significant benefits with some upkeep
- Example: A smuggling operation with two boats

Major Resource (12 XP, 1 month)

- Large enterprise, elite team, rare capabilities
- Powerful advantages with substantial upkeep
- Example: A trading company with international contacts

Player Tip: Resources expand the story into new directions. A spy network creates intrigue; a workshop sparks invention; a guild hall cements influence.

3. Special Abilities

Develop unique capabilities that set you apart.

General Abilities (Cost varies)

- Universal benefits like improved recovery, bonus dice in specific situations, or unique combat techniques
- Typically cost 4–8 XP
- Example: "Quick Recovery" - heal 1 additional Harm when resting

Cultural Abilities (Cost varies)

- Heritage-based skills tied to your character's background
- Often require specific fictional positioning
- Example: "Stone Sense" (dwarven) - intuitive understanding of stonework

Advanced Abilities (12+ XP)

- Powerful capstone features available at higher tiers
- Often have significant narrative weight and requirements
- Example: "Master Diplomat" - can reroll failed social checks once per session

Example: A veteran bard invests in "Silver Tongue" (6 XP), allowing them to sway hostile crowds once per session. This becomes their defining trick in tense negotiations.

3.3 Character Development Paths

Your spending choices define your character's growth direction. Consider these archetypal paths:

The Specialist

70–90% personal improvement, 0–10% resources, 0–20% abilities

- **Strengths:** Exceptional individual capability, reliable in spotlight moments
- **Weaknesses:** Limited influence, vulnerable to being isolated
- **Best for:** Solo operatives, elite warriors, master artisans
- **Example:** A duelist who invests heavily in combat skills and physical attributes

The Leader

50–65% personal, 15–25% resources, 15–25% abilities

- **Strengths:** Well-rounded, can handle diverse challenges, good support
- **Weaknesses:** Jack-of-all-trades, not exceptional in any area
- **Best for:** Party faces, field commanders, investigators
- **Example:** A merchant-prince with decent combat skills, good social abilities, and a network of contacts

The Mastermind

25–40% personal, 35–55% resources, 20–40% abilities

- **Strengths:** Extensive influence, can solve problems indirectly, strategic power
- **Weaknesses:** Personally vulnerable, complex upkeep, domino-effect risks
- **Best for:** Spymasters, crime lords, wealthy patrons
- **Example:** An information broker with modest personal skills but an extensive spy network

Player Note: These are not rigid templates. Mix and match to discover unique growth arcs.

3.4 Training and Development Time

Most improvements require downtime to reflect the effort of learning and integration.

Standard Time Requirements

- **Attribute increase:** New rating in days
- **Skill improvement:** New level in days
- **Resource acquisition:** 1 week to 1 month depending on scope
- **Ability learning:** Typically 3–10 days

Accelerated Development

You can attempt to learn things more quickly, but this carries risks:

- The GM creates a **Risk Clock** with 4 segments
- If the clock fills during rushed training, the new capability has flaws:
 - Attribute/Skill: -1 die penalty until you spend proper downtime
 - Resource: Loyalty problems or functional limitations
 - Ability: Unreliable or with unintended side effects

Example: The wizard crams advanced spellwork into a frantic three days. She gains the ability, but her Risk Clock fills—her spells now sputter unpredictably until she retrains.

3.5 Character Progression Tiers

As you accumulate XP and capabilities, you advance through tiers that represent your growing reputation and influence.

Tier I: Novice (0–40 XP)

- Learning the ropes, establishing yourself
- Local reputation, modest capabilities
- **Typical assets:** Basic equipment, a few contacts

Tier II: Experienced (41–90 XP)

- Proven capability, recognized skills
- Regional reputation, reliable in your specialty
- **Typical assets:** Skilled followers, specialized equipment

Tier III: Veteran (91–150 XP)

- Master of your craft, significant influence
- National reputation, can handle major challenges
- **Typical assets:** Multiple operations, elite teams

Tier IV: Elite (151–220 XP)

- Exceptional capability, major influence
- International reputation, shapes events
- **Typical assets:** Organizations, unique capabilities

Tier V: Master (221+ XP)

- Legendary status, world-changing influence
- Historical reputation, defines eras
- **Typical assets:** Nations, legendary artifacts

3.6 Managing Allies and Followers

Characters who work with you require maintenance and carry risks.

Acquisition Costs

- **Skilled helper:** Capability rating squared in XP
- **Example:** A capability 3 scout costs 9 XP

Upkeep Requirements

- Each downtime period, spend XP equal to their capability rating
- Alternative: Dedicate a scene to maintaining the relationship

Risk Management

- When the GM spends 2+ Story Beats, allies may face consequences instead of you
- Allies can solve problems off-screen once per downtime, but this generates complications

3.7 Strategic Advancement Considerations

Early Game (Tiers I–II)

Focus on survival and establishing your niche:

- Invest in core competencies first
- Build a small but reliable support network

Mid Game (Tier III)

Expand your influence and specialize:

- Develop your signature capabilities
- Build substantial resources

Late Game (Tiers IV–V)

Shape the world around you:

- Pursue advanced abilities
- Build organizations or movements
- Leave a legacy

3.8 Advancement Philosophy

Remember that advancement serves the story. The best choices:

- Reflect your character's experiences and growth
- Create interesting new capabilities and complications
- Enhance the group's collective abilities

Final Thought: Every XP spent changes not just your character sheet, but your character's story. Choose investments that make your hero more interesting to play and watch evolve.

XP Planning Guide

Early Tier Priorities:

- Core attribute to 3 (9 XP)
- Key skills to 2–3 (4–8 XP each)
- 1–2 minor resources (8 XP total)

Mid Tier Expansion:

- Attributes to 4 (12 XP)
- Specialization skills to 4 (8 XP)
- Standard resources (8 XP each)
- Cultural abilities (6–10 XP)

Late Tier Mastery:

- Capstone abilities (12+ XP)
- Major resources (12 XP)
- Legacy projects

3.9 Narrative-Heavy Advancement Options

For groups that prefer strong narrative focus in advancement, consider these optional approaches:

Story-Driven Milestones: Instead of tracking XP numerically, the GM can award advancement when characters reach significant story milestones. "You've trained with the master for months—you've improved your skill."

Experience Through Reflection: Players can spend downtime scenes reflecting on past experiences to earn XP. A meaningful flashback or character moment can justify growth without tracking specific points.

Collaborative Advancement: The group can discuss and agree on advancement choices, ensuring everyone's growth supports the overall story direction.

Narrative Justification Focus: When spending XP, players should explain how their character gained this capability through in-game experiences, creating richer backstory and continuity.

Chapter 4

Magic and Special Abilities

Magic in this game is powerful but dangerous—a negotiation with reality itself that always carries risks. This chapter covers the core magical systems: standard **spellcasting**, **ritual magic**, and special **pact-based abilities**. Throughout, look for examples and player-facing tips to keep the fiction front and center.

4.1 The Nature of Magic

Magic is not a safe tool but a dangerous force:

- **Powerful:** Can reshape battles, stories, or even the world
- **Controlled:** Every use generates **Story Beats (SB)** that manifest as backlash
- **Thematic:** Effects and consequences align with the type of magic used
- **Volatile:** Never fully predictable or controllable
- **Narrative:** Casting is always a significant story moment

Table Vignette: *“I can hold the avalanche,” says Mira, fingers trembling. “But something will answer.”* The party nods—risk accepted, stakes clear.

4.2 Basic Spellcasting

All spellcasting follows the standard action resolution system but with additional considerations for magical effects.

The Casting Process

1. **Declare Intent:** What you want the magic to achieve
2. **Choose Approach:** Which magical skill and method you’ll use
3. **Set Position:** **Dominant**, **Controlled**, or **Desperate** based on circumstances
4. **Roll:** Attribute + Magical Skill
5. **Resolve:** Apply outcomes with magical consequences

Magical Skills

Common magical skills include:

- **Arcana:** General magical knowledge and theory
- **Elemental Magic:** Fire, water, earth, air manipulation
- **Spiritual Magic:** Communing with spirits, divine magic
- **Mental Magic:** Telepathy, illusion, mind affecting
- **Healing Magic:** Restoration, purification, life magic

Player Tip: State a clear **intent** and a vivid **method**. The more concrete the fiction, the easier it is to set fair **DV** and meaningful consequences.

4.3 The Casting Loop

For more significant magical effects, use the structured Casting Loop requiring two actions.

Phase 1: Weave

Shape the magical effect:

- Player builds dice pool and rolls
- On success, they stabilize the spell's form
- Any 1 rolled may cause narrative backlash related to the Element

Phase 2: Cast

Channel the effect into the world:

- A second roll channels the effect
- Backlash: Any 1 rolled may cause narrative backlash related to the Element

Designer Note: The **Casting Loop** requires the **Caster's Gift** talent (2 XP) and creates spotlight tension: describe effect now, risk **Backlash** on each roll.

4.4 Backlash Severity

| Roll Result | Backlash Trigger |
|-------------------------|----------------------------------|
| Partial/Miss | Minor backlash (choose one) |
| Miss | Major backlash (choose two) |
| Hit with two or more 1s | Minor backlash alongside success |

4.5 Magical Arts and Traditions

Different cultures and traditions approach magic differently.

Elemental Magic

Manipulation of natural forces:

- **Fire Magic:** Heat, light, transformation, destruction
- **Water Magic:** Flow, healing, divination, adaptation
- **Earth Magic:** Stability, protection, growth, strength
- **Air Magic:** Movement, communication, freedom, change

Spiritual Magic

Interaction with intangible forces:

- **Divine Magic:** Power from gods or higher powers
- **Spirit Magic:** Communing with nature spirits or ancestors
- **Necromancy:** Interaction with death and the departed
- **Protection Magic:** Wards, blessings, purification

Mental Magic

Affecting minds and perceptions:

- **Illusion:** Creating false perceptions and images
- **Telepathy:** Mind reading and communication
- **Enchantment:** Influencing thoughts and emotions
- **Divination:** Gaining knowledge through supernatural means

Vignette: *The candles lean toward the oracle's breath. "Ask," she whispers, "but truth is sharp."*

4.6 Ritual Magic

Rituals take Significant Time (typically 10-30 minutes) for powerful effects.

Ritual Requirements

- **Time:** Significant Time (typically 10-30 minutes)
- **Preparation:** Specific materials, locations, or conditions
- **Focus:** Undisturbed concentration and coordination

Ritual Procedure

1. **Preparation:** Gather components, prepare space, focus intent
2. **Invocation:** Perform the Rite as a ritual
3. **Completion:** Effect manifests, always marks +1 Obligation

Ritual Benefits and Risks

- **Benefits:** Safe casting, no Push It option
- **Risks:** Time investment, Obligation cost, environmental requirements

4.7 Rites and Pact Magic

Rites are precise magical effects gained through **pacts** with powerful entities. There are two main paths to accessing Rites:

The Runekeeper (Rites Path)

- Requires Patron + Thiasos (Familiar) + Codex (4 XP)
- Accesses that Patron's full Rite list
- Structured, powerful, but accrues **Obligation**
- Can Push Rites once per scene for +1 Obligation

The Invoker (Symbol Path)

- Requires one or more **Patron's Symbols** (4 XP each)
- Accesses ritual invocation of Patron's Rites
- Safe but slow—requires Significant Time
- Can Crack the Seal for instant cast at steep Obligation cost (+2/+3)

Using Rites

1. **Invocation:** Invoke a Rite requires 1 Action
2. **Obligation:** Each Rite used marks Obligation on its clock
3. **Effect:** The Rite's specific effect manifests

Rite Invocation via Symbol

- **Time.** Invoking a Rite via Symbol takes $DV + 1$ rounds.
- **Obligation.** On completion, mark +1 Obligation (in addition to any listed Rite costs, if applicable).
- **No Push.** Invoker Rites cannot use *Push It* benefits.
- **Symbol Display.** The Symbol must remain visible throughout the invocation.
- **Materials.** Symbols replace any Thaisos and Codex requirements.

4.8 Obligation Capacity

A character's **Obligation Capacity** equals Spirit + Presence. Track total Obligation segments across all Patrons (or Symbols, for Invokers).

- **Exceeding Capacity:** For each segment above Capacity, mark 1 Fatigue. The character cannot Invoke Rites or perform rituals until Obligation is reduced below Capacity.
- **Resolution:** Reduce Obligation through Downtime service, Patron tasks, ritual cleansing, or story resolution.

Example: Spirit 2 + Presence 3 = Capacity 5. 6 segments → Fatigue 1. 7 segments → Fatigue 2. 10 segments → Harm 1. 11 segments → Harm 2.

Obligation Management

Your debt to Patrons must be managed:

- **Service:** Perform tasks fitting your Patron's nature
- **Offerings:** Provide sacrifices or tributes
- **Propagation:** Spread your Patron's influence or beliefs
- **Downtime:** Clear through fitting service during downtime

Obligation Levels

| Segments | Consequences |
|----------|---|
| 1–2 | Minor attention, subtle signs |
| 3–5 | Noticeable influence, regular demands |
| 6–8 | Significant control, major tasks required |
| 9+ | Dominant influence, potentially dangerous |

Vignette: *At the crossroads, Ash lays iron nails and salt. The wind shifts. Somewhere, something smiles.*

4.9 Special Magical Abilities

Some characters develop unique magical capabilities through experience or heritage.

Cultural Magical Traditions

- **Dwarven Stone-Sense:** Intuitive understanding of earth and stone
- **Elven Memory-Weaving:** Accessing and manipulating ancestral knowledge
- **Human Versatility:** Adaptable magical approaches from various traditions
- **Nomadic Spirit-Walking:** Journeying between physical and spiritual realms

Advanced Magical Techniques

- **Spell Shaping:** Modifying non-ritual spell factors (range/scale/targeting)
- **Ritual Mastery:** Perform powerful rituals with reduced risk
- **Arcane Dominance:** Overpower weaker magical effects automatically

4.10 Magical Backlash Examples

Elemental Backlash

- **Fire:** Burns, flares; vs. **Water:** slick, sputter, dim
- **Water:** Slippery tide, slow gear; vs. **Fire:** smoke, shorted gear
- **Earth:** Slips, binds, encumbrance; vs. **Air:** sound carries, exposure
- **Air:** Scatter, misheard words; vs. **Earth:** stuck, dust choke

Conceptual Backlash

- **Fate:** Options close, only-one-way; vs. **Luck:** mischance hits ally
- **Life:** Growth surge, vines tether; vs. **Death/Dreams:** numbness, sleep-tug
- **Luck:** Odds flip; vs. **Fate:** harsher fixed outcome
- **Death/Dreams:** Whispers, chill; vs. **Life:** pain returns, rot

4.11 Magical Item Creation

Creating permanent magical items is a complex process.

Creation Requirements

- **Knowledge:** Understanding of the desired effect
- **Materials:** Appropriate components with magical properties
- **Time:** Significant investment of time and effort
- **Skill:** High level of magical and craft skills
- **Facilities:** Proper workspace with necessary tools

Creation Process

1. **Design:** Plan the item's properties and limitations
2. **Gathering:** Acquire necessary materials and components
3. **Crafting:** Physical creation of the item base
4. **Enchantment:** Magical infusion of the desired properties
5. **Finishing:** Final adjustments and testing

Item Limitations

- **Charges:** Limited uses before needing recharge
- **Attunement:** Required bonding with the user
- **Maintenance:** Regular upkeep to preserve functionality
- **Drawbacks:** Negative side effects or requirements

4.12 Magic in Social Situations

Using magic in social contexts has special considerations.

Social Spellcasting

- **Discretion:** Avoiding detection while casting
- **Consent:** Ethical considerations of affecting others' minds
- **Reactions:** How different cultures view magical influence
- **Laws:** Legal restrictions on magical use in society

Social Backlash

Magical social failures can cause:

- **Distrust:** People becoming wary of the caster
- **Resistance:** Developing immunity or countermeasures
- **Reputation:** Becoming known as a manipulator
- **Legal:** Facing consequences from authorities

4.13 Learning and Improving Magic

Magical ability grows through study and practice.

Skill Advancement

- **Study:** Researching magical theory and techniques
- **Practice:** Regular casting to improve control
- **Experimentation:** Trying new approaches and combinations
- **Instruction:** Learning from more experienced casters

Advanced Magical Development

At higher levels, casters can:

- **Specialize:** Focus on specific magical traditions
- **Innovate:** Create new spells or techniques
- **Teach:** Instruct others in magical arts
- **Research:** Discover lost or forbidden knowledge

4.14 Magical Safety and Ethics

Responsible magical practice involves understanding risks and consequences.

Safety Considerations

- **Containment:** Preventing unintended spread of effects
- **Stability:** Ensuring magical effects remain controlled
- **Fail-safes:** Planning for when magic goes wrong
- **Recovery:** Procedures for dealing with backlash

Ethical Guidelines

- **Consent:** Respecting others' autonomy regarding magic
- **Transparency:** Being honest about magical capabilities
- **Restraint:** Using magic judiciously and appropriately
- **Responsibility:** Accepting consequences of magical actions

Magic Quick Reference

Casting (Freeform):

- Requires Talent: **Caster's Gift** (2 XP)
- **Weave & Cast**: Two action effect using the Eight Elements
- **Backlash**: Any 1 rolled may cause narrative backlash

Backlash Severity:

- On Partial/Miss: Pick 1-2 consequences flavored by Element
- Color consequences by Element (fire burns, fate twists, etc.)

Rites System:

- **Invoke**: 1 action effect
- **Obligation**: Mark segments on clock
- **Push It**: +1 Obligation for +1 step effect

Note: Some talents, Rites, or magical paths may specify alternative corruption costs or additional consequences for Push It actions. When explicitly stated, those specific rules override the universal costs.

Clearing Corruption Corruption may be reduced through *purging rituals*, such as exorcisms, sacred songs, or rites of contrition. These require a test (typically **Lore + Spirit**) against a DV equal to the character's current corruption level. On success, reduce corruption by 1. On failure, the corruption manifests violently, imposing a temporary Condition or advancing its narrative expression.

Optional: A **Story Beat** may also be spent to attempt such a ritual, representing the personal cost of atonement. Patrons may demand specific acts of service, sacrifice, or obligation as part of the purging process.

Invoker Path:

- **Symbols** (4 XP each) grant ritual access
- **Rituals**: Significant Time, always +1 Obligation
- **Crack the Seal**: Instant cast (+2/+3 Obligation)

Safety: Every roll changes the story. Success without risk is rare.

4.15 Practical Magic Examples

Fire Cast, Partial

You Weave flame to blind a squad (DV 3). Partial with two 1s. GM spends SB to Position -1 (flare blinds you too) and colors backlash as singed lashes; patrol is alerted (Exposure).

Runekeeper Push and Debt

You Invoke Circle of Denial [WARD] and Push It to harden the ring. Mark +1 Obligation for the Rite plus +1 for the push. When a demon tests the ring, use [WARD] vs Cap; on its Hit, add +DV to its Leash.

Crack the Seal Under Fire

You present Ikasha's Symbol and Crack the Seal to lay an instant shadow lane. Symbol → Compromised; mark +2 Obligation. GM immediately spends 1 SB to dim all lights (panic), then the lane forms. During downtime, you restore the Symbol (Arcana DV 3): a shaky hit leaves it Neglected until you perform the full rite of cleaning.

4.16 Talent: Cantor's Path — “Songs of the Low Rites”

Cantor's Path

You echo the liturgies of Patrons through breath and string. Not a sworn celebrant but a perilous mimic, you weave Low Rites into song. It is slower, riskier, and beautiful—but never free.

Type Major Talent (15 XP)

Prerequisites Lore 1+, Performance 2+, Presence 2+

Access Any character (does not require Thiasos membership).

Effect

You may learn and perform **Low Rites as Songs**. Each Song counts as knowing the associated Low Rite for performance purposes only.

- **Casting Test:** *Lore + Performance vs. DV* (default DV = 2–3).
- **Action Economy:** *1 action to begin; Song resolves at the start of your next turn* unless accelerated.
- **Scope:** *Low Rites only.* Standard/High Rites remain exclusive to Patrons and Thiasos initiates.
- **Costs:** Pay any *materials* listed. On success you do *not* mark Obligation.

Corruption Clock

- You gain a personal **Corruption Clock** equal in segments to your **Body** rating.
- Each time you cast a Song or whenever the Keeper spends a Story Beat involving you, mark +1 segment.
- When the Clock fills:
 - You immediately gain a trait of corruption from the **last Patron** whose Rite you performed.
 - All of your followers, retainers, or familiars also gain a trait of the same corruption (NPCs manifest visibly unsettling traits).
 - Reset the Clock to empty.
- Corruption traits gained in this way fade at the next Downtime, unless reinforced by further Patron influence.

Outcomes

Success: The Low Rite takes effect as written.

Partial: The Rite manifests with reduced effect (–1 step) or shortened duration. Mark **Fatigue 1**.

Failure: No effect; mark **Fatigue 1** and the Keeper gains +1 **SB (Hearts)**.

Interrupted: Harm, Silence, or disruption before resolution = treat as Failure.

Push It

When you Push:

- Song resolves immediately instead of next round.
- Mark **Fatigue 1**.
- Add +1 to your **Corruption Clock**.
- Keeper immediately triggers a **Story Beat**, representing fallout from a Patron, the Road, or social attention.

4.16.1 Corruption Fading

Downtime At the beginning of each Downtime, reduce a character's current Corruption by 1 level.

Accelerated Recovery Certain Rites, Patron bargains, or narrative acts of atonement may remove additional Corruption at the GM's discretion.

Persistence Corruption does not clear through rest or Supply. If a character enters Downtime with 0 Corruption, no further reduction occurs.

Limits & Interactions

- **Stacking:** Cannot benefit from the same Rite twice.
- **Visibility:** Songs are inherently noticeable. On Failure or Push, assume observers take note.
- **Silence/Disruption:** Impose –1 to –3 dice at Keeper’s discretion.

4.16.2 Corruption Fading

Natural Fading At the beginning of each Downtime, reduce a character’s current **Corruption** by 1 segment. Lingering or “pesky” effects, such as Patron whispers or moral distortions, persist until they are addressed through roleplay or explicit purification. Natural Fading represents the quiet grace of time and distance, but not absolution.

Act of Contrition Perform a genuine act that contradicts the Patron’s influence or repairs its harm. Suitable examples include:

- Publicly oppose the Patron’s themes or agents.
- Aid those harmed by similar Corruption.
- Destroy symbols or relics of the Patron’s dominion.
- Make amends with those offended by your past actions.

Effect: Remove 1 Corruption segment and clear one persistent effect. Contrition must cost the character something—reputation, certainty, or comfort—to be genuine.

Ritual Purification Undertake an act of cleansing aligned with faith, penance, or sacred balance. Common examples include:

- Seek absolution from an opposing or rival divine figure.
- Complete a pilgrimage or penitent journey.
- Perform service for those harmed by your actions.

Effect: Remove 2 Corruption segments and clear all persistent effects. The Keeper may require the character to mark temporary Fatigue or Obligation to represent penance.

Patron Bargain Negotiate directly with the Patron that marked you. A bargain may take many forms:

- Accept a divine or infernal quest in service to the Patron’s goals.
- Trade **Obligation** for **Corruption** at a 1:2 ratio.
- Offer something of deep personal or moral value.

Effect: Remove 1–3 Corruption segments depending on the quality and gravity of the exchange. This method never comes without consequence; the Keeper should introduce a narrative cost or condition.

Bound Grace If a character retains unresolved **Obligation** to the same Patron, their **Corruption** cannot fall below 1. Divine debt stains even the most earnest repentance until service is rendered or renounced.

Persistence Corruption effects do not clear through rest or routine healing. They require deliberate narrative resolution, confession, or meaningful acts of change. Every method above is an opportunity for character development and moral play, not bookkeeping.

Downtime Transition

At any Downtime, a character with **Cantor's Path** may permanently exchange this talent for initiation into a Thiasos and access to its Codex. This represents the Patron or their agents taking note of the Cantor's repeated Songs and recruiting them into a formal structure. The Cantor loses their personal **Corruption Clock** and instead adopts the standard **Obligation** and **Codex access** mechanics of a Runekeeper. Any existing corruption traits carry forward as "first marks" of Patronal bond, shaping how the Thiasos views and employs them.

4.17 Narrative-Heavy Magic Options

For groups that prefer strong narrative focus in magic use, consider these optional approaches:

Intent-Driven Magic: For minor magical effects that don't significantly alter the story, players can simply declare what they want to accomplish and describe how they do it, without rolling dice. The GM determines if the effect is reasonable and what complications might arise.

Collaborative Backlash: Instead of the GM unilaterally determining backlash, players can suggest thematic consequences that fit the fiction, with GM approval. This makes magic feel more collaborative and story-driven.

Ritual as Story Beats: Major magical workings can be treated as scene-defining moments where the group collaboratively describes what happens, with mechanical effects determined by the narrative impact rather than detailed rolls.

Patron Relationships: Focus on the roleplaying aspects of Patron relationships, treating Obligation as a measure of story tension and character development rather than just a mechanical track to be managed.

Magic as Character Development: Use magical experiences as opportunities for character growth and backstory development, allowing players to narrate how their characters learned new abilities through significant story moments.

Closing Thought: **Magic** is a powerful tool but never a safe one. Every casting carries risks, and great power always demands great responsibility. Make bold choices—then let the consequences write the next chapter.

4.17.1 Embracing Corruption

A character with **2+ levels of Corruption** may choose to **Embrace** it, transforming creeping decay into a permanent **Talent**. Embracing never reduces Corruption — it reshapes it. The deeper the corruption, the greater the power and the cost.

| Corruption Level | Talent Tier | Cost |
|------------------|---------------------|--|
| 2 (Early) | Minor Talent | +1 Permanent Corruption (cannot Fade below 1) |
| 3 (Deepening) | Major Talent | +2 Permanent Corruption, constant visible tell |
| 4+ (Severe) | Transcendent Talent | Permanently altered, locked at Stage 3+ |

High Cantor (24 XP Major Talent) *Prerequisite: Tier II+, any Patron Rite.*

You have learned to weave the sacred tongue through breath and pulse rather than word or gesture. You may now learn and cast **Standard Rites**, as a **High Cant**.

- The Rite resolves instantly and gains +1 die to its primary effect.
- You automatically mark +1 **Corruption** after resolution.
- This bonus stacks with *Push It* but cannot be reduced or transferred.

Special: Each Patron’s resonance colors the manifestation differently—flame halos for the Oath, rippling silence for the Choir, tolling harmonics for the Confessor. High Canting is recognizable to other adepts; it draws attention from entities attuned to that frequency. Repeated use within a single scene risks drawing the Keeper’s focus: add +1 DV to all subsequent *Resolve* rolls for moral fatigue.

“The louder the hymn, the nearer the flame.”

Embraced Talents always reflect the Patron’s themes (e.g., shadow, indulgence, empathy, paranoia). They grant great power, but mark the character irrevocably as claimed.

4.17.2 Summoning (Pact-Whisperer)

Summoning is the disciplined art of calling and binding Outsiders for temporary aid. This path requires the **Pact-Whisperer** Talent (2 XP). Each summoned being is restrained by a metaphysical tether called a *Leash*, representing the summoner’s control and the strain of sustaining the bond.

Talents & Access.

- **Lesser Pactwright:** You may *Call* spirits of **Cap 1**.
- **Greater Pactwright:** You may also *Call* spirits of **Cap 3**.
- **Dual Pactwright:** With both Lesser and Greater Pactwright, you may maintain one spirit of each Cap simultaneously.

[Summoning Core Mechanics] IX

Mechanic Description and Requirements

Call 1 Action to manifest the spirit at *Near* range; choose a Spirit Template aligned to fiction or Patron domain.

Bind Spend 1 Boon *or* mark 1 Fatigue to establish initial control.

Leash Set Leash = **Cap** + **Command** segments. (*Cap* is the Outsider’s tier: Cap 1 for Lesser, Cap 3 for Greater.)

Tick Leash Whenever the spirit takes Harm, you command it against its nature, you split focus, a rival contests it, it moves *Close* \rightarrow *Far* rapidly, or crosses a [WARD] ($DV = Cap$).

Departure When the Leash fills, the spirit acts to its nature once, then departs (or turns hostile at GM discretion).

Procedure.

1. **Call (1 Action):** A spirit manifests at *Near*. Choose a Spirit Template appropriate to the scene or Patron.
2. **Bind:** Spend 1 Boon *or* mark 1 Fatigue to anchor the connection.
3. **Leash:** Record Leash = **Cap** + **Command** segments. Draw a clock to track strain.
4. **Command:** Each round, issuing a meaningful order uses your Action. Commands contrary to the spirit's nature tick the Leash.
5. **Maintain:** If you split focus or perform other significant actions while it acts on your order, tick the Leash.
6. **Departure:** When the Leash fills, the spirit acts to its nature once, then departs. Use this to escalate or reveal consequences.

Economy & Limits.

- **Boon Finesse:** Once per round, spend 1 Boon to clear 1 Leash tick (before it fills). Represents appeasement or renewed focus.
- **Action Economy:** Issuing commands uses your Action; most spirits act immediately after their summoner.
- **Concurrency:** Only one active summoned spirit at a time unless a Talent states otherwise. Exceeding this limit inflicts 1 Fatigue per extra Cap point.
- **Downtime:** All summons end at Downtime unless explicitly sustained by a Rite or Asset.

Example. *Kestra calls a Cap 3 fire elemental to aid in battle. She spends 1 Boon to Bind it. The elemental's Leash is 7 segments (3 + Command 4). When it takes Harm, the GM ticks the Leash. Later, Kestra splits focus to issue orders while attacking, ticking again. Careful management and Boon Finesse keep the bond stable—until the elemental's fury tests her will.*

4.17.3 Paths of Magic: Complete Comparison

Five distinct paths define supernatural power in FATE'S EDGE. Each carries a unique risk, cadence, and narrative flavor. These paths are intentionally *asymmetric*—balanced through story consequences and tactical tradeoffs, not identical mechanics.

@I Y Y Y Y Y@

Feature Summoner (Pact-Whisperer) Cantor's Path Caster (Freeform) Runekeeper (Rites) Invoker (Symbols)

Core Identity The *Conjurer*: calls and commands spirits as allies The *Bootlegger*: steals magic through song The *Artist*: improvises magic via elemental will The *Devotee*: channels a Patron's power The *Ritualist*: works slow, precise magic via Symbols

Access *Pact-Whisperer* (2 XP), then Pactwright Talents *Cantor's Path* (15 XP) *Caster's Gift* (2 XP) *Codex* (4 XP) + Familiar (2 XP) *Patron's Symbol* (4 XP each)

How It Works Call (1 action) → Bind (Boon/Fatigue) → Command. Spirit acts each round, tied to a **Leash** clock Perform Song (1 action) → effect next beat. Mimics Low Rites Weave + Cast (2 actions). Highly flexible element magic Invoke Rite (1 action). Immediate supernatural effect Ritual Invocation (multiple rounds). **Crack the Seal** for instant power

Primary Risk **Loss of Control**: fill the Leash, spirit acts independently **Corruption**: personal decay and aura effects **Backlash**: volatile elemental consequences **Obligation**: narrative debt owed to Patron **Ritual Cost**: Symbol damage or Obligation

Power Source Bound spirits and Outsiders Stolen resonance, no pact Personal discipline + elements Formal pact with a Patron Consecrated Symbol + precise lore

Flexibility **Extreme (via proxy)**: flight, phasing, stealth, combat, etc. Structured: mimic known Low Rites **Very high**: any describable effect Moderate: Patron Rite list Moderate: Symbols owned

Speed Fast: Spirit acts each round, but commands cost actions Moderate: 1 action to begin, effect next beat Moderate: 2 actions per spell **Very fast**: 1 action **Very slow**: multi-round rituals

Key Mechanic **The Leash** + Boon Finesse (clear ticks with Boons) Corruption Clock & Push It GM-set DV & Element choice Push It (gain Obligation) Crack the Seal (instant cast at high cost)

Player Fantasy *The Tactician*: minion control, economy, versatility *The Gambler*: risk-for-power, stolen magic *The Improviser*: creative problem-solving *The Dramatist*: pact, faith, narrative consequences *The Planner*: preparation and precision

Balance by Asymmetry. These paths do not share identical mechanics. They are balanced narratively:

- **Summoners** gain sustained power and versatility, but risk catastrophic loss of control.
- **Cantors** enjoy quick access to magic without a Patron, but corruption erodes them over time.
- **Casters** can attempt nearly anything, but risk explosive elemental backlash.
- **Runekeepers** unleash powerful effects instantly, but every use deepens Patron obligations.
- **Invokers** can safely reshape the world through ritual, but rarely in the heat of battle.

Collectively, they form a complete **pentarchy of power**—distinct, dramatic, and tactically meaningful. No path is universally superior; each shines in different challenges and story arcs.

Chapter 5

Attributes and Skills

Your character's capabilities are built on four core **Attributes** and specialized **Skills**. This chapter explains how they work together to define what your character can do and how they interact with the world, with clear examples and player-facing tips.

5.1 Core Attributes

Attributes represent your character's fundamental capabilities. Each is rated from 1 to 5, with higher numbers indicating greater proficiency.

Body

Physical strength, endurance, coordination, and health.

- **Used for:** Melee combat, athletics, endurance tests, physical labor
- **Typical applications:** Lifting, running, climbing, fighting, resisting physical harm
- **Associated skills:** Athletics, Brawl, Melee, Endurance
- **Rating examples:**
 - 1: Average person, some physical activity
 - 2: Fit individual, regular training
 - 3: Athlete or soldier, excellent condition
 - 4: Exceptional athlete, near-peak human
 - 5: Peak human capability, legendary strength

Wits

Mental acuity, perception, quick thinking, and problem-solving.

- **Used for:** Investigation, perception, tactics, quick decisions
- **Typical applications:** Spotting details, solving puzzles, planning, reacting quickly
- **Associated skills:** Perception, Investigation, Tactics, Lore

- **Rating examples:**
 - 1: Average awareness, sometimes misses things
 - 2: Observant, notices important details
 - 3: Sharp-minded, quick to spot patterns
 - 4: Exceptionally perceptive, rarely surprised
 - 5: Near-prescient awareness, sees connections others miss

Spirit

Willpower, intuition, mental resilience, and connection to intangible forces.

- **Used for:** Resisting mental effects, intuition, magical aptitude, determination
- **Typical applications:** Resisting fear, sensing danger, magical ability, enduring hardship
- **Associated skills:** Resolve, Intuition, Magic, Faith
- **Rating examples:**
 - 1: Average willpower, somewhat suggestible
 - 2: Strong-minded, resists ordinary pressure
 - 3: Very determined, hard to intimidate
 - 4: Exceptional will, inspires others
 - 5: Iron will, nearly unshakeable resolve

Presence

Charisma, social influence, appearance, and force of personality.

- **Used for:** Social interactions, leadership, persuasion, intimidation
- **Typical applications:** Negotiating, leading, charming, commanding attention
- **Associated skills:** Sway, Command, Performance, Deception
- **Rating examples:**
 - 1: Average presence, doesn't stand out
 - 2: Noticeable, makes an impression
 - 3: Charismatic, naturally influential
 - 4: Commanding presence, people listen
 - 5: Magnetic personality, can sway crowds

5.2 Skill System

Skills represent specialized training and expertise. They combine with **Attributes** to form your dice pool for actions.

Skill Ratings

| Rating | Description |
|--------|----------------------------------|
| 0 | Untrained — No formal training |
| 1 | Novice — Basic understanding |
| 2 | Competent — Reliable skill level |
| 3 | Professional — Expert capability |
| 4 | Master — Renowned expertise |
| 5 | Grand Master — Legendary skill |

Skill Categories

Combat Skills

- **Melee:** Swords, axes, close-quarters weapons
- **Ranged:** Bows, crossbows, thrown weapons
- **Brawl:** Unarmed combat, grappling
- **Tactics:** Battlefield strategy, unit coordination

Physical Skills

- **Athletics:** Running, climbing, jumping
- **Stealth:** Moving unseen, hiding
- **Endurance:** Resisting fatigue, harsh conditions
- **Craft:** Building, repairing, creating

Social Skills

- **Sway:** Persuasion, negotiation, charm
- **Command:** Leadership, intimidation, authority
- **Deception:** Lying, bluffing, misdirection
- **Performance:** Entertainment, oration, acting

Knowledge Skills

- **Lore:** History, culture, general knowledge
- **Investigation:** Research, deduction, analysis
- **Medicine:** Healing, anatomy, treatment
- **Nature:** Wilderness, animals, plants

Specialized Skills

- **Arcana:** Magic, rituals, mystical knowledge
- **Mechanics:** Devices, engineering, construction
- **Diplomacy:** Formal negotiation, protocol
- **Streetwise:** Urban survival, criminal knowledge

5.3 Building Dice Pools

Your dice pool for any action is: **Attribute + Skill**.

Choosing the Right Combination

The same action can often be approached with different Attribute/Skill combinations:

- **Climbing a wall:**
 - Body + Athletics (physical strength)
 - Wits + Athletics (finding the best route)
 - Spirit + Athletics (sheer determination)
- **Persuading a guard:**
 - Presence + Sway (charm and personality)
 - Wits + Sway (logical arguments)
 - Spirit + Sway (force of conviction)
- **Investigating a crime scene:**
 - Wits + Investigation (careful observation)
 - Spirit + Investigation (intuitive leaps)
 - Presence + Investigation (getting people to talk)

Creative Combinations

With GM approval, you can justify unusual combinations:

- Body + Lore for recalling physical techniques
- Presence + Medicine for comforting patients
- Spirit + Craft for inspired artistic creation

Example: A ranger scales an ice wall using *Wits + Athletics* to route-find, then switches to *Body + Athletics* to muscle over the lip. The fiction guides the mechanics.

5.4 Skill Advancement

Improving skills requires experience points and training time.

XP Costs

| Improvement | XP Cost |
|-------------|---------|
| 0 → 1 | 2 XP |
| 1 → 2 | 4 XP |
| 2 → 3 | 6 XP |
| 3 → 4 | 8 XP |
| 4 → 5 | 10 XP |

Training Time

- 0 → 1: 1 day of practice
- 1 → 2: 3 days of training
- 2 → 3: 1 week of intensive study
- 3 → 4: 2 weeks of master training
- 4 → 5: 1 month of dedicated practice

Attribute Limits

You cannot have a skill rating higher than its primary **Attribute**. To increase a skill beyond your Attribute, you must first improve the Attribute.

5.5 Synergy Between Skills

Some skills work particularly well together, providing bonuses when used in combination. Synergies are situational and require fictional justification.

Combat Synergies

- **Tactics + Command**: +1 die when leading groups in combat
- **Melee + Athletics**: +1 die on movement-based attacks
- **Ranged + Perception**: +1 die on aimed shots

Social Synergies

- **Sway + Lore**: +1 die when using knowledge in persuasion
- **Deception + Performance**: +1 die on sustained deceptions
- **Command + Presence**: +1 die on leadership actions

Exploration Synergies

- **Investigation + Perception:** +1 die on detailed searches
- **Nature + Survival:** +1 die on wilderness navigation
- **Mechanics + Craft:** +1 die on complex repairs

5.6 Using Skills in Play

When to Roll

Skills are used when:

- The outcome is uncertain
- There are meaningful consequences for failure
- The action is significant to the story

Difficulty Values by Skill Level

| Skill Level | Routine Task | Challenging Task |
|-------------|--------------|------------------|
| 0 | DV 2 | DV 4 |
| 1 | DV 1 | DV 3 |
| 2 | Automatic | DV 2 |
| 3 | Automatic | DV 1 |
| 4+ | Automatic | Automatic |

Reading the Table: A *Professional* (3) auto-succeeds on routine tasks; challenge them with interesting stakes or higher DVs.

Group Skill Use

When multiple characters use the same skill:

- **Assistance:** One character leads, others provide +1 die each (max +3)
- **Cooperation:** Multiple characters attempt the same task separately
- **Complementary:** Different skills used together for a complex task

5.7 Skill Challenges

Complex tasks may require multiple skill uses or extended effort.

Extended Tests

For tasks taking significant time:

- Set a clock with 4–8 segments
- Each successful skill use fills segments
- Complications may add segments or create setbacks

Complex Challenges

Tasks requiring multiple skills:

- Different characters use different skills
- Successes contribute to overall progress
- Failure in one area may complicate others

Example (Complex Heist): *Stealth* to enter, *Mechanics* to bypass locks, *Investigation* to locate the vault, *Deception* to mislead guards. Each success advances the *Heist Clock*; SB creates new heat.

5.8 Skill-Based Character Archetypes

The Warrior

- **Primary:** Body + Melee/Ranged
- **Secondary:** Spirit + Endurance, Wits + Tactics
- **Key skills:** Athletics, Brawl, Command
- **Playstyle:** Direct confrontation, physical solutions

The Expert

- **Primary:** Wits + Lore/Investigation
- **Secondary:** Presence + Sway, Spirit + Resolve
- **Key skills:** Mechanics, Medicine, Perception
- **Playstyle:** Problem-solving, information gathering

The Face

- **Primary:** Presence + Sway/Deception
- **Secondary:** Wits + Investigation, Spirit + Performance
- **Key skills:** Command, Diplomacy, Streetwise
- **Playstyle:** Social manipulation, negotiation

The Specialist

- **Primary:** Varies by specialty
- **Secondary:** Supporting skills for the specialty
- **Key skills:** Craft, Arcana, Nature, etc.
- **Playstyle:** Technical expertise, unique capabilities

5.9 Improving Your Capabilities

Balanced Development

- Improve both **Attributes** and **Skills** together
- Develop complementary skill sets
- Consider how skills work in combination
- Plan for both immediate needs and long-term growth

Specialized Focus

- Maximize one **Attribute** and related skills
- Develop deep expertise in one area
- Become the go-to character for specific challenges
- Risk being less effective outside your specialty

Versatile Approach

- Moderate investment in multiple areas
- Ability to handle diverse situations
- Less peak capability but more adaptability
- Good for supporting other characters

Attributes and Skills Quick Reference**Attributes (1–5):**

- **Body:** Physical capability
- **Wits:** Mental acuity
- **Spirit:** Willpower
- **Presence:** Social influence

Skill Levels:

- 0: Untrained | 1: Novice | 2: Competent
- 3: Professional | 4: Master | 5: Grand Master

Dice Pool: Attribute + Skill d10s**Improvement:** New level \times 2 XP (skills)**Specialization:** +1 die in specific area at level 3+**Synergy:** Complementary skills give +1 die

5.10 Practical Examples

Combat Example

A warrior (Body 4, Melee 3) attacks:

- Dice pool: $4 + 3 = 7d10$
- Needs 6+ on each die for successes
- DV set by opponent's defense (typically 2–3)

Social Example

A diplomat (Presence 3, Sway 2) negotiates:

- Dice pool: $3 + 2 = 5d10$
- Position: Controlled (opponent is skeptical)
- Stakes: Success gets cooperation, failure creates suspicion

Exploration Example

A scout (Wits 3, Perception 2) searches for tracks:

- Dice pool: $3 + 2 = 5d10$
- DV 2 for fresh tracks, DV 3 for old tracks
- Success finds trail, partial finds clues, miss misses important signs

Final Note: Your **Attributes** and **Skills** define not just what you can do, but how you approach challenges. Choose combinations that reflect your character's personality and style, and let the fiction lead your mechanical choices.

5.11 Narrative-Heavy Skill Options

For groups that prefer strong narrative focus in skill use, consider these optional approaches:

Intent-Driven Skills: For routine tasks that don't significantly impact the story, players can simply declare what they want to accomplish without rolling dice. The GM determines if the action succeeds based on the character's capabilities and the fiction.

Descriptive Assistance Bonuses: Players can provide vivid, helpful descriptions of how they're using their skills to assist allies, granting a +1 die bonus to the primary actor's roll without spending Boons.

Skill as Character Development: Use skill challenges as opportunities for character growth and backstory development, allowing players to narrate how their characters learned new techniques through significant story moments.

Collaborative Difficulty Setting: Instead of the GM unilaterally setting DVs, players can suggest reasonable difficulty levels based on their understanding of the task, with GM approval.

Narrative Skill Synergies: Focus on how skills work together in the story rather than mechanical bonuses. A well-described combination of skills might grant advantage on Position or Effect without requiring specific synergy rules.

Chapter 6

Experience Paths and Character Building

How you spend your **Experience Points (XP)** defines not only your character's capabilities—but also their role in the world. This chapter explores different advancement philosophies and provides practical, legal starting builds that fit the campaign's creation rules.

6.1 Three Advancement Paths

There are three broad approaches to character development, each representing a different philosophy of growth:

Personal Path Invest in personal mastery and self-improvement

Balanced Path Mix personal growth with resources and influence

Influencer Path Focus on networks, assets, and strategic power

6.2 Path 1: Personal Development

The **Personal Path** focuses on individual capability through attributes and skills.

Typical Investment

- 70–90% Personal improvement
- 0–10% Resources and assets
- 0–20% Special abilities

Strengths

- Reliable in direct challenges and combat
- Minimal upkeep or management required
- Resilient to loss of external resources
- Consistent performance in spotlight moments

Weaknesses

- Limited influence in social or strategic scenes
- May struggle with problems requiring networks
- Less capable in logistics or large-scale operations
- Dependent on personal presence for all solutions

Build Example: The Duelist (Legal Start)

Total XP: 30 (34 with +4 from Bonds/Complications; see §6.5)

- **Attributes:** Body 3, Wits 2, Spirit 1, Presence 1
 - Costs (Attributes cost *new rating* ×3 each step): Body 1→2 (6), 2→3 (9) = **15**; Wits 1→2 (6) = **6**; Spirit/Presence remain 1 = **0**. *Subtotal: 21 XP*
- **Skills:** Melee 2, Athletics 1
 - Costs (Skills cost *new level* ×2 each step): Melee 0→1 (2), 1→2 (4) = **6**; Athletics 0→1 = **2**. *Subtotal: 8 XP*
- **Totals:** 21 + 8 = **29 XP**. Bank **1 XP**.
- **With +4 XP (Bonds/Complications):** add *Perception* 0→1 (2) and spend banked 1 XP on *Stealth* 0→1 (2), or instead take *Perception* 0→1 (2) and *Sway* 0→1 (2) for broader utility. *Cap: 34 XP*.

6.3 Path 2: Balanced Approach

The **Balanced Path** mixes personal capability with strategic resources.

Typical Investment

- 50–65% Personal improvement
- 15–25% Resources and assets
- 15–25% Special abilities

Strengths

- Adaptable to diverse situations
- Can handle both direct and indirect challenges
- Good supporting role for the group
- Moderate risk profile

Weaknesses

- Not exceptional in any single area
- Requires management of resources
- Moderate upkeep demands
- Can be outshone by specialists

Build Example: The Scout (Legal Start)

Total XP: 30 (34 with +4 from Bonds/Complications)

- **Attributes:** Wits 2, Body 2, Spirit 1, Presence 1
 - Costs: Wits 1→2 (6), Body 1→2 (6) = **12 XP**
- **Skills:** Survival 2, Perception 1, Stealth 1
 - Costs: Survival 0→1 (2), 1→2 (4) = **6**; Perception 0→1 **2**; Stealth 0→1 **2**. *Subtotal: 10 XP*
- **Resources:** *Minor equipment cache* (camp gear, maps, signal kit) = **4 XP**
- **Special Abilities:** *Wilderness Lore* (broad travel benefits) = **4 XP**
- **Totals:** 12 + 10 + 4 + 4 = **30 XP**.
- **With +4 XP:** add *Perception 1→2* (+4) or take a *trained hawk companion* (Minor Resource, 4 XP).

6.4 Path 3: Influencer Focus

The **Influencer Path** prioritizes networks, assets, and strategic power.

Typical Investment

- 25–40% Personal improvement
- 35–55% Resources and assets
- 20–40% Special abilities

Strengths

- Strong strategic and social influence
- Can solve problems indirectly
- Excellent at planning and preparation
- Creates opportunities for the whole group

Weaknesses

- Personally vulnerable in direct confrontations
- High maintenance requirements
- Complications can cascade through networks
- Dependent on external factors

Build Example: The Merchant (Legal Start)

Total XP: 30 (34 with +4 from Bonds/Complications)

- **Attributes:** Presence 2, Wits 2, Spirit 1, Body 1
 - Costs: Presence 1→2 (6), Wits 1→2 (6) = **12 XP**
- **Skills:** Sway 2, Deception 1, Lore 1
 - Costs: Sway 0→1 (2), 1→2 (4) = **6**; Deception 0→1 **2**; Lore 0→1 **2**. *Subtotal: 10 XP*
- **Resources:** *Standard trading office* (staffed storefront, ledgers, storage) = **8 XP**
- **Totals:** 12 + 10 + 8 = **30 XP**.
- **With +4 XP:** add *Negotiation Mastery* (4 XP general ability) *or* expand to a second *Minor merchant route* (4 XP).

6.5 Starting Character Guidelines

Base XP Allocation

- **Standard Starting XP:** 30 points
- **Bonds and Complications:** You may take up to **two total** from any mix of meaningful *Bonds* (up to 2, +2 XP each) and significant *Complications* (up to 2, +2 XP each), granting maximum +4 XP.
- **Maximum Starting XP:** 34 points
- **Complication Effect:** Each unresolved starting Complication adds +1 banked SB to early scenes until cleared.

Recommended Starting Ranges

| Category | Recommended XP |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| Primary Attribute | 9–12 XP (rating 3–4) |
| Secondary Attributes | 0–9 XP each (rating 1–3) |
| Key Skills | 4–6 XP each (rating 2–3) |
| Supporting Skills | 2–4 XP each (rating 1–2) |
| Resources | 0–8 XP total |
| Special Abilities | 0–8 XP total |

Cost Reminders:

- **Attributes:** Each step costs *new rating* $\times 3$ XP (e.g., $1 \rightarrow 2$ costs 6; $2 \rightarrow 3$ costs 9).
- **Skills:** Each step costs *new level* $\times 2$ XP (e.g., $0 \rightarrow 1$ costs 2; $1 \rightarrow 2$ costs 4).
- **Resources:** Minor 4 XP; Standard 8 XP; Major 12 XP.
- **Special Abilities:** Minor Edge 2 XP; Major Edge 4 XP; Prestige 6+ XP.

6.6 Progression Planning

Early Game (0–40 XP)

Focus on establishing core capabilities:

- Reach attribute rating 3 in your primary area
- Develop 2–3 key skills to rating 2–3
- Acquire basic resources or one special ability
- Establish your character's niche in the group

Mid Game (41–90 XP)

Expand and specialize:

- Increase primary attribute to 4
- Specialize key skills to rating 3–4
- Develop supporting capabilities
- Build strategic resources or networks
- Acquire signature special abilities

Late Game (91–150 XP)

Master your chosen path:

- Achieve peak attributes (rating 4–5)
- Master key skills (rating 4–5)
- Build substantial influence or unique capabilities
- Develop advanced special abilities
- Consider legacy projects or organizations

6.7 Path Combination Strategies

Many players mix elements from different paths:

Combat Specialist with Resources

- Strong personal combat capabilities
- Moderate resource investment for support
- Good for frontline fighters who need logistical support
- Example: Warrior with a fortified base and loyal troops

Social Character with Personal Skills

- Excellent social capabilities
- Solid personal skills for self-defense
- Good for diplomats who operate independently
- Example: Ambassador with combat training and persuasion skills

Technical Expert with Networks

- Deep technical or magical expertise
- Network of contacts and resources
- Good for specialists who need support systems
- Example: Master crafter with supplier network and apprentices

6.8 Resource Management

Each path requires different management approaches:

Personal Path Management

- Minimal upkeep requirements
- Focus on equipment maintenance
- Occasional skill practice or training
- Low complexity, high reliability

Balanced Path Management

- Moderate upkeep for resources
- Relationship maintenance with contacts
- Skill development alongside resource management
- Balanced time investment

Influencer Path Management

- Significant upkeep demands
- Network maintenance and expansion
- Resource allocation and development
- Strategic planning and opportunity management

6.9 Risk Assessment

Each path carries different risks:

Personal Path Risks

- Over-specialization in one area
- Vulnerability to problems outside specialty
- Limited growth options later in game
- May become predictable in approach

Balanced Path Risks

- Jack-of-all-trades, master of none
- Spread too thin across capabilities
- Moderate risks in multiple areas
- May lack standout capabilities

Influencer Path Risks

- Network vulnerability to attacks
- High maintenance requirements
- Cascade failure potential
- Personal safety concerns

6.10 Building for Group Synergy

Consider how your path complements other party members:

Complementary Paths

- Personal path characters provide reliable combat capability
- Balanced path characters handle diverse challenges
- Influencer path characters create opportunities and resources
- Mixed groups cover all bases effectively

Redundant Paths

- Multiple personal path characters may overlap in combat
- Multiple influencer path characters may compete for resources
- Consider diversifying within similar paths
- Example: Different combat specialties or resource types

6.11 Adapting Your Path

Your chosen path isn't permanent—you can shift focus as the game progresses:

Early Shift (0–40 XP)

- Easy to change direction
- Minimal sunk cost in any approach
- Good time to experiment with different styles
- Can respond to group needs or story developments

Mid Game Shift (41–90 XP)

- Requires more deliberate planning
- Some capabilities may need to be maintained
- Can fill emerging gaps in group capability
- May require temporary performance dip during transition

Late Game Shift (91+ XP)

- Significant investment in current path
- Major shift requires substantial XP investment
- Consider adding complementary capabilities rather than replacing
- May be better to develop existing strengths further

XP Path Quick Reference

Personal Path (70–90% self):

- Reliable individual performance
- Low upkeep, high consistency
- Best for combat and specialist roles

Balanced Path (50–65% self):

- Good all-around capability
- Moderate risk and upkeep
- Flexible supporting role

Influencer Path (25–40% self):

- Strategic power and influence
- High upkeep, high reward
- Creates opportunities for group

Starting XP: 30 base + up to +4 from Bonds/Complications (max start 34).

6.12 Practical Building Examples (Narrative Roles, Legal Starts)

Example 1: The Guardian

Path: Personal **Total:** 30 XP

- **Attributes:** Body 3 (15), Wits 2 (6) = **21 XP**
- **Skills:** Melee 2 (6), Athletics 1 (2) = **8 XP**
- **Bank:** 1 XP
- **Role at table:** Frontline protection, reliable duel pressure. With +4 XP, add *Combat Reflexes* (2 XP talent) and *Shield Mastery* (4 XP talent) using banked 1 + 4 = 5 XP, with 1 XP remaining.

Example 2: The Explorer

Path: Balanced **Total:** 30 XP

- **Attributes:** Wits 2 (6), Body 2 (6) = **12 XP**
- **Skills:** Survival 2 (6), Perception 1 (2), Stealth 1 (2) = **10 XP**
- **Resources:** Minor mapping kit & route notes = **4 XP**
- **Ability:** Trail Sense = **4 XP**
- **Totals:** **30 XP**. With +4 XP, raise *Perception* 1→2 (+4) or add a trained beast (Minor Resource, 4).

Example 3: The Schemer

Path: Influencer **Total:** 30 XP

- **Attributes:** Presence 2 (6), Wits 2 (6) = **12 XP**
- **Skills:** Sway 2 (6), Deception 1 (2), Lore 1 (2) = **10 XP**
- **Resources:** Standard safehouse & message drops = **8 XP**
- **Totals:** **30 XP**. With +4 XP, take *Network Builder* (4 XP talent) or add *Minor informant ring* (4 XP).

Reminder: All builds above assume baseline *Attributes at 1* and *Skills at 0* before spending. Attribute and Skill advances are cumulative by step (see costs in §6.5).

Remember: Your chosen path should reflect both your character concept and your preferred play style. There's no single "correct" path—only what works for you and your group.

6.13 Narrative-Heavy Character Building Options

For groups that prefer strong narrative focus in character building, consider these optional approaches:

Story-Driven Milestones: Instead of tracking XP numerically, the GM can award advancement when characters reach significant story milestones. "You've trained with the master for months—you've improved your skill."

Experience Through Reflection: Players can spend downtime scenes reflecting on past experiences to earn XP. A meaningful flashback or character moment can justify growth without tracking specific points.

Collaborative Advancement: The group can discuss and agree on advancement choices, ensuring everyone's growth supports the overall story direction.

Narrative Justification Focus: When spending XP, players should explain how their character gained this capability through in-game experiences, creating richer backstory and continuity.

Path as Theme: Focus on the narrative themes of your chosen path rather than strict XP allocations. A Personal Path character might emphasize their journey of self-mastery, while an Influencer Path character focuses on their growing web of relationships and influence.

Chapter 7

Talents and Special Abilities

Talents are the building blocks of character specialization. They represent learned techniques, supernatural gifts, or cultural inheritances. Each Talent costs XP, and their costs are tied to impact.

7.1 Understanding Talents

Talents are purchased with **Experience Points (XP)** and provide special capabilities:

- They go beyond simple skill bonuses
- They often have specific **activation conditions**
- They may provide **narrative permissions** (you can try things others cannot)
- They can define your character's **unique identity**

Talent Costs

| Type | Cost | Examples |
|------------|-------|--|
| Minor Edge | 2 XP | Caster's Gift, +1 situational bonus |
| Major Edge | 4 XP | Patron's Symbol, strong summon upgrade |
| Prestige | 6+ XP | Campaign-defining effects |

Activation Types.

- **Passive:** Always on; no action
- **Active:** Requires an action or scene focus
- **Reactive:** Triggers on a condition

Limits and Economy. Unless a talent says otherwise:

- **Per Scene** uses refresh at scene end
- **Per Session** uses refresh after downtime
- Some talents allow you to spend **Boons** to push effects

7.2 Talent Categories

Minor Edge Talents

Basic abilities available to any character:

- **Cost:** 2 XP
- **Examples:** Caster's Gift, Familiar Bond, basic magical abilities
- **Best for:** Essential capabilities and access requirements

Major Edge Talents

Significant abilities with moderate requirements:

- **Cost:** 4 XP
- **Examples:** Patron's Symbol, Codex, significant summon upgrades
- **Best for:** Core specialization and magical access

Prestige Talents

Powerful abilities unlocked through mastery or story events:

- **Cost:** 6+ XP
- **Examples:** Breaking fundamental limits, forbidden summons, rewriting obligations
- **Best for:** Campaign-shaping capabilities

7.3 Magic Access Talents

Caster's Gift

Cost: 2 XP

Grants access to Weave & Cast freeform spellcasting using the Eight Elements. Without this, characters cannot freeform cast.

Familiar

Cost: 2 XP

Required to access Patron features such as Patron's Gift. Binds a Thiasos.

Codex

Cost: 4 XP

Required to fully join a Patron's service as a Runekeeper. Grants access to that Patron's Rites and Obligation system.

Patron's Symbol

Cost: 4 XP

Minor Asset. Allows an Invoker to access a Patron's Rites via ritual precision. Each Patron requires its own Symbol.

7.4 Patron's Gift (Imbuement)

Cost: Free (requires Thiasos)

Activation: 1 Action once per scene

Duration: Scene

Range: Touch

Effect: Imbue one item with temporary magical power related to your Patron's domain. The item functions as a magical weapon (+1 Melee) and specialized tool (+1 thematic Skill) for the scene.

Push It: The item's power persists for one additional scene but marks +1 Obligation.

7.5 Monk Talents

Core Concept

Monks channel inner discipline into supernatural martial prowess, combining unarmed combat mastery with spiritual focus.

Starting Talent

Disciplined Body (3 XP — Minor Talent) **Requirements:** Melee 1+, Body 2+.

Benefits:

- +1 die to unarmed combat attacks.
- Convert 1 Harm to Fatigue once per scene.
- Once per scene, improve Position by one step.

Advanced Talents

Iron Fist Way (6 XP — Minor Talent) **Benefits:** +1 die to unarmed attacks; strikes count as enchanted.

Flowing Spirit Way (8 XP — Major Talent) **Benefits:** Convert up to 1 Harm into Fatigue per attack; +1 die against fear or charm.

Perfect Timing Way (7 XP — Major Talent) **Benefits:** Twice per scene, improve Position by +1 step; +1 die to reactions.

Untouchable Way (12 XP — Major Talent) **Prerequisites:** Iron Fist + Flowing Spirit.
Benefits: +1 die to unarmed attacks; convert 2 Harm into Fatigue; cannot be grappled.

Inevitable Way (15 XP — Major Talent) **Prerequisites:** Iron Fist + Perfect Timing.
Benefits: +2 dice to unarmed attacks; ignore 1 Armor; may counterattack when an enemy misses.

Transcendent Harmony (18 XP — Epic Talent) **Prerequisites:** Flowing Spirit + Perfect Timing, Spirit 4+.

Benefits: Convert 2 Harm into Fatigue; once per session become immune to Harm; allies gain +1 defense.

Progression Path

Monks specialize early (6–8 XP), combine paths mid-tier (12–15 XP), and achieve transcendence late (18 XP). Each path represents a distinct combat philosophy and playstyle.

7.6 Selecting Talents

Consider Your Magical Path

Choose talents that reinforce your character’s magical approach:

- **Caster:** Freeform spellcasting talents, elemental control
- **Runekeeper:** Rites access, Obligation management, Patron specialization
- **Invoker:** Ritual efficiency, Symbol maintenance, invocation speed
- **Specialist:** Unique talents matching your specific focus

Balance Access and Power

Consider both access requirements and power talents:

- **Access:** Essential prerequisites (Caster’s Gift, Familiar)
- **Power:** Combat enhancements, magical amplifications
- **Utility:** Support abilities, resource management

Think About Investment

Consider how much XP each talent represents:

- **Minor (2 XP):** Essential access, small narrative tricks
- **Major (4 XP):** Strong upgrades, permanent effects in niche
- **Prestige (6+ XP):** Campaign-defining, fundamental limits broken

7.7 Talent Building Strategies

The Specialist

Focus on talents supporting one primary magical path:

- Choose talents that **synergize** with each other
- Develop a clear specialization identity
- Become the go-to character for specific magical challenges
- **Risk:** May be less effective outside specialty

The Generalist

Spread talents across multiple magical approaches:

- Cover different types of magical challenges
- Provide support to other party members
- Adapt to diverse situations
- **Risk:** Less peak capability in any area, increased bookkeeping

The Foundation Builder

Focus on essential access talents first:

- Prioritize access requirements (Caster's Gift, Familiar)
- Build toward major capabilities
- Establish core identity before specialization
- **Risk:** May lack immediate power payoff

7.8 Talent Examples

Magic Access Talents

Caster's Gift (2 XP) — Access to Weave & Cast freeform spellcasting using the Eight Elements.

Familiar (2 XP) — Required for Patron's Gift and other Patron features.

Codex (4 XP) — Full access to a Patron's Rites and Obligation system.

Patron's Symbol (4 XP) — Ritual access to a Patron's Rites via invocation.

Combat Talents

Second Wind (2 XP, *Active*) — Once per scene, clear 1 Fatigue when you take a moment to catch your breath.

Combat Reflexes (2 XP, *Reactive*) — +1 die on defense rolls when surprised or flanked.

Precise Strike (2 XP, *Active*) — Once per scene, ignore armor on one attack if you had **Dominant** or **Controlled** position.

Weapon Mastery (4 XP, *Passive*) — Choose a weapon type; +1 die when using it.

Social Talents

Silver Tongue (2 XP, *Passive*) — +1 die on persuasion attempts.

Read Emotions (2 XP, *Active*) — Once per scene, automatically detect surface emotions in a social exchange.

Command Presence (4 XP, *Passive*) — +1 die on leadership and intimidation rolls.

Network Builder (4 XP, *Passive*) — Gain a minor contact in each new settlement visited.

Exploration Talents

Keen Senses (2 XP, *Passive*) — +1 die on perception checks to spot danger or hidden details.

Wilderness Lore (2 XP, *Passive*) — Automatically find food and water in hospitable biomes.

Trackless Step (2 XP, *Active*) — Leave no trail for the rest of the scene.

Urban Navigation (2 XP, *Passive*) — Never get lost in cities.

7.9 Advanced Talent Examples

Casting Mastery

Spell Shaping (4 XP; Req: Caster's Gift) — Modify spell factors (range/scale/targeting) by one step when you Weave.

Elemental Mastery (6 XP; Req: Arcana 3) — Reduce backlash severity by one step when casting spells of your chosen element.

Arcane Dominance (6 XP; Req: Spirit 4, Arcana 4) — Overpower weaker magical effects automatically when you contest them.

Ritual Expertise

Ritual Mastery (4 XP; Req: Familiar) — Perform rituals with reduced risk: the GM spends 1 fewer SB on ritual backlash.

Efficient Invocation (4 XP; Req: Patron's Symbol) — Reduce ritual casting time by one step (minimum 1 Player Turn).

Crack Specialist (6 XP; Req: 3 Patron Symbols) — Reduce Crack the Seal Obligation cost by 1 (minimum +1).

Dual Covenant (6 XP): Maintain two active summons.

Prestige Abilities

Forbidden Knowledge (6 XP; Req: Tier II) — Access to one forbidden summon or dangerous rite.

Obligation Master (8 XP; Req: Tier III, Codex) — Reduce all Obligation segment costs by 1 (minimum 1).

Backlash Immunity (10 XP; Req: Tier IV, Spirit 5) — Ignore minor backlash entirely on casting rolls.

Triad Bond (8 XP): Maintain three active summons.

7.10 Talent Synergies

Some talents work particularly well together:

Casting Synergies

- **Caster's Gift + Spell Shaping:** Flexible, precise freeform casting
- **Elemental Mastery + Arcane Dominance:** Powerful, controlled elemental effects
- **Ritual Mastery + Caster's Gift:** Reduced risk on both freeform and ritual casting

Social Synergies

- **Silver Tongue + Command Presence:** Charm or command with equal force
- **Read Emotions + Network Builder:** Understand and leverage social connections
- **Familiar + Social Talents:** Patron-enhanced social abilities

Exploration Synergies

- **Keen Senses + Trackless Step:** Find others while leaving no trace
- **Wilderness Lore + Urban Navigation:** Comfortable in all environments
- **Familiar + Exploration Talents:** Patron-guided exploration

7.11 Talent Limitations and Balance

Usage Restrictions

Most talents have limits to maintain game balance:

- **Per scene:** Common for strong actives
- **Per session:** Reserved for swingy effects
- **Resource cost:** Some require spending Boons or generating Obligation
- **Position requirements:** May require specific narrative circumstances

Prerequisite Systems

Advanced talents require meeting certain conditions:

- **Attribute minimums:** e.g., Spirit 4, Wits 3
- **Skill requirements:** Specific skills at set levels
- **Previous talents:** Foundational picks first (Familiar required for Patron features)
- **Tier requirements:** Character advancement level

7.12 Building Your Talent Set

Early Game (0–40 XP)

Focus on essential access and basic capabilities:

- 1–2 access talents (Caster’s Gift, Familiar)
- 2–3 basic talents for reliability
- Save XP for major access requirements
- Choose talents that work with your core concept

Mid Game (41–90 XP)

Develop your specialization:

- Major access talents (Codex, Patron’s Symbol)
- 2–3 synergistic power talents
- Balance active and passive picks
- Plan for prestige abilities

Late Game (91+ XP)

Achieve mastery:

- 1–2 prestige talents defining your apex
- Picks that create legacy effects
- Talents that benefit the whole party
- Prepare for campaign-defining challenges

7.13 Talent Customization

Work with your Game Master to create custom talents:

- **Based on story events:** Reflect character experiences
- **Balanced costs:** Match similar scope to existing talents (2/4/6+ XP)
- **Clear prerequisites:** Define requirements clearly
- **Mechanical clarity:** Define activation, effects, and limits

7.14 Talents and Group Dynamics

Consider how your talents complement the party:

- **Fill gaps:** Cover party weaknesses in magical capabilities
- **Synergize:** Coordinate with other players' magical approaches
- **Avoid overlap:** Don't duplicate another character's access path
- **Support role:** Talents that help the whole group manage magical risks

7.15 Talent Respecification

If your character concept changes, you may respec talents:

- **GM approval required:** Discuss proposed changes
- **Downtime cost:** Represent retraining (typically 1 downtime period)
- **Story justification:** Explain the change in-narrative
- **Limited frequency:** Typically once per major story arc

Talent Selection Guide**Early Game (0–40 XP):**

- 1–2 access talents (2 XP each)
- 2–4 basic talents (2 XP each)
- Focus on essential capabilities

Mid Game (41–90 XP):

- 1–2 major talents (4 XP each)
- 1–2 advanced talents (4–6 XP each)
- Plan for prestige prerequisites

Late Game (91+ XP):

- 1–2 prestige talents (6+ XP each)
- Campaign-defining capabilities
- Party-supporting abilities

Remember: Talents should reflect your character's story and magical growth.

7.16 Practical Talent Examples

Example 1: The Caster

- **Caster's Gift** (2 XP) — Essential access to freeform casting
- **Spell Shaping** (4 XP) — Modify spell parameters
- **Elemental Mastery** (6 XP) — Reduce casting risks
- **Arcane Dominance** (6 XP) — Overpower opposing magic
- **Total: 18 XP** invested in casting capabilities

Example 2: The Runekeeper

- **Familiar** (2 XP) — Access to Patron features
- **Codex** (4 XP) — Full Rites access
- **Ritual Mastery** (4 XP) — Reduced ritual risks
- **Obligation Master** (8 XP) — Better debt management
- **Total: 18 XP** invested in Pact magic

Example 3: The Invoker

- **Patron's Symbol** (4 XP) — Ritual access to Patron
- **Efficient Invocation** (4 XP) — Faster rituals
- **Crack Specialist** (6 XP) — Reduced instant cast costs
- **Ritual Mastery** (4 XP) — Reduced backlash
- **Total: 18 XP** invested in ritual magic

7.17 Melee Combat Talents

7.17.1 Minor Talents

Defensive Survival (3 XP)

Requirements: Melee 2+

Effect: +1 die to defense rolls while engaged in melee. Once per scene, convert first Harm 1 from melee to Fatigue.

Narrative: Years of combat teaching you to read attacks and flow with them.

Tactical Movement (4 XP)

Requirements: Athletics 2+

Effect: Move within engagement zone as Move action (instead of full action). Once per scene, disengage from Close as Move action.

Narrative: Footwork and positioning that keeps you alive in the press.

Conditioning (4 XP)

Requirements: Body 3+

Effect: Body attribute counts as +1 for Fatigue track calculations. +1 die to resist Fatigue overflow effects.

Narrative: Physical conditioning that lets you endure punishment.

Weapon Master (5 XP)

Requirements: Melee 2+

Effect: +2 dice (instead of +1) with chosen weapon category. Once per scene, +1 Effect with signature weapon.

Narrative: Mastery of specific weapons that makes them extensions of yourself.

7.17.2 Major Talents

Flurry Strike (7 XP)

Requirements: Melee 3+, Body 3+

Effect: When engaged with multiple opponents, make 2 attacks as one action. Each attack at -1

die.

Narrative: Training that lets you fight multiple enemies simultaneously.

Duelist's Edge (8 XP)

Requirements: Melee 3+, Wits 3+

Effect: When engaged with single opponent: +1 die to all melee rolls. Once per scene, ignore first Harm 1 or 2 from that opponent.

Narrative: Psychological and tactical dominance in one-on-one combat.

Battlefield Mastery (8 XP)

Requirements: Melee 4+, Wits 4+, Command 2+

Effect: Once per scene, when engaged with 3+ opponents, declare "Battlefield Mastery." For next 3 exchanges:

- All melee attacks gain +1 Effect
- Enemies act at -1 die due to disorientation
- Your Position improves by one step
- Convert one Harm 1→Fatigue per exchange

Narrative: When surrounded, you enter a state of perfect combat flow where enemies become obstacles rather than threats.

Subtle Casting (Major Talent — 8 XP)

Requirements: Lore 3+, Performance 2+ *or* Runekeeper with Codex

Effect: Make a **Performance** + **Lore** roll to quietly cast a spell, invoke a Rite, or sing a Cantos against DV (Tier). If successful, the casting does not generate on the *Channel* or initial roll. This talent allows the caster to veil magic in story, song, or symbol rather than force.

Limitations:

- Cannot be used for *Great* or *Extreme* Tier effects.
- The *Weave* phase (if applicable) still generates normal SB.
- Obvious magical manifestations still occur (glowing sigils, strange sounds, sudden winds, etc.).

"True subtlety is not silence, but harmony — when even the wind believes it sang the song."

Backstab (Major Talent, 8 XP) **Req:** Stealth 2+, Melee 2+, Light weapon.

Effect: When you attack an **Unaware** or **Engaged** foe from **Stealth**, deal +1 Harm and ignore 1 point of their Armor.

Definitions:

- **Unaware:** The target is not aware of your presence or hostile intent. This typically requires being *Hidden* or having succeeded on a *Stealth* test.

- **Engaged:** The target is currently taking an *Attack* action against another character, or casting a spell/ritual that specifically targets another character.
 - In miniatures/tactical play: the target is in melee range (*Close*) with another PC/NPC and actively fighting them.

Limit: Once per scene. To use again, you must first *re-enter Stealth* (DV by narrative) and mark 1 *Fatigue* (e.g., via *Shadow Dance*).

On a Miss: You are *Exposed* — drop to *Desperate Position* or mark 1 *Harm*.

Shadow Dance (Synergy Talent, 10 XP) **Req:** Backstab, Stealth 3+, Mobility 2+.

Effect: After a successful **Backstab**, you may immediately test **Stealth** vs. DV (Tier).

- On success: You *re-enter Stealth* and may either **clear 1 Fatigue** or **improve Position +1**.
- On failure: You remain *Exposed* and must mark 1 *Fatigue*.

Limit: May only chain once per scene.

Deathblow (Capstone Talent, 12 XP) **Req:** Shadow Dance, Stealth 4+, Melee/Ranged 3+.

Effect: When you strike from **Dominant Position** or after re-entering **Stealth** via *Shadow Dance*, you may declare a **Deathblow**.

- On a hit: Deal *triple Harm*. If the attack incapacitates the target, you may immediately attempt a free **Stealth** test (DV by narrative) to vanish.
- On a miss: You are *Exposed* — drop to *Desperate Position* and mark 1 *Harm*.

Limit: Once per scene. You may mark 1 *Fatigue* to attempt a second time.

7.17.3 Prestige Talents

Battlefield Terror (12 XP)

Requirements: Melee 4+, Body 4+, Harm 2+ experience

Effect: Enemies in *Close range* act at -1 die due to intimidation. Once per scene, convert enemy's success to partial with cost.

Narrative: Reputation and presence that makes opponents hesitate.

7.17.4 Epic Talents

Blade Dance (18 XP)

Requirements: Melee 5+, Duelist's Edge, Flurry Strike

Effect: Engage and attack up to 3 targets in one action. Each attack at -1 die, but *Position* improves by one step.

Narrative: Legendary skill that makes you a whirlwind of death.

7.17.5 Combat Balance Notes

These talents are designed to enhance melee viability while maintaining Fate's Edge's core tension between risk and reward. Melee combat should remain **manageably deadly** - dangerous enough to require tactical skill, but with meaningful options for skilled fighters to excel.

Key Principles:

- Talents enhance existing mechanics rather than replace them
- Specialization provides clear advantages for focused builds
- High-cap opponents remain genuinely threatening
- Positioning and tactical decision-making remain crucial
- Story Beat escalation continues to compound challenges

Role Balance: Enhanced melee fighters complement rather than overshadow other roles. Ranged characters maintain mobility advantages, magic users provide battlefield control, and support characters enable team effectiveness.

7.17.6 Embrace the Void (Major Talent, 8 XP)

For those who walk the knife-edge between power and damnation. **Prerequisites:** Any character with 2+ levels in a skill tied to their Patron's domain, and at least one segment of Obligation to that Patron.

Effect: Once per session, you may choose to fully embrace your Patron's corrupting influence to gain significant temporary power.

Activation:

- Immediately mark 2 segments of Obligation to your chosen Patron.
- Mark 1 segment on that Patron's specific Corruption Table.
- Gain one of the following benefits for the remainder of the scene:
 - **Power Surge:** +1 die and +1 effect on all rolls related to that Patron's domain.
 - **Defiance:** Immunity to one specific consequence type (fear, charm, physical harm, etc.) for the scene.
 - **Forbidden Rite:** Use one Rite of that Patron without marking additional Obligation (Backlash still applies).
 - **Tempting Tongue:** +1 effect on all social manipulations for the scene.

Cost:

- A permanent mark on your character sheet indicating embraced corruption.
- Your Patron's influence deepens: the GM gains +1 Story Beat to spend against you whenever that Patron is relevant.
- You must roleplay the corruption's manifestations in future scenes.

- This Talent cannot be activated again until you clear at least 2 segments of Obligation through proper service to your Patron.

Narrative Integration: This Talent represents the Faustian bargain at the heart of Patron magic—power for a price. Players gain agency over their corruption, while ensuring that it always carries meaningful consequences.

Example Corruptions by Patron

Ikasha (Shadows): You cannot lie about secrets you have learned; you compulsively seek hidden truths.

Aliyah (Chains & Curses): You bear a visible corruption mark; you crave increasingly dangerous curses to feel alive.

Raéyn (Sea): You draw the attention of sea creatures; you suffer –1 die on land-based actions.

The Sealed Gate: You attract entities seeking to cross thresholds; you compulsively seal or lock doors, gates, and bindings.

Final Note. The best talents are those that fit your magical concept and table playstyle. Choose abilities you'll enjoy using, that create interesting consequences, and that contribute to your character's unfolding story through the lens of risk and consequence that defines Fate's Edge magic.

7.18 Narrative-Heavy Talent Options

For groups that prefer strong narrative focus in talent use, consider these optional approaches:

Story-Driven Talents: Instead of mechanical bonuses, some talents can provide narrative permissions or story effects. "Courtly Grace" might allow you to navigate noble society without rolls, while "Wild Empathy" lets you communicate with animals through roleplay rather than dice.

Collaborative Talent Activation: Players can describe how their talents work in the fiction, with GM approval, rather than relying solely on mechanical triggers. A "Master Strategist" might narrate how they reposition allies through clever tactics rather than just declaring the mechanical effect.

Talent as Character Development: Use talent acquisition as opportunities for character growth and backstory development, allowing players to narrate how their characters learned new abilities through significant story moments.

Flexible Talent Interpretation: Focus on the thematic effects of talents rather than strict mechanical applications. A "Weapon Mastery" talent might manifest differently depending on the weapon and situation, with the GM and player collaborating on the specific benefits.

Chapter 8

Assets and Followers

Your character's influence extends beyond personal capabilities through **Assets** and **Followers**. These represent worldly possessions, connections, and allies that can solve problems, provide assistance, and shape the narrative.

8.1 Understanding Assets and Followers

Key Differences

- **Assets**: Off-screen resources that solve problems between scenes.
- **Followers**: On-screen allies who assist during gameplay.
- **Assets** change the fictional situation before you arrive.
- **Followers** act alongside you in the moment.

Management Requirements

Both require maintenance and carry risks:

- Regular upkeep costs (XP or downtime).
- Vulnerability to complications and attacks.
- Narrative consequences for misuse or neglect.

8.2 Assets System

Assets are possessions, properties, or resources you control.

Asset Types and Costs

| Type | XP Cost | Establishment Time |
|----------|---------|--------------------|
| Minor | 4 XP | 1 day |
| Standard | 8 XP | 1 week |
| Major | 12 XP | 1 month |

Asset Examples

Minor Assets Small shop, safehouse, minor title, basic workshop.

Standard Assets Noble title, guild membership, trading post, spy network.

Major Assets Fortress, city license, major enterprise, regional influence.

Using Assets

Assets provide benefits in different ways:

Free Off-Screen Use Each asset has a specific off-screen effect you can use once per session:

- **Safehouse:** Provide secure lodging for the party.
- **Spy Network:** Gather basic intelligence about a location.
- **Workshop:** Repair or create simple items between adventures.
- **Trading Post:** Acquire common goods at better prices.

Boon Activation Spend **1 Boon** to use an asset dramatically during a scene:

- **Safehouse:** Suddenly reveal a hidden escape route.
- **Spy Network:** Produce crucial information at a critical moment.
- **Workshop:** Create an improvised solution to an immediate problem.
- **Trading Post:** Call in a favor from a business contact.

XP Activation Spend **2 XP** to use an asset's off-screen effect outside your normal allowance:

- Emergency use when you've already used your free activation.
- Additional uses during downtime periods.
- Special circumstances requiring extra asset support.

8.3 Asset Conditions

Assets have condition states affecting their usefulness:

Condition Levels

Maintained Fully functional, no penalties.

Neglected −1 die when used; requires attention.

Compromised Unavailable until repaired or recovered.

Maintenance Requirements

- **Regular Upkeep:** Two options per SRD §21.2:
 - **Efficient** (Higher XP, Less Time): Pay Upkeep XP = $\max(1, XP_{Acquisition})/3$, minimal effort
 - **Intensive** (Lower XP, More Time): Pay 1 XP, dedicated downtime action
- **Neglect:** Assets deteriorate if not maintained.
- **Recovery:** Compromised assets require significant effort to restore.

8.4 Followers System

Followers are characters who assist you directly.

Follower Capability Ratings

Followers are rated by Capability (**Cap**) from 1 to 5:

| Cap | Description |
|-----|---------------------------------------|
| 1 | Novice helper, basic assistance |
| 2 | Competent assistant, reliable support |
| 3 | Skilled specialist, valuable aid |
| 4 | Expert ally, significant capability |
| 5 | Master companion, exceptional ability |

Follower Costs

- **XP Cost:** Capability squared (Cap^2).
- **Example:** Cap 3 follower costs $3^2 = 9$ XP.
- **Recruitment:** 1–3 days downtime to find and brief.
- **Limits:** The GM may set maximum followers based on story.

Follower Types

Combat Allies Warriors, guards, mercenaries.

Technical Experts Craftspeople, engineers, specialists.

Social Contacts Informants, diplomats, agents.

Specialists Unique capabilities like magic or stealth.

8.5 Using Followers

Assistance in Scenes

Followers can help with your actions:

- **Assist Dice:** Add dice equal to $\min(\text{Cap}, \text{relevant skill})$.
- **Maximum Bonus:** +3 dice total from all sources.
- **Cost:** Spend 1 Boon or 1 Stress to add +1 die (max +3 from assists).
- **One Helper:** Only one follower can assist per action.

Independent Actions

Once per scene (party-wide), a follower can take a small action:

Scout & Signal Change an ally's next action to **Dominant** position.

Distract & Draw Reduce a threat clock by 1 segment.

Fetch & Carry Move an object through danger safely.

Cost of Independent Actions

- Mark +1 **Exposure** (attention or stress), *or*
- Take **Harm 1** (injury or trauma).
- Cannot be used if the follower is already **Compromised**.

8.6 Follower Conditions

Followers track two condition types:

Exposure

Represents attention, stress, or narrative pressure:

- **Gains:** From independent actions, dangerous situations, complications.
- **Effects:** Increased risk, reduced effectiveness, attention from enemies.
- **Recovery:** Downtime activities, careful management.

Harm

Represents injury, trauma, or damage:

- **Gains:** From combat, accidents, enemy attacks.
- **Effects:** Penalties to assistance, possible incapacity.
- **Recovery:** Medical care, rest, magical healing.

Condition States

Maintained Ready and reliable, full capability.

Neglected Needs attention, -1 die to assistance.

Compromised Unavailable: captured, defected, lost, or incapacitated.

8.7 Follower Risks

Using followers carries significant risks:

Complication Targeting

When the GM spends **2+ Story Beats** on an action where you have assistance:

- The follower may face consequences instead of you.
- Could be injury, capture, betrayal, or other complications.
- Fictionally appropriate to the situation.

Off-Screen Capability

Once per downtime, a **Cap 5** follower can solve a significant problem:

- But generates **1 Story Beat** for the party.
- The GM describes how this creates story consequences.
- Useful for emergencies but costly.

8.8 Upkeep and Maintenance

Both assets and followers require regular maintenance.

Asset Upkeep

Two options per SRD §21.2:

- **Option 1 - Efficient** (Higher XP, Less Time):
 - Cost: Pay Upkeep XP = $\max(1, AcquisitionXP)/3$
 - Time: Minimal effort
- **Option 2 - Intensive** (Lower XP, More Time):
 - Cost: Pay 1 XP
 - Time: Dedicated downtime action with significant personal involvement
- **Failure to Pay**: Asset becomes *Neglected* (or *Compromised* if already *Neglected*)

Follower Upkeep

Two options per SRD §21.2:

- **Option 1 - Efficient:**
 - Cost: Pay Upkeep XP = $\max(1, Cap^2)/3$
 - Time: Minimal effort
- **Option 2 - Intensive:**
 - Cost: Pay 1 XP
 - Time: Dedicated downtime action with significant personal involvement
- **Failure to Pay:** Follower becomes *Wary* (or *Seized* if already *Wary*)

8.9 Strategic Considerations

When to Invest in Assets

- You need reliable off-screen capabilities.
- Your character concept involves wealth or influence.
- The party lacks certain logistical support.
- You want to build long-term influence.

When to Invest in Followers

- You need on-screen assistance.
- Your character works better with support.
- The party needs specific capabilities you lack.
- You want character-driven story opportunities.

Balance Recommendations

- **Personal Path:** 0–10% assets/followers.
- **Balanced Path:** 15–25% assets/followers.
- **Influencer Path:** 35–55% assets/followers.

8.10 Loyalty and Relationships

Loyalty Levels

Optional system for tracking follower loyalty:

Wary Cautious, may leave if pressured; +1 XP upkeep cost.

Steady Reliable, standard performance; normal upkeep.

Devoted Loyal, may sacrifice; can convert one major complication to a minor setback per arc.

Building Loyalty

- Fair treatment and respect.
- Sharing rewards and successes.
- Protecting followers from harm.
- Honoring agreements and promises.

Losing Loyalty

- Mistreatment or disrespect.
- Unreasonable demands or risks.
- Broken promises or betrayal.
- Consistent neglect.

8.11 Advanced Follower Management

Follower Groups

For multiple similar followers, you can manage them as a group:

- **Single Rating:** Treat as one entity with combined capability.
- **Condition Tracking:** Group shares exposure and harm.
- **Maintenance:** Single upkeep cost for the group.
- **Risks:** Problems affect the entire group.

Follower Advancement

Followers can improve over time:

- **Experience:** Gain capability through successful assistance.
- **Training:** Spend XP to improve follower capabilities.
- **Equipment:** Better gear can enhance effectiveness.
- **Limits:** Followers typically cap at lower levels than PCs.

8.12 Risk Management

Asset Risks

- **Financial:** Assets can be costly to maintain.
- **Security:** Assets can be attacked or stolen.
- **Attention:** Valuable assets draw unwanted notice.
- **Dependency:** Over-reliance can be problematic.

Follower Risks

- **Safety:** Followers can be harmed or captured.
- **Loyalty:** Followers may betray or leave.
- **Attention:** Followers can draw enemy interest.
- **Morale:** Followers have needs and limits.

Mitigation Strategies

- **Diversification:** Don't put all resources in one place.
- **Security:** Protect valuable assets and followers.
- **Relationships:** Maintain good terms with your people.
- **Contingencies:** Have backup plans for losses.

Assets and Followers Quick Reference

Assets:

- Minor: 4 XP | Standard: 8 XP | Major: 12 XP
- Free off-screen use: once per session
- Boon activation: spend 1 Boon for scene impact
- Conditions: *Maintained* → *Neglected* → *Compromised*

Followers:

- Cost: Cap^2 XP
- Assistance: $+ \min(Cap, skill)$ dice (max +3 from all sources)
- Independent action: once per scene (party-wide)
- Conditions: *Exposure* and *Harm* tracks

Upkeep Options:

- Efficient: $\max(1, Cost)/3$ XP, minimal time
- Intensive: 1 XP, dedicated downtime action

8.13 Practical Examples

Asset Example: The Safehouse

- **Type:** Minor Asset (4 XP)
- **Free Use:** Secure lodging, basic supplies between adventures.
- **Boon Activation:** Reveal a hidden escape route during pursuit.
- **Upkeep:** Option 1: 2 XP (4/3 rounded up) or Option 2: 1 XP + downtime action.
- **Risks:** Discovery by enemies, maintenance costs.

Follower Example: The Scout

- **Capability:** 3 (9 XP cost)
- **Assistance:** +3 dice on tracking and survival rolls.
- **Independent Action:** Scout ahead to improve party position.
- **Upkeep:** Option 1: 3 XP (9/3) or Option 2: 1 XP + downtime action.
- **Risks:** Injury in dangerous scouting; disloyalty if mistreated.

Combination Example: The Merchant

- **Assets:** Trading post (8 XP), caravan (4 XP) — *12 XP total*
- **Followers:** Cap 2 guards (4 XP each = 8 XP), Cap 3 factor (9 XP) — *17 XP total*
- **Total Investment:** **29 XP** in assets and followers
- **Upkeep (Efficient Option):** Assets 4 XP + Followers 6 XP = **10 XP** per downtime period
- **Benefits:** Trade income, transport, protection, business contacts
- **Risks:** Competition, bandit attacks, employee issues, regulatory attention

Remember: Assets and followers can greatly expand your capabilities, but they require careful management and carry significant risks. Invest wisely based on your character concept and the needs of your group. The SRD provides flexible upkeep options to suit different play styles and campaign pacing.

8.14 Narrative-Heavy Asset and Follower Options

For groups that prefer strong narrative focus in asset and follower management, consider these optional approaches:

Story-Driven Upkeep: Instead of tracking XP costs for upkeep, the GM can introduce narrative complications that require attention. A neglected asset might attract unwanted attention, while a neglected follower might request a favor or special treatment.

Collaborative Management: Players can describe how they maintain their assets and followers through roleplay rather than mechanical upkeep costs. A well-described scene of tending to a workshop or bonding with followers can fulfill maintenance requirements.

Asset and Follower as Character Development: Use asset and follower management as opportunities for character growth and backstory development, allowing players to narrate how their relationships and holdings evolve through significant story moments.

Flexible Condition Tracking: Focus on the narrative implications of asset and follower conditions rather than strict mechanical penalties. A "Neglected" asset might still function but with interesting complications, while a "Compromised" asset might require creative solutions rather than just XP investment.

Chapter 9

World Interaction

In **Fate's Edge**, the world is not a backdrop—it's a partner in the conversation. Dikes groan under black rain in Viterra, clan horns answer across Acasia's ridgelines, Ecktoria's marble halls echo with careful words, and Kahfagia's pilots read storms by taste. Wherever you go, place, culture, and pressure push back.

9.1 Game Structure and Time

Understanding how time works in Fate's Edge helps you navigate both the mechanical and narrative flow of play.

Basic Units

Scene The basic unit of narrative play, covering a specific situation or conflict (Some Time to Significant Time). Resolves a particular question or challenge.

Player Turn (Beat) An individual player's action within a scene: Declare action → GM sets position → roll → resolve outcome → manage consequences.

Round Simultaneous or near-simultaneous actions within a scene (primarily for combat), representing a few seconds of real time.

Session One complete game session (typically 3–6 hours), containing 2–4 major scenes and resolving significant narrative progress.

Downtime The narrative time between scenes, used for recovery, advancement, and off-screen activities. Measured in days, weeks, or months depending on fiction.

Campaign Entire story arc (6–20+ sessions) with major character development and lasting consequences.

9.2 Movement and Positioning

Space is tracked with **range bands** and **Position**.

Range Bands

Close Touching distance: grapples, knife-work, hand on a relic.

Near Same room/yard/deck; a rush away.

Far Same site but distant; requires route or time to reach.

Absent Off-screen; requires scene change or significant effort to interact.

Movement Actions

- **Move:** Shift one range band as a *beat*.
- **Dash:** Shift two bands as your full action (terrain may require a roll).
- **Melee Flag:** Mark when two parties are in Near range and directly engaged in combat.

Position States

Dominant You have cover, leverage, or ritual footing. Failure still leaves options.

Controlled Standard case: exposed lanes, rivals near, watchful eyes. Failure has teeth, but not ruin.

Desperate Bad ground, bad odds, bad timing. Failure is severe; success may bring extra XP.

Position Shifting:

- GM can spend **1 SB** to worsen Position by one step.
- Player can spend **1 Boon** to improve Position by one step (once per action).
- Narrative triggers (flanking, reinforcements, etc.) can shift Position without cost.

9.3 Travel Framework

Travel abstracts distance into *legs* with tension and color rather than miles and meal counts. Each leg has a **Travel Clock** and draws on a **regional deck** to seed fiction.

Travel Process

1. **Set the Leg:** Name origin and destination; start a Travel Clock (4-10 segments based on difficulty).
2. **Draw Prompts:** Draw up to one card from each suit to establish terrain, people, pressures, and leverage.
3. **Assign Roles:** Players take on travel roles (Guide, Scout, Quartermaster, Watch) to contribute actions.

4. **Play the Leg:** Players take actions to advance the clock or mitigate complications. GM spends SB from rolls showing 1s to introduce hazards.
5. **Resolve:** When the clock fills, you arrive—changed by the journey.

Using Assets and Followers During Travel

- **Assets:** Spend 1 Boon to activate an asset for dramatic effect during travel (reveal hidden path, call for emergency aid, etc.).
- **Followers:** Assign followers to travel roles for bonuses. A Cap 3 Scout follower adds +3 to navigation rolls, for example.
- **Independent Actions:** Once per travel leg, a follower can take an independent action (scout ahead, secure supplies, etc.) at the cost of Exposure or Harm.
- **Off-Screen Solutions:** High-Cap followers (4-5) can solve significant travel problems once per downtime, but generate 1 SB for the party.

Regional Travel Decks

Each major region has a themed prompt list or card table (see §??):

Viterra Fen causeways, dike-brotherhoods, crown law.

Acasia Border-lace titles, ruined towers, clan tempers.

Ecktoria Imperial roads, precinct gates, temple schedules.

Ubral Stone passes, toll-cloisters, ghosted fields.

Kahfagia Current maps, pilot-mirrors, storm lanes.

Aelinnel Mist paths, bell-mounds, spirit ways.

Travel Complications

- **Hazards:** Weather, terrain challenges, wildlife encounters.
- **Social:** Border checks, local politics, cultural misunderstandings.
- **Supplies:** Food shortages, equipment failure, resource management.
- **Pursuit:** Being followed, hunted, or racing against time.

9.4 Narrative Time

Time is measured by *importance* rather than duration.

A Moment A glance, a strike, a whisper over a law-stone.

Some Time A skirmish, a negotiation, a careful climb.

Significant Time Hours of march, rites, audits, stakeouts.

Days Drills, recoveries, research, roadwork.

9.5 Social Interactions

Social scenes use the same engine with **cultural color**.

Cultural Skill Emphases

Viterra Rapport with parishes; Sway for markets; Command under writ.

Acasia Rapport for kin-bridges; Command with banner-rights; Deceive risks honor clocks.

Ecktoria Sway in salons; Deceive at court; Perform in temple fora.

Kahfagia Rapport aboard; Sway at piers; Command on a storming deck.

Social Stakes & Clocks

- **Alliance Clock (Viterra):** Parishes and guilds come to your side.
- **Honor Clock (Acasia):** Feasts, oaths, wyrd—trust builds (or frays).
- **Bureau Clock (Ecktoria):** Stamps, seals, approvals—delay is pressure.
- **Trust Clock (Kahfagia):** Pilots and crews extend favors and routes.

9.6 Supply and Resources

Track scarcity with a **Supply Clock** shared by the party's expedition.

| Segments | State & Effects |
|---------------|---|
| 0 (Full) | Well-provisioned; no penalty. |
| 2 (Low) | Minor frictions; -1 to resource checks. |
| 3 (Dangerous) | Each PC gains <i>Fatigue 1</i> . |
| 4 (Empty) | Severe penalties; desperate measures. |

subsectionUsing Tags Tags only function when *printed on a Talent, an Ability, or as the result of a Spell/Rite*. They do nothing on their own. Unless specified otherwise, **DV is set by fiction**, and duration defaults to **Scene**. When a Tag affects an **Outsider**, use the unified rules in §??.

Example: Disabling a Magical Trap (). A magical trap is represented by the tag. Its Difficulty Value (DV) to disable is usually the same DV used to cast or sustain the ward.

Approaches (examples).

- **Wits + Arcana:** analyze and unravel the binding.
- **Wits + Tinker:** mechanically bypass the trigger/anchor.
- **Body + Agility:** carefully avoid or physically disarm the trigger.

Position sets DV (Ladder).

- **Dominant** (ample time, proper tools, safe access): **DV 2.**
- **Controlled** (under pressure, limited time, partial access): **DV 3.**
- **Desperate** (activating/compromised access): **DV 4–5+** (GM sets by threat).

Talents & Tools. A relevant Talent or Tool may unlock an alternate approach or grant +1d / +1 Effect; proper tools may improve Position at the GM's discretion.

Outcomes.

- **Success:** the is suppressed, bypassed, or its trigger safely disarmed.
- **Partial:** the is affected but *unstable* or a new complication appears (GM may start/advance a related clock or spend SB for an intrusion).
- **Miss:** the remains and may trigger; generate SB as complications (backlash, mechanism damage, alarm to the creator, etc.).

9.7 Engaging the World—Player Actions

- **Scout & Signal:** A follower can make the next travel action *Dominant* (mark Exposure or Harm 1 on them).
- **Local Color:** Briefly state what locals notice about you; GM offers a small fictional edge *or* a tempting clock—choose.
- **Mark the Map:** On arrival, declare one change to the fiction (new ford, patron's shrine, toll-skip). GM may attach a minor clock as cost.
- **Asset Activation:** Spend 1 Boon to activate an asset dramatically during a scene.
- **Follower Assistance:** Have a follower assist your actions for bonus dice (max +3 from all sources).

9.8 Summary

The world has opinions. Movement is clocks and color, position rises and sinks with weather and words, and every suit you draw speaks in a regional accent. Ask the land for a favor—then pay it back on the road.

Remember: Every interaction with the world is an opportunity. Use your assets, deploy your followers, and engage with the setting actively. The world responds to your choices, and every journey changes both you and the places you pass through.

Chapter 10

Example Character Concepts

This chapter presents example character concepts to illustrate how the game’s systems can create diverse and interesting heroes. These are **examples only**—not prescriptive templates or exhaustive lists. Use them for inspiration, as pre-generated characters, or as starting points for your own unique creations.

10.1 Important Disclaimer

These examples are provided for illustrative purposes only. They demonstrate how the game’s mechanics can support different character archetypes and play styles. You are encouraged to:

- Modify these concepts to fit your preferences
- Create completely original characters
- Mix and match elements from different examples
- Work with your Game Master to develop unique concepts

The game system is designed to support a wide variety of character types beyond these examples.

10.2 How to Use These Examples

Each concept includes:

- **Concept Overview:** Narrative identity and role
- **Mechanical Foundation:** Suggested starting capabilities
- **Play Style:** How the character typically engages with challenges
- **Development Path:** Potential growth directions
- **Story Hooks:** Plot opportunities for the Game Master
- **Build Blocks:** A *30 XP* starting build, plus an optional *34 XP* variant using Bonds/Complications (+4 XP)

10.3 1. The Guardian

Concept: A protector who stands between danger and those they've sworn to defend. *Steel in hand, vow in heart.*

Typical Inspiration: Paladins, knights, bodyguards, sworn shields

Mechanical Foundation:

- **Primary:** Body, Spirit
- **Skills:** Melee, Athletics, Command
- **Talents:** Defensive stance, protective instincts

Play Style:

- Frontline combat and protection
- Drawing attention away from allies
- Using presence and authority to control situations
- Taking risks to protect others

Development Path:

- Increase defensive capabilities
- Develop leadership skills
- Acquire better protective gear
- Learn area control abilities

Story Hooks:

- Who or what are they protecting?
- What oath or duty drives them?
- What happens if they fail in their protection?
- What personal costs do they bear for their role?

Build Blocks. Starting Build (30 XP).

- **Attributes** (Cost = rating \times 3 XP): Body 3 (9), Spirit 2 (6), Wits 1 (3), Presence 1 (3) \rightarrow **21 XP**
- **Skills** (Cost = level \times 2 XP): Melee 2 (4), Athletics 1 (2), Command 1 (2) \rightarrow **8 XP**
- **Total:** 29 XP (bank 1 XP)

With Bonds/Complications (34 XP).

- Add **Talent:** Combat Reflexes (5 XP) using banked $1 + 4 = 5$ XP
- **Revised Total:** 34 XP

10.4 2. The Scholar

Concept: A seeker of knowledge who uses information as power. *Candlesmoke, marginalia, and dangerous truths.*

Typical Inspiration: Wizards, sages, researchers, historians

Mechanical Foundation:

- **Primary:** Wits, Spirit
- **Skills:** Lore, Investigation, Arcana
- **Talents:** Quick Study, Research Mastery

Play Style:

- Information gathering and analysis
- Solving puzzles and mysteries
- Using knowledge to gain advantages
- Researching solutions between adventures

Development Path:

- Specialize in specific knowledge areas
- Develop magical or technical capabilities
- Build research networks
- Create unique inventions or discoveries

Story Hooks:

- What knowledge are they seeking?
- What dangerous information might they uncover?
- How do they handle forbidden knowledge?
- Who opposes their research?

Build Blocks. Starting Build (30 XP).

- **Attributes:** Wits 3 (9), Spirit 2 (6), Body 1 (3), Presence 1 (3) → **21 XP**
- **Skills:** Lore 2 (4), Investigation 1 (2), Arcana 1 (2) → **8 XP**
- **Total:** 29 XP (bank 1 XP)

With Bonds/Complications (34 XP).

- Add **Talent:** Research Mastery (5 XP) using banked $1 + 4 = 5$ XP
- **Revised Total:** 34 XP

10.5 3. The Scout

Concept: A wilderness expert who navigates dangerous territories. *Quiet footfalls, hawk eyes, and the long road.*

Typical Inspiration: Rangers, hunters, trackers, explorers

Mechanical Foundation:

- **Primary:** Wits, Body
- **Skills:** Survival, Stealth, Perception
- **Talents:** Wilderness Lore, Keen Senses

Play Style:

- Scouting ahead and gathering intelligence
- Wilderness survival and navigation
- Ambush and skirmish tactics
- Finding paths and resources

Development Path:

- Improve stealth and tracking abilities
- Develop animal companions or allies
- Master specific environments
- Learn advanced survival techniques

Story Hooks:

- What uncharted territory are they exploring?
- What secrets have they discovered in the wild?
- How do they balance civilization and wilderness?
- What threats have they encountered beyond settled lands?

Build Blocks. Starting Build (30 XP).

- **Attributes:** Wits 3 (9), Body 2 (6), Spirit 1 (3), Presence 1 (3) → **21 XP**
- **Skills:** Survival 2 (4), Stealth 2 (4) → **8 XP**
- **Total:** 29 XP (bank 1 XP)

With Bonds/Complications (34 XP).

- Add **Asset:** Hidden Cache (Minor Asset, 4 XP) using banked 1 + 4 = 5 XP
- **Revised Total:** 34 XP

10.6 4. The Diplomat

Concept: A negotiator who resolves conflicts through words and influence. *A smile for the foyer, steel for the parlor.*

Typical Inspiration: Bards, ambassadors, merchants, politicians

Mechanical Foundation:

- **Primary:** Presence, Wits
- **Skills:** Sway, Investigation, Lore
- **Talents:** Silver Tongue, Read Emotions

Play Style:

- Social interaction and negotiation
- Gathering information through contacts
- Resolving conflicts without violence
- Building alliances and relationships

Development Path:

- Expand social influence and networks
- Develop economic or political power
- Learn cultural specialties
- Master manipulation or inspiration techniques

Story Hooks:

- What major conflict are they trying to resolve?
- What alliances have they built or broken?
- How do they handle betrayal or failed negotiations?
- What personal relationships affect their diplomacy?

Build Blocks. Starting Build (30 XP).

- **Attributes:** Presence 3 (9), Wits 2 (6), Spirit 1 (3), Body 1 (3) → **21 XP**
- **Skills:** Sway 2 (4), Investigation 1 (2), Lore 1 (2) → **8 XP**
- **Total:** 29 XP (bank 1 XP)

With Bonds/Complications (34 XP).

- Add **Talent:** Silver Tongue (3 XP) and **Skill:** Lore +1 (now 2) for 2 XP using banked 1 + 4 = 5 XP
- **Revised Total:** 34 XP

10.7 5. The Specialist

Concept: An expert with unique capabilities beyond typical roles. *The right tool, the right touch, at the right time.*

Typical Inspiration: Artisans, healers, engineers, spies

Mechanical Foundation:

- **Primary:** Varies by specialty (often Wits or Body)
- **Skills:** One specialty at focus, plus two support skills
- **Talents:** Unique techniques that unlock niche actions

Play Style:

- Solving problems with unique expertise
- Creating or repairing specialized items
- Providing services others cannot
- Using niche knowledge for advantage

Development Path:

- Master their specialty area
- Develop related capabilities
- Build reputation and clientele
- Create unique inventions or methods

Story Hooks:

- What makes their specialty unique or valuable?
- How did they acquire their special skills?
- What problems require their specific expertise?
- Who seeks to control or exploit their abilities?

Build Blocks (Artificer example). Starting Build (30 XP).

- **Attributes:** Wits 3 (9), Body 2 (6), Presence 1 (3), Spirit 1 (3) → **21 XP**
- **Skills:** Craft 2 (4), Mechanics 2 (4) → **8 XP**
- **Total:** 29 XP (bank 1 XP)

With Bonds/Complications (34 XP).

- Add **Talent:** Technical Expert (6 XP) - need 6 XP but have 5 XP available (1 banked + 4 from Bonds/Complications)
- **Alternative:** Add **Talent:** Quick Study (3 XP) and bank 2 XP for future use
- **Revised Total:** 32 XP (bank 2 XP)

10.8 6. The Survivor

Concept: Someone who has endured hardship and developed resilience. *Scars are maps; read them well.*

Typical Inspiration: Veterans, refugees, outcasts, hardened adventurers

Mechanical Foundation:

- **Primary:** Spirit, Body
- **Skills:** Endurance, Survival, (optionally) Perception/Insight
- **Talents:** Endurance, Adaptable

Play Style:

- Enduring difficult conditions
- Overcoming physical and mental challenges
- Using experience to avoid dangers
- Helping others survive hardships

Development Path:

- Improve physical and mental resilience
- Develop survival-related skills
- Acquire better equipment and resources
- Learn to teach survival to others

Story Hooks:

- What trauma or hardship have they survived?
- How has their past shaped their present?
- What survival skills have saved them repeatedly?
- How do they help others facing similar challenges?

Build Blocks. Starting Build (30 XP).

- **Attributes:** Spirit 3 (9), Body 2 (6), Wits 1 (3), Presence 1 (3) → **21 XP**
- **Skills:** Endurance 2 (4), Survival 2 (4) → **8 XP**
- **Total:** 29 XP (bank 1 XP)

With Bonds/Complications (34 XP).

- Add **Talent:** Endurance (3 XP) using banked 1 + 4 = 5 XP; bank 2 XP
- **Revised Total:** 32 XP (bank 2 XP)

10.9 7. The Innovator

Concept: A creative problem-solver who finds new solutions. *Blueprints on napkins, tomorrow in your pocket.*

Typical Inspiration: Inventors, strategists, reformers, visionaries

Mechanical Foundation:

- **Primary:** Wits, Presence
- **Skills:** Craft, Lore, Investigation
- **Talents:** Creative/Innovative thinking, Quick Study

Play Style:

- Finding novel solutions to problems
- Creating new devices or methods
- Analyzing systems for improvement
- Convincing others to try new approaches

Development Path:

- Develop specific technical specialties
- Create increasingly complex inventions
- Build support for innovative ideas
- Overcome resistance to change

Story Hooks:

- What problem are they trying to solve?
- How do others react to their innovations?
- What unintended consequences might their creations have?
- Who benefits or suffers from their changes?

Build Blocks. Starting Build (30 XP).

- **Attributes:** Wits 3 (9), Presence 2 (6), Body 1 (3), Spirit 1 (3) → **21 XP**
- **Skills:** Craft 2 (4), Lore 2 (4) → **8 XP**
- **Total:** 29 XP (bank 1 XP)

With Bonds/Complications (34 XP).

- Add **Talent:** Quick Study (3 XP) using banked $1 + 4 = 5$ XP; bank 2 XP
- **Revised Total:** 32 XP (bank 2 XP)

10.10 8. The Networker

Concept: Someone who builds and leverages social connections. *A web of favors, a chorus of names.*

Typical Inspiration: Merchants, spies, socialites, community leaders

Mechanical Foundation:

- **Primary:** Presence, Wits
- **Skills:** Sway, Lore, (optionally) Command/Deception
- **Talents:** Network Builder, Command Presence / Silver Tongue

Play Style:

- Building and maintaining relationships
- Gathering information through contacts
- Leveraging social influence
- Navigating complex social situations

Development Path:

- Expand social network and influence
- Develop specific community ties
- Acquire political or economic power
- Master manipulation or leadership techniques

Story Hooks:

- What networks or communities are they part of?
- How do they balance multiple relationships?
- What happens when loyalties conflict?
- How do they handle betrayal or broken trust?

Build Blocks. Starting Build (30 XP).

- **Attributes:** Presence 3 (9), Wits 2 (6), Body 1 (3), Spirit 1 (3) → **21 XP**
- **Skills:** Sway 2 (4), Lore 2 (4) → **8 XP**
- **Total:** 29 XP (bank 1 XP)

With Bonds/Complications (34 XP).

- Add **Talent:** Silver Tongue (3 XP) using banked $1 + 4 = 5$ XP; bank 2 XP
- **Revised Total:** 32 XP (bank 2 XP)

10.11 Creating Your Own Concept

Start with Narrative

- What is your character's background and motivation?
- What role do they play in their community or society?
- What relationships are important to them?
- What goals are they pursuing?

Add Mechanical Support

- Choose attributes that support your concept
- Select skills that reflect their training and experience
- Consider talents that provide unique capabilities
- Think about assets that represent their resources

Consider Group Role

- How does your concept complement other party members?
- What gaps in group capability can you fill?
- What unique contributions can you make?
- How will you work with other characters?

Plan for Growth

- What short-term improvements make sense?
- What long-term development aligns with your concept?
- How might your character change over time?
- What legacy do you want to build?

Character Concept Worksheet**Narrative Elements:**

- Concept: _____
- Motivation: _____
- Background: _____
- Relationships: _____

Mechanical Foundation:

- Primary Attributes: _____
- Key Skills: _____
- Starting Talents: _____
- Initial Assets: _____

Development Plan:

- Short-term goals: _____
- Long-term vision: _____

10.12 Final Notes

Remember that these examples are starting points, not limitations. The most interesting characters often combine elements from multiple concepts or create entirely new approaches. Work with your Game Master to ensure your character concept fits the campaign and provides engaging story opportunities.

The best characters are those that you find interesting to play and that contribute to an enjoyable experience for everyone at the table.

Chapter 11

World Regions and Cultures

The world of *Fate's Edge* is a tapestry of ancient empires, emerging kingdoms, and untamed wilderness. This chapter surveys major regions and cultures that shape the setting—from the marble cities of Ecktoria to the mist-shrouded fields of Aelinnel. These frameworks are yours to adapt, blend, or reimagine.

11.1 The Amaranthine Inland Sea

At the heart of the known world lies the **Amaranthine Inland Sea**, a wind-gnarled waterway ringed by marble quays, vineyard hills, and smoke-blue mountains. For millennia it has served as the circulatory system of trade, faith, and conquest. Tides are subtle, but seasonal winds and river-feeds set the rhythm of commerce, pilgrimage, and war.

11.2 Northern Shore of the Amaranthine Sea

Ecktoria — The Utaran Imperium Successor

Once the furnace of empire (*Marble & Fire*), Ecktoria remains a palimpsest of power: old stones bearing new banners, old laws written under fresh seals. Though imperial reach waned, its civic habits endure.

Marble Cities Forums, amphitheaters, and aqueducts yet flow. District fountains double as public oaths guaranteed by guild charters.

Imperial Roads Mile-markers of white granite, way-shrines and customary tolls noted for couriers of the *Ashen Staves*.

Legal Legacy The **Utaran Civic Codes** govern contracts, inheritance, and war-rights; local custom bends them under licensed *variance*.

Architectural Wonders Sun-bridges spanning deltas, the **Vault of a Thousand Maps**, and the **Amber Arch** petrified by alchemical storm.

Acasia — "The Broken Province"

Frontiers braided from roads, rivers, and resentments. Here the outer seams of empire frayed first. Fortresses turned manors, manors turned townholds, and banners multiplied like thistles after rain.

Petty Kingdoms Dozens of river-vales ruled by river-kings and banner-queens. Alliances shift with marriages, harvests, and omens.

Fortified Towns Walls for defense, not display. Gate-streets kink for ambush; towers carry horn-codes every child knows.

Mercenary Culture Free companies keep a *Black Ledger*: contracts fulfilled, oaths kept, debts paid.

Cultural Mix Imperial rites meet clan feasts; old gods share niches with civic saints. Exiles and second chances (*see* Silkstrand tales) are common.

Vhasia — "Old Vhasia & The Bloodlands"

Politically fractured land of courtly intrigue and martial tradition, where ancient bloodlines vie for supremacy amid shifting alliances and ceremonial warfare.

Fortress Castles Stone keeps crowned with gilded spires; courtiers plot in tapestried halls while knights train in courtyards.

Political Intrigue Complex web of alliances, vendettas, and ceremonial duels that settle matters of honor and succession.

Court Culture Elaborate ceremonies, patronage of arts, and rigid social hierarchies maintained through ritual and reputation.

Heraldic Traditions Complex system of banners, titles, and precedence that govern social interactions and military commands.

Thepyrgos

Province and capital city renowned as a center of learning, magic, and scholarly pursuit, where ancient towers house both wisdom and dangerous secrets.

Scholarly Traditions Tower-cities where mages, philosophers, and researchers pursue knowledge in specialized colleges and scriptoria.

Arcane Heritage Deep traditions of magical study, with libraries containing texts predating the fall of ancient empires.

Academic Rivalries Intense competition between schools of thought, often manifesting in formal debates, magical duels, or scholarly contests.

Mystical Dangers Forbidden knowledge and experimental magic that sometimes escape control, creating ongoing threats.

Viterra — "The Last Kingdom"

Tudor-inspired realm that straddles the Dolmis and Amaranthine seas, known for its legalistic approach to governance and strategic river crossings.

Hedge-Law Culture Complex system of legal precedents, tolls, and river rights that govern everything from trade to personal conduct.

Duchy System Semi-autonomous regions governed by dukes who maintain their own courts and armies while owing fealty to the crown.

River Commerce Economy built around controlling strategic crossings, ferry rights, and maritime trade routes.

Legalistic Politics Intrigue centered on court cases, charter disputes, and the interpretation of ancient laws rather than open warfare.

Ubral — "The Stone Between Spears"

Highland realm of rugged clans and fortified holds, where honor culture and martial traditions dominate social interactions.

Clan Strongholds Fortified positions in mountain passes and high valleys, each clan maintaining its own laws and customs.

Honor Culture Society built around concepts of personal honor, family reputation, and the resolution of disputes through formal challenges.

Highland Warfare Military traditions emphasizing heavy infantry, defensive positions, and knowledge of mountain terrain.

Clan Loyalties Complex web of alliances, blood-feuds, and marriage pacts that shift with each generation.

Kahfagia — "The Empire of Wakes and Storm-Flags"

Maritime empire built on naval supremacy and exploration, where ship captains and merchant-adventurers shape both policy and culture.

Naval Supremacy Military and economic power based on controlling sea lanes, harbors, and maritime trade routes.

Explorer Culture Tradition of venturing into unknown waters, mapping new territories, and establishing trading posts.

Storm-Flag Protocol Complex system of maritime signals, weather prediction, and naval customs that govern seaborne activities.

Mixed Heritage Cosmopolitan society influenced by contacts with distant lands and diverse cultures encountered through exploration.

11.3 Southern Reaches

Theona — "The Marsh Crown"

Three island realms connected by causeways and maritime traditions, where wetland resources and naval culture define daily life.

Marsh Agriculture Sophisticated systems of dikes, canals, and floating gardens that support dense populations in wetland environments.

Island Culture Distinct traditions for each island, unified by shared maritime customs and inter-island trade.

Waterborne Commerce Economy based on fishing, water transport, and control of strategic waterways between islands.

Folk Horror Traditions Deep connection to marsh spirits, water deities, and ancient practices that blur the line between protection and appeasement.

The Mistlands — "Fields Under a Moving Sky"

Isolated region shrouded in perpetual mists, where ancient Aelerian protectorate status creates tension between autonomy and oversight.

Mistbound Geography Landscape of bogs, waterways, and hidden settlements connected by causeways and boat paths.

Bell Culture Complex system of bells and wards must be maintained to keep the Direwood horrors at bay.

Isolation Tensions Cultural friction between desire for independence and practical need for trade and protection.

Ancient Secrets Ruins and artifacts predating the Aelerian protectorate, hinting at older civilizations and forgotten magics.

11.4 Peoples and Cultures

Wood Elves (Lethai-al "People of the Body")

Inhabitants of the Valewood, deeply connected to the natural world and the cycles of growth and decay.

Forest Harmony Lifestyle integrated with woodland ecosystems, practicing sustainable hunting, gathering, and cultivation.

Body-Centric Philosophy Belief system emphasizing physical experience, instinct, and the wisdom of the body over abstract thought.

Living Magic Spellcasting traditions that work with natural forces rather than commanding them, often involving plant growth and animal communication.

Seasonal Rituals Calendar of ceremonies marking natural cycles, from planting rites to autumn harvests to winter hibernation periods.

High Elves (Lethai-thora "People of the Mind")

Primarily found in Thepyrgos as established immigrants, known for their scholarly pursuits and intellectual traditions.

Scholarly Excellence Deep traditions of academic study, magical research, and philosophical debate.

Mind-Centric Philosophy Cultural emphasis on reason, logic, and the pursuit of abstract knowledge over physical concerns.

Arcane Mastery Advanced magical techniques and theoretical understanding that often surpass other traditions.

Long Perspective Tendency to view problems and conflicts through the lens of centuries or millennia rather than immediate concerns.

"Dark Elves" (Lethai-ar)

Rare practitioners pledged to Isoka and Inaea, embracing serpent and spider themes without inherent evil, representing different philosophical approaches.

Serpent Wisdom Followers of Isoka, emphasizing transformation, renewal, and the shedding of old identities for new growth.

Spider Webs Devotees of Inaea, focusing on connections, patterns, and the weaving of fate through careful manipulation.

Philosophical Balance Neither inherently good nor evil, but representing alternative approaches to power and influence.

Cultural Rarity Uncommon in most settings, often viewed with suspicion or fascination by other cultures.

Gnomes (Aelinnel — "People of Sums")

Inhabitants of the Mistlands, inspired by dark fairy tales and Wonderland lore, known for their mathematical precision and otherworldly logic.

Mathematical Culture Society built around complex calculations, probability, and the belief that all phenomena can be understood through numerical relationships.

Fey Logic Non-linear thinking patterns that seem illogical to outsiders but follow their own internal consistency.

Mist Adaptation Unique abilities to navigate and manipulate the perpetual mists of their homeland.

Contract Culture Deep tradition of precise agreements, wordplay, and the careful crafting of obligations that can be both helpful and dangerous.

Halflings (Aelaerem — "People of the Hearth")

Peaceful agricultural communities with folk horror elements, emphasizing home, family, and the dark side of domestic tranquility.

Hearth Culture Deep connection to home, family, and the maintenance of traditional ways of life.

Agricultural Expertise Sophisticated farming techniques and seasonal celebrations that mark the rhythm of rural life.

Folk Horror Elements Dark undercurrents in seemingly peaceful communities, where hospitality can become trapping and tradition carries hidden costs.

Community Defense Strong traditions of mutual aid and collective action when the community is threatened.

Dwarves (Aeler — "People of Stone")

Mountain-dwelling peoples of the Aelerian ranges, known for their craftsmanship, clan traditions, and complex relationship with stone and metal.

Stone-Sense Innate ability to understand and work with geological formations, making them master miners and architects.

Clan System Complex social structure based on family lines, with intricate systems of honor, debt, and mutual obligation.

Craft Traditions Legendary skills in metalworking, stonework, and engineering that have been refined over generations.

Underground Cities Vast complexes carved from mountain hearts, connected by tunnels and halls that serve both practical and ceremonial purposes.

Other Races — "Peoples Beyond the Old Roads"

Various other cultures and peoples exist in the margins of the known world, each with their own traditions and ways of life.

Nomadic Tribes Various peoples who follow seasonal patterns across steppes, deserts, and other marginal lands.

Coastal Peoples Maritime cultures that live in harmony with ocean environments and maintain their own naval traditions.

Border Cultures Mixed communities that arise where different major cultures meet, creating unique hybrid traditions.

Ancient Survivors Remnants of older civilizations that persist in isolated regions, maintaining forgotten knowledge and customs.

11.5 Regional Specialties and Resources

Economic Strengths

Agrarian Belts Grain, olives, wine, riverfish.

Mineral Ranges Iron, copper, silver, salt, cut-stone.

Trade Hubs Banking, oath-bonds (insurance), information markets.

Coasts Ship-timber, sailcloth, tar, dried fish.

Forest Marches Timber, resin, furs, healing herbs.

Unique Products

- **Mistlands:** Fog-pollen ink, peat-bricks, bog iron, *mistglass* that hums in storms.
- **Aeler:** Tempered steel, memory-stones etched with oath-runes, counterweight bridges.
- **Theona:** Citrus oils, amphora ceramics, star-compasses.
- **Kahfagia:** Goods and spices from across the world, including the mysterious "west lands;" potatoes, tomatoes, maize.
- **Acasia:** Veteran mercenaries, mixed-style armor, border-wares bearing two stamps.

11.6 Travel and Trade

Major Routes (Reference)

Amaranthine Coastway Sea-corridor linking Theona, Linn, Zakov, and Kahfagia.

Astroegro Straits Pilot-ruled narrows; tolls and weather courts.

River Roads Grain and scrip from interior markets to sea.

Aelerian Passes Underways Vault-routes beneath the peaks; sealed in winter.

Kahfagian Sea Lanes Goods from across the sea; dangerous journeys.

The Way Of Silk Overland routes from the far-east ending in Silkstrand.

Shadow Corridors Liminal shortcuts near the Ways Between; risky, fast, never the same twice.

Travel Considerations

- **Road Quality:** From imperial highways to cart-ruts; in the marsh, dust becomes murder-mud overnight.
- **Bridges & Ferries:** Strategic choke points; expect tolls, ledgers, and oaths on both banks.
- **Seasonality:** Passes close, steppe-sand shifts, sea-winds reverse; plan by *Wind Tables*.
- **Safe Havens:** Caravanserais, monasteries, lighthouse-cloisters owing aid by charter.

11.7 Regional Clocks and World Response

Tie adventures to **clocks** that change the map:

- **Grain Shortage (4)**: If filled, food riots reshape a Theonacity's politics.
- **Banner-Muster (6)**: Steppe tribes unify; caravans demand new terms.
- **Harbor Scrip Crash (4)**: Trade letters lose value; smugglers thrive.
- **Fog-Roused (6)**: Mistland spirits awaken; bells fail at night.

GM Story Beats may *tick* these when the party's choices strike regional nerves: missed payments, broken oaths, loud magic, conspicuous success.

11.8 Cultural Practices and Customs

Languages and Cant

- **Utaran High** (court, law, scholarship); **River Cant** (trade pidgin with gesture-signs).
- **Steppe Tongues** (whistled across distance); **Sea-Patter** (mariners' clipped code).

Religious Patterns

- **Temple & School** (Theona): Ethical schools blend with temple tithes; festivals mark navigation seasons.
- **Ancestor Poles** (Vilikari): Kin-spirits seated at feasts; oaths taken under the watch of names.
- **Sky & Earth** (Steppe): Wind-knots bound, libations poured into the first hoofprint.
- **Sea-Rites** (Linn/Zakov): Weather judgments witnessed by storm-priests.

Law and Custom

- **Utaran Codes**: Contracts, inheritance, civic duties; licensed *variance* lets local custom lean the written law.
- **Clan Law** (Acasia/Vilikari): Oath-payment by cattle, steel, or service-days.
- **Merchant Law**: Arbitration by bonded factors; ledgers sealed in wax and salt.

11.9 Magic and Attitude by Region

- **Ecktoria:** Licensed thaumaturges file *Casting Notices* for urban work; unfired magic draws fines—and attention.
- **Acasia:** Folk-wards respected; visible sorcery can start a levy.
- **Aeler:** Rituals fold into craft; backlash treated like a cracked beam—fix it, document it.
- **Mistlands:** Bells and fog-names soothe fears; spiritualists mediate with the grey things.
- **Linn/Zakov:** Weather rites must be witnessed by three wind-bearers; false rites are crimes.

11.10 Creating Regional Adventures

Using Regional Characteristics

Consider how geography shapes travel and pursuit; which customs open doors (or close them); which tensions tick **clocks**; and which resources (salt, steel, scrip, secrets) define stakes.

Mixing Regional Elements

- **Tin vs. Tide:** Aeler miners accuse a port-city of short-weighted scales.
- **Festival of Threads:** Islanders, Steppe riders, and Heartlanders trade rites and insults under watchful magistrates.
- **Fog and Fire:** A Mistlands relic surfaces in a Theonaauction; three factions bid with more than coin.
- **The Unquiet Map:** An Aeler survey contradicts an old border—whose truth stands?

Regional Adventure Seeds

Mistlands Mystery (Clock 4: Bells Go Silent)

- Dusk bells falter. Tracks end at a mirror-pool that shows tomorrow's sky.
- *Complications (SP)*: Fog names stolen; a bell-tree cracks; a reed altar burns cold.

Broken Marches Conflict (Clock 6: Valley Claim)

- Two lords court your company. One keeps books; one keeps graves tidy.
- *Complications (SP)*: Ambush at witness trees; the Black Ledger demands a tithe.

Stone Kingdom Discovery (Clock 6: Archive Wakes)

- An echo-vault opens to song. Memory-stones argue *with each other*.
- *Complications (SP)*: Rival charter; a cracked beam of magic; miners strike for better rites.

Theona Trade War (Clock 4: Harbor Scrip Collapse)

- Watermarks sing wrong. A counterfeit choir spreads.
- *Complications (SP)*: Dock riot; lighthouse shutters locked; a patron's legal *variance* revoked.

11.11 Adapting Regions to Your Campaign

These regions are *frameworks*. Rename, splice, or tilt them toward your tale:

- Merge Mistland bells with island wind-courts to create *storm-bell law*.
- Let the Merchant Concord adopt steppe arbitration; settle contracts at a gallop.
- Tie your party to a **regional clock**: when it fills, the map—and your story—changes.

Remember: the world should *answer* the players. Roads reroute around their deeds; bells ring differently after they pass; ledgers carry their names in salt.

Chapter 12

Gods, Powers, and Patrons

In *Fate's Edge*, the **divine** is not a distant thesis—it is an active pressure system that pushes back when named. Temples argue in *Ecktic High* (§??), bells speak law in the Mistlands, and oaths sworn under clear sky bind tighter than iron (§11). This chapter restores the **lore of traditions**, clarifies **Patrons** and their **Rites**, and shows how all of it interlocks with the core systems (§4).

12.1 The Nature of Divine Forces

Scholars of Thepyrgos write that divinity condenses in three ways:

Numina Place-bound or concept-focused powers (a harbor's luck, a winter's severity).

Lineages Ancestor-chains and civic cults that accrue obligation over centuries.

Offices Roles that exist whether or not a face is seated—*Witness*, *Arbiter*, *Wayfinder*. Whoever answers the call *is* the office for as long as the rites hold.

All three *answer* when approached in their proper language, place, and price (§??).

Friction With Reality. Calling on the sacred generates narrative pressure. Treat divine missteps as Story Beats (SB) that the GM can spend for omens, visitations, taboos invoked, or social consequences among the faithful (§4).

12.2 Major Divine Traditions

The Everflame and the Lampers

Domains: Fire, purification, law **Centers:** Ecktoria's marble courts, Sun Coast porticoes

Themes: Order through light, confession by heat, civic duty

- **Clergy & Orders:** *Lampers* tend beacon-fires and court lamps; *Ash-Deacons* oversee penances.
- **Rites:** *Lamp of Plain Speech* (forces truth in sworn testimony), *Cinder-Ward* (burns contagion, literal or social).
- **Customs:** *Three-Wick Vigil* before verdicts; extinguishing a lamp early is a public insult.

Vignette: In the Echo Hall a thousand glass panes bloom with flame. Each verdict adds one. The Archivist snuffs two and the crowd inhales—history itself has been corrected.

The Reformed Light (Mercy-Cant)

Domains: Revelation, mercy, community **Centers:** Valewood clinics, Theonan schools

Themes: Repair over punishment; unity through service

- **Orders:** *Lantern-Hands* (healers), *Keepers of Account* (community ledgers of generosity).
- **Rites:** *Sharing-Bread* (multiplies supplies within a bounded fellowship), *Pardon-Mark* (removes a social stigma clock if restitution is made).
- **Taboo:** No light is to be used to shame the poor in public.

Sea and Storm Courts

Domains: Oceans, storms, navigation **Centers:** Linn and Zakov archipelagos (§11)

Themes: Bargain with weather; respect for hazard

- **Priesthood:** *Tide-Readers* interpret current-scripts; *Bell-Helms* lead weather-rites.
- **Rites:** *Stern-Knot* (locks a course against drift), *Storm's Portion* (you surrender cargo; the squall spares lives).
- **Language:** Sea-Patter requires triadic call-and-response (§??); missing the third call risks an omen.

Sky and Conflict Traditions

Domains: Sky, conflict, honor **Centers:** Vilikari highlands, Acasian Marches

Themes: Oaths make war bearable; victory is *clean* when witnessed

- **Oath-Forms:** Horn-codes and duel formulae (§??) bind reparations.
- **Rites:** *Sky-Witness* (freezes a parley one exchange; no one may strike), *Banner-Balance* (equalizes a skirmish's scale for one beat).

Shadow and Transformation Paths

Domains: Shade, secrets, change **Centers:** Eastern caravan cloisters, Mistland bell precincts

Themes: Hidden knowledge; necessary metamorphosis

- **Initiates:** *Veil-Bearers* trade names seasonally (see Fog-Names, §??).
- **Rites:** *Veil of Change* (mask a social role until challenged by bell or oath), *Moth-Path* (take a consequence now to step past a danger later).

Ancestral Houses and Stone-Law

Domains: Kin, craft, memory **Centers:** Stone Kingdoms, Aeler tunnels

Themes: Work remembered; promises become architecture

- **Practices:** Charter-Script read aloud to attest memory (§??).
- **Rites:** *Line-Recall* (perfect recall in spaces your kin laid), *Load-Share* (shift harm from structure to sworn caretakers as Fatigue).

12.3 Patrons and the Rites

Not all power wants worship. **Patrons** are entities or *offices* that answer to named procedures and ledgered **Obligation**. Some wear faces. Others are the role itself. Runekeepers pledge themselves to a single Patron, Invokers use Symbols and arcane knowledge to perform their rites.

Devotional Practice

Prayer, calendar rites, ethics. Grants access to themed **Talents** (e.g., *Purifying Touch*, *Guide's Wisdom*) at normal XP cost (§7). Use language, posture, and season for fictional advantage (§??).

Thaumaturgical Access

Treat miracles as procedures: preconditions, components, and test points. Use *Wits + Arcana* to *Channel*, then *Weave* (§4); divine sources may swap in *Spirit + Faith* for either phase, per tradition.

Pact Magic (Rites)

- **Prereqs:** Talent such as *Familiar Bond* or *Codex of Names*.
- **Invoke:** Spend a *Boon* or mark *Obligation* (GM sets segments based on scale: minor 1, standard 2, major 3+).
- **Risk:** On misses, GM spends SB as *Backlash* flavored by the Patron's office (§4).

12.4 Regional Faces & Sacred Geography

Inland Sea Circuit

Pilgrim's Ring—a route of beacon-towers, courts, and granaries. Completing the ring in a year and a day grants the title *Road-Kin* (merchants will open a door once for free).

Mistlands Bell-Precincts

Bells carry law and lament. The *Three-Tone Dusk* is binding: certain Rites (*Veil of Change*) must answer or disperse harmlessly.

Stone Kingdoms Oath-Works

Bridges and vaults are "signed" with ancestor marks. A *Line-Recall* Rite in the right hall reads generations like a book.

Kahfagian Sea-Courts

Courts convene on the sea itself: three boats, three judges, verdict by current and chant (§?? Sea-Patter).

12.5 Talents & Devotional Boons

Examples that fit the above traditions (costs per §7):

- **Purifying Touch**—Once per scene, cleanse a mundane taint or calm a crowd segment if you carry fire openly.
- **Guide's Wisdom**—When mediating, ask the GM one clarifying question about *stakes*; answer is candid.
- **Storm Sense**—You always know the fastest safe anchorage within a day's sail.
- **Oath-Keeper**—When you publicly accept terms, gain a *Boon* to the next roll that advances them.

12.6 Consequences & Conflicts

- **Attention:** High Obligation grants visitations—aid that arrives *with* a demand.
- **Rival Doctrines:** Lampers vs Mercy-Cant on punishment; Sea Courts vs Sky Oath on jurisdiction; Ancestral Houses vs Catalyst on continuity.
- **Blasphemy as Mechanics:** GM spends SB to flip a rite's tone (e.g., *Lamp of Plain Speech* exposes *your* omission first).

12.7 Gameplay Tools

Quick SB Menu (Divine)

- **1 SB:** An omen complicates timing or tone (bell toll, lamp gutter).
- **2 SB:** A taboo is invoked; someone important is offended.
- **3 SB:** A rival office answers as well (Keeper *vs* Catalyst).
- **4 SB:** An owed service comes due *now*.

Sacred Site Tags

Consecrated, Witnessed, Thresholded, Storm-Favored, Ancestral-Resonant. Each tag lowers DV by 1 for aligned rites and raises it by 1 for opposed offices.

Divine & Patron Quick Reference

Approaches: Devotion (Talents), Thaumaturgy (procedures), Pact (Rites + Obligation)

Obligation Track: 9 segments—at 3/6/9 trigger requests, visitations, demands

Backlash: GM SB spend, flavored by office and region

Language Keys: Ecktic High (oaths), Sea-Patter (weather), Charter-Script (memory)

Assets Help: Libraries, colleges, shrines modify DV/Position (§??)

12.8 Mechanical Integration

- **Talent Access**—Divine-themed Talents use normal XP (§7); prerequisites are narrative.
- **Rites System**—Use *Obligation* and SB as described; scaling: minor (1 seg), standard (2), major (3+).
- **Casting Loop**—Rites can slot into *Channel/Weave/Backlash* (§4); *Spirit* often substitutes for *Wits*.
- **Language Hooks**—Correct register can lower DV by 1 or grant *Boon* (§??).

Closing Note

Every allegiance writes *terms* into your story: who will answer when you call, and who will come to collect when you don't.

Chapter 13

Character Backgrounds

From the journal of a Thepyrgosi Witch Hunter

They call it mercy when the Tower does it and cruelty when I do. The difference is a seal of wax and a hymn at the gate.

I was a bright spark once—could taste iron on my tongue when the air went thin before a working. The masters in Thepyrgos tested me, weighed me, and found me *nearly* enough. “Nearly” is a door that never opens again.

So I learned the other doors.

I keep a ledger: names, places, the hour the lamps guttered in a tenement, the way the brick sweats when a child hums without meaning to. I carry writs that make people look away. I carry cord and a promise I do not speak aloud. The University pays for talent delivered in time; the city pays for fires that never start. Between those accounts, I balance what I can.

You will say I go too far. Sometimes I do. Sometimes the street is a tinderbox and a wrong whisper is a spark. Sometimes a family would rather believe in saints than in ash. I give them a story they can live with and take away the one that might kill them.

When the bells of Thepyrgos answer the river wind, I walk the colonnade to the bursar’s door and do not look at the windows. The work is ugly. The work is necessary. The night does not care which of those is true—only that the lamps keep burning.

Before your character took their first deliberate risk, they belonged somewhere. Backgrounds are the trail-dust on your boots, the school-ink on your fingers, the bell-pattern you still tap when frightened. They explain how you know what you know—and who still knows *you*.

13.1 Understanding Backgrounds

Backgrounds serve several important functions:

- Provide narrative context for abilities and choices
- Explain how you gained skills, languages (§??), and connections
- Create ties to regions and factions (§11)
- Offer roleplaying hooks, obligations, and privileges
- Seed reliable *contacts*, *customs*, and *places* that matter on-screen

Mechanical Hooks. Choose **one background** at character creation. It grants:

- **Access Tags** (narrative permissions; see below)
- **A Signature Contact** (named NPC; usually a Cap 1 follower you *do not* pay XP for; they cannot take independent actions, but can grant +1d *once per scene* when their help is plausible)
- **A Background Boon** (once per session, gain a +1d or reduce DV by 1 for a task strongly tied to the background's sphere)
- **An Obligation Clock** (4 segments; when filled, it creates a *call-in* from that world—debt, favor, duty; see §13.9)

Access Tags. Tags describe *where* and *with whom* you have standing. Examples: *Guild-Ledgered*, *Court-Announced*, *Veteran-of-the-Marches*, *Bell-Kin of the Causeways*, *Wind-Rider's Tokens*, *Charter-Stamped*. When a scene engages a tag, the GM may:

- Waive a trivial gate (no roll) or
- Lower Position risk by one step for first contact or
- Offer a *Devil's Bargain* tied to that society's expectations

13.2 Common Background Categories

Social Class Backgrounds

Aristocratic House Scion

- **Access Tags:** *Court-Announced*, *Heraldic Right*
- **Skills:** Sway, Command, Lore (customs)
- **Signature Contact:** Family steward (Cap 1)
- **Background Boon:** Once/session in a formal setting, treat Social Position as one step better for an exchange.
- **Obligation Seeds:** Marriage alliances, estate audits, house feuds
- **Challenges:** Intrigue clocks, reputation stakes

Merchant Factor

- **Access Tags:** *Guild-Ledgered*, *Caravan Rights*
- **Skills:** Sway (negotiation), Investigation (accounts), Lore (markets)
- **Signature Contact:** Bookkeeper or quartermaster (Cap 1)
- **Background Boon:** Once/session when buying/selling or logistics, reduce DV by 1 or gain +1d.
- **Obligation Seeds:** Notes due, partner demands, embargoes

Common Folk

- **Access Tags:** *Neighborhood Trust, Guild-Friend*
- **Skills:** Craft (one), Endurance, Streetwise or Nature
- **Signature Contact:** Elder, foreman, or midwife (Cap 1)
- **Background Boon:** Once/session among familiar folk, convert a failure on routine labor to a success-with-cost.
- **Obligation Seeds:** Communal favors, festival work, mutual aid

Professional Backgrounds

Marcher Veteran

- **Access Tags:** *Veteran-of-the-Marches, Muster Papers*
- **Skills:** Melee or Ranged, Tactics, Endurance
- **Signature Contact:** Old sergeant (Cap 1)
- **Background Boon:** Once/session in organized violence, ignore the first point of situational Disadvantage from confusion or fear.
- **Obligation Seeds:** Recall to colors, feud legacies, back-pay claims

Academic of the Dialogues

- **Access Tags:** *School-Sealed, Reading Privileges*
- **Skills:** Lore, Investigation, Sway (debate)
- **Signature Contact:** Lecturer or archivist (Cap 1)
- **Background Boon:** Once/session in research or disputation, ask one clarifying question the GM must answer plainly or point to the shelf that does.
- **Obligation Seeds:** Citations owed, controversial thesis, patron politics

Underworld Hand

- **Access Tags:** *Harbor Handsigns, Black Banner Cant*
- **Skills:** Stealth, Deception, Streetwise
- **Signature Contact:** Fence or fixer (Cap 1)
- **Background Boon:** Once/session when using a *cant* (§??), gain +1d to set up or slip out.
- **Obligation Seeds:** Debts, heat with a rival crew, burned safehouse

Regional Backgrounds

Urban Child of Silkstrand

- **Access Tags:** *Street-Stall Rights*, *Night-Patrol Familiar*
- **Skills:** Streetwise, Perception, Sway (fast talk)
- **Signature Contact:** Watch-lantern or stall-keeper (Cap 1)
- **Background Boon:** Once/session in a dense city, you know a *shortcut or rumor* that reduces time/cost by one step.

Rural Valewood Forager

- **Access Tags:** *Green Courts Token*, *River-Ferry Nod*
- **Skills:** Nature, Survival, Lore (spirits)
- **Signature Contact:** Leaf-warden (Cap 1)
- **Background Boon:** Once/session in the wild, downgrade a Travel complication by one step.

Frontier Marcher Homesteader

- **Access Tags:** *Land-Grant Papers*, *Border Moot Voice*
- **Skills:** Craft (build), Endurance, Tactics or Diplomacy
- **Signature Contact:** Neighboring elder (Cap 1)
- **Background Boon:** Once/session at a contested site, shift Position up by one step when defending what's yours.

13.3 World-Linked Backgrounds

Aeler Charter Apprentice

- **Access Tags:** *Charter-Stamped*, *Stone-Speech Initiate*
- **Skills:** Craft, Lore (engineering), Investigation (plans)
- **Signature Contact:** Oathscribe (Cap 1)
- **Boon:** Once/session around structures, ignore the first *environmental* complication from collapse or strain.

Mistlands Bell-Keeper

- **Access Tags:** *Bell-Law, Causeway Rights*
- **Skills:** Perception, Lore (omens), Survival (fens)
- **Signature Contact:** Dusk-warden (Cap 1)
- **Boon:** Once/session, ring a lawful pattern to reframe a fog scene's Position from *Controlled* to *Dominant* for one exchange.

Ykrul Wind-Runner

- **Access Tags:** *Wind-Knot Tokens, Banner Hospitality*
- **Skills:** Survival (steppe), Ranged or Riding, Sway (customs)
- **Signature Contact:** Banner-aunt (Cap 1)
- **Boon:** Once/session in open country, coordinate allies at distance; they gain a one-time *Boon* if they can hear your call.

Kahfagian Dock-Priest Acolyte

- **Access Tags:** *Harbor Blessings, Beacon Rights*
- **Skills:** Lore (sea rites), Sway (crews), Investigation (cargo)
- **Signature Contact:** Beacon-keeper (Cap 1)
- **Boon:** Once/session at sea or harbor, treat one navigation check as if aided by favorable weather (DV−1).

13.4 Background Benefits and Limits

Typical Benefits

- **Skill Access:** Strong narrative justification for certain tests
- **Resource Access:** Borrowed tools, rooms, shrines, or records (scene-time instead of XP; see Assets, §8)
- **Social Access:** Entry to circles your tag recognizes
- **Knowledge:** Clues, maps, or customs that lower DV by 1
- **Reputation:** Advantage on *first impressions* in-tag

Common Limitations

- **Obligations:** Duties to house, guild, banner, or court
- **Restrictions:** Codes, taboos, or public expectations
- **Enemies:** Rival houses, crews, or schools
- **Secrets:** Leverage others can pull
- **Dependencies:** Loss of standing if you neglect ties

13.5 Custom Backgrounds

Build Procedure (Player & GM)

Pick 1 **Access Tag**, 1 **Signature Contact**, 1 **Boon**, and 1 **Obligation Seed**. Name places and people.

- **Origin:** Where were you taught/raised/forged?
- **Training:** Which *two* skills does this background naturally support?
- **Experiences:** One memory that still changes how you act
- **Relationships:** One ally, one rival; both want something
- **Values:** What won't you let slide?

Mechanical Considerations

- **Boon Scope:** DV−1 or +1d once/session when strongly on-theme
- **Contact Use:** +1d as assist; cannot take independent actions unless purchased as a *Follower* (Cap² XP; §8)
- **Assets:** Borrowing an institutional asset costs *scene time* (counts as upkeep for that asset this downtime) but 0 XP
- **Languages:** Choose one tongue linked to the background (see §??); at least *Conversational*

13.6 Integration with Development

Early Career

- Apprentice, recruit, junior clerk, initiate bell-keeper
- Boon is modest; obligation triggers are frequent but small

Mid-Career

- Foreman, sergeant, factor, lecturer
- Add a **second Access Tag** or elevate contact to Cap 2 by *paying XP* for a follower

Late Career

- Master, banner-aunt, beacon-warden, arbiter
- Background Boon may become a *scene-long permission* at GM approval tied to a vow or festival

13.7 Background Combinations

Sequential

- **Veteran** → **City Watch**: Access shifts from *Muster Papers* to *Badge Rights*
- **Scholar** → **Diplomat**: Keep libraries, gain court

Parallel

- **Noble Merchant**: Both *Court-Announced* and *Guild-Ledgered*; obligations multiply

Contrasting

- **Criminal Penitent**: Underworld ties vs. temple vows; great hooks, sharp bargains

13.8 Using Backgrounds in Play

Player Applications

- Name your places: the specific stall, shrine, or yard you know
- Cash your Boon when you leverage that familiarity
- Call on your contact to assist or to introduce a new lead

GM Applications

- Offer choices where background allegiance matters
- Turn Access Tags into *gates* and *keys*
- Spend Story Beats (§9) to *complicate the old ties*

13.9 Obligations & Evolution

Obligation Clock (4)

When filled by misses, bargains, or story, something is *due*.

1–2 Minor favor, time, or tithe

3 Significant service, costly honesty, dangerous escort

4 Defining ordeal: duel, audit, rite, or trial

Clear segments by honoring duties on-screen, sacrificing resources, or changing affiliation (which creates new clocks).

Enhancement & Transformation

- **Enhance:** Add a tag or upgrade the contact via XP (Follower rules)
- **Transform:** Rewrite the background after a major arc; keep one tag, swap the rest, reset the clock
- **Resolution:** Retire a background after paying its *price*; gain a *Legacy Note*—a small permanent permission

13.10 Tables & Tools

Quick Background Seeds

| d10 | Seed |
|-----|--|
| 1 | Failed heir with an honest steward and a dishonest cousin |
| 2 | Caravan accountant who knows three border tariffs by heart |
| 3 | Bell-tender whose dusk pattern saved a village once |
| 4 | Charter apprentice who broke a measure and hid it |
| 5 | Ykrul courier who owes horses to two banners |
| 6 | Dock acolyte who lit the beacon in a storm against orders |

GM SB Menu: Background Complications

- **1 SB:** A rival claims your tag is invalid here; prove it or pay time
- **2 SB:** Your contact is *busy* or *watched*; help will cost you exposure
- **3 SB:** Obligation advances; an audit, rite, or muster arrives early
- **4 SB:** An enemy weaponizes your background—publicly

Background Quick Reference

At Creation

- Choose: 1 *Access Tag*, 1 *Signature Contact* (Cap 1 assist), 1 *Boon* (once/session), 1 *Obligation Seed*.
- Pick 1 language tied to the background at *Conversational* or better (§??).

In Play

- Invoke tags to open doors or shift Position.
- Call your contact for +1d assist (no independent actions).
- Track the *Obligation Clock* (4). Pay it on-screen.

Advancing

- Upgrade contact to a *Follower* by paying XP (Cap²).
- Add a second tag after a major arc or training.

13.11 Worked Examples

House Shield (Aristocratic-Military Hybrid)

- **Tags:** *Court-Announced*, *Veteran-of-the-Marches*
- **Skills:** Command, Melee, Lore (protocol)
- **Contact:** House steward (Cap 1)
- **Boon:** Once/session while guarding a principal, treat one consequence as one step less severe.
- **Hook:** Duel clock from an old slight; an audit of campaign spoils

Ledger Lantern (Merchant-Temple Bridge)

- **Tags:** *Guild-Ledgered*, *Beacon Rights*
- **Skills:** Sway, Investigation (accounts), Lore (sea rites)
- **Contact:** Beacon-keeper (Cap 1)
- **Boon:** Once/session, secure safe harbor or fair rate; DV-1.
- **Hook:** Rivals whisper of skimming tithe; prove the books

Fog Warden (Mistlands Civic)

- **Tags:** *Bell-Law, Causeway Rights*
- **Skills:** Perception, Survival, Sway (local law)
- **Contact:** Dusk-warden (Cap 1)
- **Boon:** Once/session in mist, choose *route-or-safety*: negate a travel delay or downgrade a hazard.
- **Hook:** Someone silences the bells; obligation advances

Let your background do work for you. Speak its language, call its favors, and pay its debts in play. The world will answer.

Chapter 14

Enhanced Player Play

Optional Player-Character Death

By default, Fate's Edge treats death as rare and dramatic. Use any of the following modules (singly or in combination) to tune how lethal your table feels. All options respect **Story Beats (SB)** and **Obligation** as core currencies.

Baseline (Default)

PCs do not die on ordinary failures. Instead, they suffer **Harm**, Conditions, lost opportunities, or narrative costs. Death only occurs when a rule below is in play or the table agrees a scene warrants it.

Option A — Severe Harm Death

Trigger. When a PC would take a **third** instance of Severe Harm (or escalate past the top of your harm track), they instead face death.

Stave It Off. The player may avoid death by choosing one: (1) mark **2 SB** *and* take a MAIMED permanent Condition, (2) accept a **Patron's Claim** (see Option D), or (3) convert the blow into a **Last Stand** (Option C).

Option B — Death Clock

Trigger. Catastrophic consequences (falls, crushes, mortal wounds) fill a named **Death Clock** (4 or 6 ticks).

While Ticking. Actions that stabilize reduce the clock; taking further punishment advances it.

When Full. The character dies unless one of the following occurs immediately: spend **2 SB** to hold at full (buy a single action), accept a **Patron's Claim**, or another PC succeeds at *Pull From the Brink* (risky, effect = clock -2 on success).

Option C — Last Stand

Trigger. On lethal harm or a full Death Clock, the player may declare a **Last Stand**.

Effect. For the remainder of the scene, the PC acts with **+1 effect** and ignores new Harm. Each action automatically creates **1 SB**. When the scene ends, the character **dies** unless a **miracle** is secured (Patron rite, relic, or equivalent).

Option D — Patron’s Claim

Trigger. On death, the PC’s Patron (or a circling power) intervenes.

Bargain. The GM offers 1–3 -negotiable terms (e.g., *Obligation +2, forfeit a Gift, become a vessel for a season*). If accepted, the PC lives; mark the costs immediately and record the **Claim** as an ongoing front. Refusal means the death proceeds.

Note. Claims should change the campaign; use sparingly.

Option E — Dramatic Exit Inheritance

Dramatic Exit. The player may choose a meaningful death that resolves a question or saves others.

Inheritance. The next PC created by that player inherits one of: (a) a **Relationship** (bond, contact, or rival), (b) a **Tool** (asset degraded one step), or (c) a **Lesson** (start with +1 XP toward a Talent used in the exit). Record how the world remembers them.

Option F — Return From Beyond

Trigger. A body, a name, and a path (rite, gate, bargain).

Cost. Treat as a High Rite with Obligation appropriate to the transgression. Set DV using the Rites system. On success, the PC returns **changed**: apply a SCAR (permanent Condition) and 1 SB to the rescuer. On failure, choose: lose the body, or return with a Patron’s Claim.

Quick Picks

Low lethality: Baseline + Death Clock only. **Heroic tragedy:** Severe Harm Death + Last Stand + Inheritance. **Dark bargains:** Any combo with Patron’s Claim.

The world of **Fate’s Edge** sings when players help steer the tune. This chapter gathers *player-facing dials*—lightweight, opt-in mechanics that turn your table’s choices into momentum in the fiction of Viterra, Acasia, Ecktoria, Ubral, and the long coasts besides. Treat these as a menu: use a few, or layer many as your group grows comfortable.

14.1 Player Resources

Two shared languages of play appear throughout this chapter:

Boons Core system edge; spend to power talents or convert to XP (per core rules).

SB The GM’s Story Beats; several options here invite players to accept SB in exchange for narrative benefits.

14.2 Engagement Rewards

14.2.1 Session Investment Tracker

At session close, each player privately rates their *investment* (1–3). The tracker rewards steady participation without penalizing quiet nights.

1 — Low You followed others’ lead. Gain +1d once next session on any *support* action.

- 2 — Medium** You took initiative in some scenes. Gain **+1d** once next session on a *relationship* roll and bank **1 Momentum** (see §14.5.1).
- 3 — High** You anchored or elevated multiple scenes. Gain **+1d** twice next session (different scenes) and bank **1 Momentum**.

Table Boon. If *all* players report 2+ in a session, the GM may award the table **1 free Boon** to assign at the start of the next session.

14.2.2 Cultural Immersion Bonus

Reward lived-in play with light, predictable benefits.

- **Earn 1 Culture Point** when you enrich a scene with apt language, rites, or customs (Sea-Patter hail; bell-speech courtesy; Aeler craft-honorifics). Max **3/session**.
- **Spend 3 Culture** for **+1d** on a culturally keyed roll.
- **Spend 5 Culture** (across sessions) to declare a *trusted door*: one institution in that culture treats you as Friendly for the next approach.

14.3 Collaborative Play

14.3.1 Information Trading

When the table hunts answers, convert curiosity into structure.

Request & Price. State the question and choose a price the table accepts:

Devil's Bargain Offer the GM a future complication to "pay" for deeper intel.

Accept SB The GM gains **+1 SB** now; you gain a strategic clue or reduced DV.

Spend Boon Spend **1 Boon** to lower DV by 1 on the research/social approach.

Creative Methods. Swap coin for color: poetry duels, shrine petitions, map-reading at a parish stone. If your method sings with setting, take **+1 effect** on the check.

14.3.2 Clock Manipulation

Players can nudge tension without rewriting stakes.

- **Slow** a visible Clock by **1 segment** by either **spending 1 Boon** *or* **accepting +1 SB** into the scene (fiction must justify delay).
- **Hasten** a visible Clock by **1 segment** by **spending 1 Momentum** (§14.5.1) *or* **taking a Devil's Bargain**.
- **Limit:** Once per player per scene. If three or more players affect the same Clock in a scene, the GM gains **+1 SB**.

14.3.3 Complication Bargaining

Invite the kind of trouble you want to play.

- Name a *type*: social, physical, mystery, or moral (e.g., Valora court etiquette; Ubral scree; Isoka whispers; oath vs. mercy).
- The GM frames the complication accordingly and grants you **+1d** on your next roll *within* that trouble, or reduces DV by 1 if your approach leans into the specified texture.

14.4 Faction Awareness

14.4.1 Loyalty Recognition

Track a simple ladder ($-3 \dots +3$): *Enemy, Hostile, Unfriendly, Neutral, Friendly, Supportive, Ally*. When you act *with* an institution's aims, mark a **tick** toward the next step (GM pacing). When you betray a stated value, drop one step immediately and the GM banks **+1 SB** for future headaches.

14.4.2 Cross-Cultural Synergies

Spotting a neat cultural combo (Zakov pilots + Kahfagia signals; Aeler engineering + Ecktoria charters) grants **+1d** once per scene the synergy is actively used.

14.5 Advanced Techniques

14.5.1 Momentum Banking

When your team resolves a Clock *early* (segments unspent), bank **1 Momentum** per unused segment (max **2/session**). Spend 1 Momentum to:

- Gain **+1d** on a future approach tied to that victory (*lessons learned*); or
- *Telescope* a travel beat (skip a routine obstacle the same route would present); or
- Trigger a *Prepared Move*: declare a sensible minor setup you plausibly arranged off-screen.

14.5.2 Escalation Management

Trade heat for shape.

- **De-escalate (spend 1 Boon)**: Downgrade a Major consequence to Minor with a plausible concession (quiet tolls paid, harsh words eaten).
- **Redirect (accept +1 SB)**: Shift pressure to a new venue or actor you name; the GM places that SB there as attention.
- **Truce (spend 1 Momentum)**: Freeze a faction's hostility for one scene if you can cite a shared value (oath, rite, charter clause).

14.6 Character Creation Enhancements

Players may take up to **2 Bonds** (+2 XP total) and up to **2 Starting Complications** (+4 XP total) for a cap of **34 XP**. Each unresolved starting Complication adds **+1 banked SB** to early scenes until cleared. Favor *storyful* picks (clan honor, guild debt, patron notice) over pure math.

14.7 Downtime

Between sessions, tend your garden—quietly moving the world.

14.7.1 Bookkeeping

- Allocate XP (respecting days required).
- Update Assets/Followers (status: Maintained, Neglected, Compromised).
- Track Boons (conversion cap remains 2 XP/session).
- Note SB Debt from unresolved Complications.

14.7.2 Activities

- **Recovery:** Clear Harm/Exposure with scenes that show the work.
- **Training:** Buy advances; narrate mentors, gyms, scriptoria.
- **Research:** Lower DVs with good sources; log new leads.
- **Social:** Strengthen Bonds; tune faction attitudes.
- **Preparation:** Cache gear, sow rumors, line up ferries.

14.7.3 Strategic Considerations

Clear SB-debt complications first; synchronize travel plans; decide which Asset gets love this interval, and which follower needs face-time to avoid Neglect.

14.8 Implementation Timeline

Sessions 1–3

Investment Tracker, Information Trading (via Boons/Bargains), light Complication Bargaining.

Sessions 4–6

Clock Manipulation (Boon/Momentum/SB), Cultural Immersion, Faction Awareness, Momentum Banking.

Sessions 7+

Cross-Cultural Synergies, Escalation Management, advanced pacing choreography.

At-Table Prompts

Seed the Scene. "Ask for the kind of complication you want."

Name the Stakes. "Is this clock worth slowing? Who pays—Boon, SB, or Momentum?"

Pay with Color. "What custom or rite do you invoke to make this work?"

Close the Loop. "Mark your Investment; one sentence of what you learned."

14.9 Between Sessions Activities Log

Use or print the following trackers.

14.9.1 Character Advancement

XP Allocation

- **Total XP Available:** _____
- **Attributes Spent:** _____ (=____ days)
- **Skills Spent:** _____ (=____ days)
- **Remaining XP:** _____

Attribute Improvements

| Attribute | Old | New | Cost | Days |
|-----------|-----|-----|------|------|
| Body | | | | |
| Spirit | | | | |
| Presence | | | | |
| Wits | | | | |

Skill Improvements

| Skill | Old | New | Cost | Days |
|-------------|-----|-----|------|------|
| Arcana | | | | |
| Combat | | | | |
| Investigate | | | | |
| Lore | | | | |
| Move | | | | |
| Notice | | | | |
| Physique | | | | |
| Resolve | | | | |
| Stealth | | | | |
| Sway | | | | |
| Survival | | | | |

14.9.2 Asset & Follower Management

Assets

| Name | Tier | Status | Notes |
|------|------|--------|-------|
| | | | |

Followers

| Name | Role | Harm | Exposure | Status |
|------|------|------|----------|--------|
| | | | | |

14.9.3 Bonds & Complications

Bonds Updated

- With: _____ — Change: _____

Complications

| Complication | Resolution or Status |
|--------------|----------------------|
| | |

14.9.4 Boons & Momentum Summary

- Boons Held: ____/5 Converted to XP: ____ (max 2 XP/session)
- Momentum Banked: ____ (max 2/session)

14.9.5 Campaign Clocks

- Mandate: ____ / 6 Crisis: ____ / 6
- Notables: _____

[Fatigue and Boons in Action] **Situation:** Cael (Cantor) is channeling a ward during a pitched fight. He already has **1 Fatigue**, meaning his next roll will force him to re-roll one success.

Roll: Spirit 3 + Arcana 3 = 6d10 → {6, 9, 1, 3, 2, 8} Result: 3 successes, 1 SB. DV = 3 (meets requirement).

Fatigue Effect: Because Cael has 1 Fatigue, he must re-roll one success die. He re-rolls the 6 → result = 4 (failure). New total = 2 successes → now a Partial.

Player Action: Cael spends **1 Boon** to negate the Fatigue penalty. Instead of losing the success, the roll stands at 3 successes.

Outcome: The ward stabilizes as a clean success. GM still gains 1 SB from the roll.

Lesson: Fatigue pressures characters by threatening their rolls, but Boons let players push back—turning failure into agency without erasing the risk.

14.9.6 Notes & Reflections

14.10 The Witch Hunter

Concept: A sanctioned tracker of illicit rites and rogue talents. Part detective, part exorcist, part collector of debts owed to the law.

Typical Inspiration: Inquisitors, occult constables, hedge-wardens, contract witch-finders.

Mechanical Foundation:

- **Primary:** Wits 4, Spirit 3
- **Skills:** Investigation 3, Lore (occult) 2, Melee 2, Insight 1
- **Talents:** *Witch-Sign Reader* (spot residue of workings), *Cold Iron Practice* (gain +1d when disrupting active magic), *Calm Under Oath* (resist panic, intimidation once/scene)
- **Assets:** Writ of limited authority (opens doors, closes some), informant in a temple archive

Play Style:

- Tracks leads, reads scenes, corners quarry with paperwork and steel
- Uses Position and leverage in social spaces before blades are drawn
- Treats magic as both *evidence* and *hazard* (§4)

Development Path:

- Specialize in *Baneful Techniques* (counter-rites, bindings)
- Build a network of informants and safe cells (§8)
- Learn one tradition deeply to turn it against itself

Story Hooks:

- A vanished ledger ties a noble salon to forbidden rites
- A *sanction* arrives with no seal—who really wrote it?
- Your oldest informant begs you to burn a file with your name on it

Witch Hunter Quick Boons

Once per session when confronting an occult scene, either:

- Reduce the DV of the first *read-the-signs* check by 1, or
- Shift Position one step safer for the first attempt to break an ongoing effect.

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