

# 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

### Player-Managed Resources Philosophy

#### You Track Your Own Story

In Fate's Edge, you are the primary manager of your character's mechanical state. This isn't just about convenience—it's a core design principle that makes the game more engaging and reduces GM overhead.

#### What You Manage:

- **Obligation Tracks** - One per Patron or Symbol
- **Corruption Clocks** - Especially for Cantors and Pact-Whisperers
- **Leash Clocks** - For summoned spirits and bindings
- **Asset States** - Maintained, Neglected, or Compromised
- **Follower Conditions** - Exposure and Harm tracks
- **Progression Clocks** - Repertoire, Spirit Bond, etc.
- **Resource Status** - Boons, Favor, Leverage

#### Your Responsibilities:

1. **Mark Immediately** - When a rule says "mark +X," do it now
2. **Declare Thresholds** - "My Obligation is filling!" or "Corruption full!"
3. **Keep It Visible** - Use trackers everyone can see
4. **Maintain Ownership** - You know your states better than the GM

**Why This Matters:** This approach keeps you invested in your character's mechanical journey, reduces table downtime, and lets the GM focus on creating compelling complications rather than tracking your resources. The world responds to what you declare about your character's state.

**GM Support:** The GM spot-checks and provides consequences, but you drive the mechanical narrative of your character's growth and struggles.

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:

$$\text{DicePool} = \text{Attribute} + \text{Skill}$$

**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                             |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <b>Clean Success</b>      | Goal achieved cleanly              |
| <b>Success &amp; Cost</b> | Goal achieved with complication    |
| <b>Partial</b>            | Progress but with difficult choice |
| <b>Miss</b>               | 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; resolve the conflict dramatically and progress or clear 1 segment on a secondary clock (generally, a clock tied to the scene, not the overarching campaign).
- **Four+ 10s:** Mythic success; progress or clear 1–2 segments from a secondary clock or create a significant story development.

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

**10s are never re-rolled by Position effects or other mechanics. Critical hit effects always take place if the roll is successful, despite any SB rolled. Critical successes may reduce Backlash/Obligation/Corruption severity by one tier.**

## 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 → Controlled → 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                              |
|---------------|--------------------------------------|
| <b>Harm 1</b> | -1 die on related actions            |
| <b>Harm 2</b> | -1 die on most actions until treated |
| <b>Harm 3</b> | 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 1/scene or -1d first attack</i> |
| Heavy  | -1d   | +3d  | <i>Set 1/scene or -2d first attack</i> |

## 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 bardings 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 × 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 × 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.

Sidebar: [TAGS] & Casting

**What are [TAGS]?** Effects in *Fate's Edge* are communicated via [TAGS]. Each [TAG] is a discrete effect gated behind a Talent, Rite, spell, or asset—it cannot be invoked spontaneously unless a rule grants access.

**How they're used.** [TAGS] provide a common language for describing effects, especially when players invent spells via *Free Casting*. Many prewritten spells and abilities also list their [TAGS] for clarity.

**Cross-reference.** For the canonical glossary and full list of available [TAGS], see §4.17.

### 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

[Invoker Path Features] IX

### Feature Description and Limitations

**Invoker's Grimoire** Major Talent, 6 XP. Grants knowledge of Ritual Magic theory and access to perform a limited number of Rites.

**Ritual Repertoire** Start with knowledge of **2** Low or Standard Rites from any Patrons you research. Learn new Rites through Downtime study (see below).

**Ritual Invocation** Takes *DV* rounds (default 2–3 rounds). Requires specific components/materials.

**Base Cost** Mark **+1 Obligation** when you successfully resolve any known Rite (Low or Standard). (*High-Power/High Rites are normally unavailable; if the Keeper permits, treat their base Obligation as +2.*)

**Symbol Enhancement** Possessing the correct Patron's Symbol for a Rite you are casting reduces its **DV by 1** and its **Obligation cost by 1** (minimum 0). Only one Symbol may apply to a given Rite.

**No Symbol (Explicit Penalties)** You may attempt the Rite without the Patron's Symbol, but suffer: **+1 DV, +1 Obligation** (in addition to Base), and **+1 round** casting time. On *Partial/Failure*, generate **+1 extra SB**.

**Symbol Display** The Symbol must be visible/active throughout the ritual. If it is concealed, disrupted, or removed mid-cast: immediately **+1 DV**; on Failure, apply *Backlash* (see below).

**Crack the Seal** Desperate technique. Instantly cast any known Rite by setting the relevant Symbol to **COMPROMISED**. Mark **+2 Obligation** (+**3** for High-Power Rites). Does not reduce Base Obligation below 0.

**Optional Push** Invokers may *Push* a Rite: choose one (+**2** dice *or* +**1** Effect *or* resolve one round faster). Always mark **+1 Obligation and** generate **1 SB**, in addition to other costs.

**Cross-Resonance** If you cast Rites from *different Patrons* in the same scene, each Patron after the first adds **+1 DV** to that Rite.

### Symbol States & Repair

- **COMPROMISED:** A Symbol set to COMPROMISED (e.g., via *Crack the Seal*) provides *no* DV/Obligation reduction until repaired. Casting with a COMPROMISED Symbol imposes –**1 die** on the Casting Test.
- **SHATTERED:** If you *Crack the Seal* again while the Symbol is COMPROMISED, it becomes SHATTERED and cannot be used until replaced (Asset lost).
- **Repair (Downtime):** 1 day of focused work and a *Craft or Lore + Tinker* test vs. DV 3. Success: clear COMPROMISED. Failure: no progress. Alternatively, spend **1 XP** to auto-repair.

## Backlash & Failure (Explicit)

- **Success:** Rite resolves; apply Base/added Obligation and any SB from Push or No-Symbol clauses.
- **Partial:** Effect  $-1$  step *or* shortened duration; mark **Fatigue 1**. If cast *without* a Symbol, Keeper gains **+1 SB** (in addition to normal SB generation).
- **Failure:** No effect; mark **Fatigue 1**; Keeper gains **+1 SB**. Then test *Spirit + Resolve* vs. DV 3:
  - On Fail: suffer **Harm 1 (Shock)** or start **Backlash Static [4]** (Keeper's choice).
  - If the Symbol was disrupted/hidden mid-cast *or* you *Cracked the Seal*: upgrade to **Harm 2 (Shock)**.
- **Interrupted:** Harm, Silence, or disruption before resolution counts as *Failure*.

**Example:** Magus Vex, bearing the **Invoker's Grimoire**, has studied the rites of Raéyn and the Sealed Gate. He knows Raéyn's *Whispering Currents* (Low) and the Sealed Gate's *Circle of Denial* (Standard). Faced with a collapsing tunnel, he attempts the Sealed Gate's ritual. It's a Standard Rite, so **DV 3**, taking **3 rounds**, and costs **+1 Obligation**. He has the Sealed Gate's Symbol, reducing the DV to **2** and the Obligation cost to **0**. When ambushed, he needs quick protection. He **Cracks the Seal** on the *Circle of Denial*. The Symbol becomes COMPROMISED, the Rite is instant, and he marks **+2 Obligation**. Later, needing to bind a particularly strong foe, he **Pushes** the Rite, marking an additional **+1 Obligation** and generating **1 SB**; the barrier strengthens. If he tried a Raéyn Rite afterwards in the same scene, *Cross-Resonance* would add **+1 DV** to that casting.

## Learning New Rites

An Invoker can expand their **Ritual Repertoire** through dedicated study during **Downtime**.

- **Cost:** 1 week of Downtime  $+ 2$  XP.
- **Requirement:** Access to texts, a teacher, or direct observation of the Rite being performed by another adept.
- **Test:** *Lore + Investigation* (or a relevant skill) vs. DV 3–5 (based on Rite rarity/complexity).
- **Success:** Add the Rite to your Ritual Repertoire.
- **Failure:** Cannot learn this specific Rite for a significant time (GM discretion). The Keeper may set a relevant Complication (e.g., *Forbidden Knowledge Pursued*).

## Symbols as Assets

- A Patron's Symbol is a **Minor Asset (4 XP)** whose primary value is as a **ritual focus/component**.
- You *can* attempt any ritual **without** the Symbol, but you incur these **No Symbol** penalties: **+1 DV** (*and therefore +1 round to cast, since casting time = DV rounds*), **+1 Obligation** (*in addition to Base*), and on *Partial/Failure* the Keeper gains **+1 extra SB**.

- Symbols can be **maintained/upgraded** like other Assets. Example upgrades: *Hardened* (ignore the first application of COMPROMISED per session), *Bright* (treat as *visible* for Symbol Display while concealed on your person).

## Invoker (Ritualist's Path)

Requires the **Invoker's Grimoire** talent (6 XP) and study of specific rites. Grants deep knowledge of ritual magic and the ability to perform Rites from multiple Patrons. Symbols are potent tools that enhance this knowledge.

[Invoker Path Features] IX

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### Feature Description and Limitations

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**Ritual Repertoire** Start with knowledge of **2** Low or Standard Rites from any Patrons you research. Learn new Rites through Downtime study (see below).

**Ritual Invocation** Takes DV rounds (default 2–3 rounds). Requires specific components/materials.

**Base Cost** Mark **+1 Obligation** when you successfully resolve any known Rite (Low or Standard). (*High-Power/High Rites are normally unavailable; if the Keeper permits, treat their base Obligation as +2.*)

**Symbol Enhancement** Possessing the correct Patron's Symbol for a Rite you are casting reduces its DV by **1** and its **Obligation cost by 1** (minimum 0). Only one Symbol may apply to a given Rite.

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**Crack the Seal** Desperate technique. Instantly cast any known Rite by setting the relevant Symbol to COMPROMISED. Mark **+2 Obligation (+3 for High-Power Rites)**. Does not reduce Base Obligation below 0.

**Optional Push** Invokers may *Push* a Rite: choose one (+2 dice *or* +1 Effect *or* resolve one round faster). Always mark **+1 Obligation** and generate **1 SB**, in addition to other costs.

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- **Failure:** No effect; mark **Fatigue 1**; Keeper gains **+1 SB**. Then test *Spirit + Resolve* vs. DV 3:
  - On Fail: suffer **Harm 1 (Shock)** or start **Backlash Static [4]** (Keeper's choice).
  - If the Symbol was disrupted/hidden mid-cast *or* you *Cracked the Seal*: upgrade to **Harm 2 (Shock)**.
- **Interrupted:** Harm, Silence, or disruption before resolution counts as *Failure*.

**Example:** Magus Vex, bearing the **Invoker's Grimoire**, has studied the rites of Raéyn and the Sealed Gate. He knows Raéyn's *Whispering Currents* (Low) and the Sealed Gate's *Circle of Denial* (Standard). Faced with a collapsing tunnel, he attempts the Sealed Gate's ritual. It's a Standard Rite, so **DV 3**, taking **3 rounds**, and costs **+1 Obligation**. He has the Sealed Gate's Symbol, reducing the DV to **2** and the Obligation cost to **0**. When ambushed, he needs quick protection. He **Cracks the Seal** on the *Circle of Denial*. The Symbol becomes COMPROMISED, the Rite is instant, and he marks **+2 Obligation**. Later, needing to bind a particularly strong foe, he **Pushes** the Rite, marking an additional **+1 Obligation** and generating **1 SB**; the barrier strengthens. If he tried a Raéyn Rite afterwards in the same scene, *Cross-Resonance* would add **+1 DV** to that casting.

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- **Cost:** 1 week of Downtime  $+ 2 \text{ XP}$ .
- **Requirement:** Access to texts, a teacher, or direct observation of the Rite being performed by another adept.
- **Test:** *Lore + Investigation* (or a relevant skill) vs. DV 3–5 (based on Rite rarity/complexity).
- **Success:** Add the Rite to your Ritual Repertoire.
- **Failure:** Cannot learn this specific Rite for a significant time (GM discretion). The Keeper may set a relevant Complication (e.g., *Forbidden Knowledge Pursued*).

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- Symbols can be **maintained/upgraded** like other Assets. Example upgrades: *Hardened* (ignore the first application of COMPROMISED per session), *Bright* (treat as *visible* for Symbol Display while concealed on your person).

## Borrowed Grace

**Type:** Invoker Talent — *Lesser Imbuement*

### Use

- **Cost:** 1 Boon, 1 action.
- **Effect (pick one on use):** +1 Melee or +1 Thematic (your table's signature/thematic Skill).
- **Duration:** *Single action/attack* (instantaneous boost only).
- **Requirement:** Wield/display the relevant Patron's **Symbol**.
- **Obligation:** Immediately mark +1 Obligation to that Patron (see §??).
- **Limits:** Cannot be extended, stacked, or *Pushed* for duration. Using *Borrowed Grace* while the Symbol is COMPROMISED lowers your **Position** by one step (*or imposes -1 die if already Desperate*).)

## 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 *purgung 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 (8 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*; the 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.

## Performance Integration

Songs are most effective when performed as part of social performances:

- **Audience Awareness:** Perform in front of 5+ observers for +1 die but +1 Corruption risk.
- **Cultural Context:** Appropriate venues/occasions grant +1 Effect.
- **Social Momentum:** Successful performances create opportunities for additional Songs in the same scene.

## Song Repertoire Progression

Develop a **Repertoire Clock** [6] to track learned Songs:

- Mark a segment for each *unique* Song learned through practice or exposure.
- At 2 segments: Reduce base DV of Songs by 1 (minimum 2).
- At 4 segments: Gain +1 die to Song performances.
- At 6 segments: Learn one *Standard Rite as a Song* (temporary, requires ongoing practice).

## Corruption Clock

- You gain a personal **Corruption Clock** with segments equal to your **Body** rating.
- **Mark Corruption when:**
  - You **Push It** (Song resolves immediately).
  - You perform a **Resonant Rite**.
  - The Keeper spends a Story Beat involving your psionic/occult activities.
- **Corruption Accumulation:** Multiple triggers may be required to mark a segment:
  - **2 Push It uses** = +1 Corruption segment
  - **1 Push It + 1 Resonant Rite** = +1 Corruption segment
  - **3 GM SB spends** on occult activities = +1 Corruption segment
  - **1 High Cantor Standard Rite** = +1 Corruption segment
- When the Clock fills:
  - You immediately gain a **thematic benefit** and **drawback** from the last Patron whose Rite you performed.
  - All of your followers, retainers, or familiars also gain a trait of the same corruption.
  - Reset the Clock, but it cannot go below your character's **Tier** (minimum corruption).
- Corruption traits can be **Embraced** for permanent thematic advantages.

## Thematic Corruption Benefits

Instead of purely punitive effects, Corruption creates character-defining traits:

**Ikasha (Shadow):** +1 die to Stealth in shadows, but –1 die in bright light; always noticed by shadow-dwellers.

**Inaea (Mercy):** +1 die to social manipulation, but –1 die when alone; compelled to offer aid to the helpless.

**Isoka (Change):** +1 die to escape/transform actions, but –1 die to maintain consistency; physical changes become visible.

**Raéyn (Sea):** +1 die to water/navigational tasks, but –1 die on land; attracts sea creatures.

**Aveh (Freedom):** +1 die to escape/avoidance, but –1 die to commitments; leaves traces of passage.

## Resonant Rites

Some powerful or thematically significant Low Rites carry the weight of the Patron's direct influence. Performing these Rites is a conscious act of drawing deep power.

- When learning a Song that mimics such a Rite, the GM or the rules text will designate it as **Resonant**.
- Performing a **Resonant Rite Song** successfully allows you to mark +1 segment on your Corruption Clock. This represents the lingering echo of power.
- **Choosing to Resonate** is optional. You can perform the Rite normally without marking Corruption.
- This choice adds a layer of strategy: is the Rite's power worth the potential long-term cost?

## Song Synergy System

Create combinations and interactions between Songs:

- **Harmony:** Performing two compatible Songs grants +1 Effect to both.
- **Counterpoint:** Using opposing Songs can cancel negative effects.
- **Chorus:** With allies, combine Songs for amplified effects (+1 Effect per participant).

## Outcomes

**Success:** The Low Rite takes effect as written.

**Partial:** The Rite manifests with reduced effect (one 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:

- The Song resolves immediately instead of next round.
- Mark **Fatigue 1**.
- Mark toward **Corruption accumulation** (see Corruption Clock).
- The Keeper immediately triggers a **Story Beat**, representing fallout from a Patron, the Road, or social attention.

## Enhanced Departure Options

- **Graceful Coda:** End a Song early to gain +1 Boon and reduce Corruption accumulation progress by 1 (if any progress exists).
- **Lingering Verse:** Song effect continues for one round after ending, but mark +1 Fatigue.
- **Audience Impact:** A successful Song performance improves social Position +1 for the next interaction.

## 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 the Keeper's discretion.
- **Obligation Transference:** Whenever a Rite would normally increase Obligation, it instead increases Corruption accumulation progress.

## Downtime Activities

- **Song Composition:** Practice and refine Songs, potentially reducing their DV or Corruption risk.
- **Performance Practice:** Improve Performance skill and social reputation.
- **Patron Study:** Research new Rites to add to your Repertoire.
- **Audience Building:** Cultivate followers who provide +1 die to future performances.

## Talents

### Talent: Resonant Performance (3 XP)

**Requirements:** Cantor's Path, Performance 2+

**Effect:** When performing a Song in front of an audience of 5+ people, reduce Corruption generation requirements by 1 (minimum 1 trigger) and gain +1 die to the performance.

## Talent: Song Weaver (4 XP)

**Requirements:** Cantor's Path, Repertoire Clock at 4+ segments

**Effect:** Combine two compatible Songs for +1 Effect to both. Once per scene, create Harmony between Songs for all participants.

## Talent: Siren's Call (Major Talent - 8 XP)

**Requirements:** Cantor's Path, Performance 3+, Repertoire 4+

**Effect:** Your Songs can compel supernatural beings.

- [COMMAND] effects work on Outsiders (Cap 3 or less)
- Resistance is Spirit + Resolve vs. your Performance + Lore
- On success: outsider acts as commanded for one exchange
- On failure: generate 2 SB, outsider becomes hostile

## Song Specialization Paths

**Battle Cantor:** War Songs grant allies +1 Position in combat; Hymn of Fury converts 1 Harm to Fatigue for allies Near you; Anthem of the Fallen allows departed allies to return as spectral echoes (1/session).

**Shadow Cantor:** Songs of Veiling create [VEIL] effects without ritual components; Melody of Misdirection imposes -1d to Notice rolls on enemies; Dirge of Passing enables communication with dead and scrying through recent deaths.

**Healing Cantor:** Songs of Restoration heal +1 Harm; Chant of Purification removes poison/disease; Hymn of Vitality grants temporary +1 Body.

**Knowledge Cantor:** Lore Songs reveal hidden knowledge; Chant of Understanding grants +2d to Investigation/Lore; Ode to Memory allows perfect recall of witnessed events.

## Corruption Fading

Corruption does not fade easily. It requires deliberate action and often, a price.

**Natural Fading** At the beginning of each Downtime, reduce a character's current **Corruption accumulation progress** by 1 step, and reduce the total **Corruption segments** by 1 (to a minimum of the character's Tier). Lingering effects persist until actively addressed.

**Act of Contrition** Perform a genuine act that contradicts the Patron's influence or repairs its harm (GM/Player agreement on suitability). **Effect:** Remove 1 Corruption segment and clear one persistent effect. Costs the character something significant.

**Ritual Purification** Undertake a significant act of cleansing (pilgrimage, service, seeking rival absolution). **Effect:** Remove 2 Corruption segments and clear all persistent effects. Likely requires marking Fatigue or temporary Obligation.

**Embrace Corruption Type:** Major Talent (6 XP) **Prerequisite:** 2+ levels of Corruption.  
 You accept the creeping decay, transforming it into a permanent Talent. **Embracing locks your Corruption at its current level—it reshapes it.** The deeper the corruption, the greater the power and the cost.

- Gain a **Minor** permanent thematic boon/condition related to the Patron (e.g., +1 die to Stealth in shadows for Ikasha, but -1 die in bright light).
- Your Corruption cannot naturally fade below the level at which you Embraced it.
- The Keeper gains +1 SB to spend against you related to that Patron's themes.

**Narrative Integration:** This Talent represents the Faustian bargain. Players gain agency over their corruption, ensuring that it always carries meaningful consequences.

**Patron Bargain** Negotiate directly with the Patron. **Effect:** Remove 1–3 Corruption segments based on the exchange's gravity. Always comes with a narrative cost or condition set by the Keeper.

**Persistence** Corruption effects do not clear through rest. They require deliberate narrative resolution or specific actions listed above. Every method is an opportunity for character development.

**High Cantor (18 XP Prestige Talent)** *Prerequisite: Tier II+, Cantor's Path, Performance 3+*  
 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.
- Gain +1 die to its primary effect.
- **Mark toward Corruption accumulation** (1 High Cantor Standard Rite = 1 Corruption trigger).

**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. Repeated use within a single scene risks moral fatigue: add +1 DV to all subsequent *Resolve* rolls against fear, charm, or social pressure in that scene.

## Divine Resonance (Major Talent - 15 XP)

*Prerequisite: High Cantor, Performance 4+, Tier III+*

Your voice carries divine authority. Once per scene, spend 2 Boons:

- **Command Effect:** Issue a [COMMAND] that affects up to (Presence) targets simultaneously
- **Miracle Effect:** Replicate any Low Rite without marking Corruption (but generate 1 SB)
- **Omen Effect:** Gain insight into a major threat - ask 3 questions about one enemy/faction

**Cost:** Mark +2 Corruption segments, immediately trigger Patron attention.

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

## 4.17 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.

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[Summoning Core Mechanics] IX

### Mechanic Description and Requirements

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**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 Capacity** Set Leash Capacity = **Cap + Spirit 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 perform a separate concentration-requiring action while commanding it; a rival contests its actions; or it crosses a [WARD] successfully (DV = Cap).

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

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**Spirit Bond Progression.** Each spirit you summon regularly can develop a **Spirit Bond Clock [4]**:

- Mark segments for successful commands, shared victories, or acts of mutual aid.
- At 2 segments: +1 die to communicate with this spirit type.
- At 4 segments: Spirit grants +1 Boon when departing naturally and becomes **Favored** (Leash reduced by 1).
- Reset: Spirit departs as ally and may return in future scenes with +1 Effect.

**Near-Miss Progress.** If a *Call/Bind* fails or a spirit departs immediately after manifesting, mark **+1** on that spirit type's **Spirit Bond Clock** once per session (per spirit type), provided a meaningful attempt was made in-scene.

**Spirit Specialization Paths.** Spirits can develop specialized capabilities through repeated summoning:

- **Combat Specialist:** +1 Harm in melee; ignore first Harm when attacking.
- **Scout Form:** Extended range, stealth bonuses, can carry small items. *Carry limits:* Cap 1 up to **2 kg** (5 lb); Cap 3 up to **10 kg** (22 lb). Dragging (not lifting) allows up to **3×** these amounts across smooth ground. Overburdening immediately ticks the Leash.
- **Utility Spirit:** Perform simple tasks (lockpicking, carrying, environmental interaction).
- **Shield Guardian:** Interpose to protect allies; convert Harm to Fatigue.
- **Scholar Spirit:** Gather information, [REVEAL] hidden knowledge, store/cast one Rite/Lore spell through spirit bond.
- **Battle Spirit:** Enhanced combat abilities, Spirit Shield Wall (+1d Defense for allies in Near), tactical coordination.

### 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 Capacity:** Record Leash Capacity = **Cap** + **Spirit segments**. Draw a clock to track strain (the Leash).
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 perform a separate action requiring concentration (e.g., casting a spell, picking a lock) while actively directing the spirit's complex actions, 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.

### Enhanced Action Economy.

- **Spirit Assist:** Once per scene, the spirit can grant +2 dice to an ally's roll instead of acting.
- **Quick Command:** Simple commands (attack, move, defend) do not require a full Action for the summoner.
- **Spirit Resonance:** When commanding multiple spirits of the same type, +1 Effect.
- **Honorable Departure:** Voluntarily end a summon early to gain +1 Boon and reduce Leash by 2.
- **Spirit Link (Major Talent - 10 XP):** Your spirits act on your turn, not their own initiative. Issue commands as free actions (not full Actions). Spirits move/act immediately when commanded. Reduce Leash ticking for natural behaviors by 1.

**Quick Command Examples.** The following orders qualify as *Quick Command* and do not consume the summoner's full Action:

- **Strike Nearest:** Attack the closest hostile.
- **Hold the Line:** Defend a doorway/ally; intercept the next entrant.
- **Relocate:** Move to that ledge/cover/marker within *Near*.
- **Retrieve:** Fetch a dropped item within *Near* and return.
- **Screen:** Impose disadvantage on the next hostile advance (tick Leash if against nature).
- **Scout Peek:** Look into the next room/corridor and report (no lingering).

### 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 the command is given. Quick Commands do not use your Action.
- **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.

### Talents.

**Spirit Synergy (4 XP).** **Requirements:** Pact-Whisperer, Lesser Pactwright.

**Effect:** When commanding two or more spirits simultaneously, reduce each Leash by 1 segment and gain +1 die to Command rolls.

**Bonded Summoner (3 XP).** **Requirements:** Pact-Whisperer, Spirit Bond Clock at 2+ segments with any spirit type.

**Effect:** Favored spirits reduce their Leash cost by 2 (minimum 3). Once per session, recall a departed Favored spirit by spending 2 Boons.

**True Name Keeper (Prestige Talent - 15 XP).** **Requirements:** Tier III+, Bonded Summoner, 6+ different spirit types.

**Effect:** You know the true names of Outsiders.

- Call any previously encountered spirit by true name
- Reduce Leash Capacity by 2 for known spirits
- Banish Effect: When a spirit's Leash fills, you may instead:
  - Permanently bind it as a Familiar (lose other familiar slot)
  - Negotiate terms for continued service (+1 Obligation but no departure)
  - Sacrifice the binding to gain major boon from Patron

**Legion Master (Prestige Talent - 18 XP).** Requirements: Tier III+, Spirit Synergy, 4+ different spirit types bonded.

**Effect:** You become a true commander of otherworldly forces.

- Maintain up to (Presence) spirits simultaneously
- Issue tactical commands as free actions to all spirits
- Legion's Will: Spirits gain +1 Effect when acting in coordinated groups
- Ultimate Ability: Call to Arms - summon one spirit of each bonded type (once/session)

**Example.** *Kestra calls a Cap 3 fire elemental to aid in battle. She spends 1 Boon to Bind it. The elemental's Leash Capacity is 7 segments (Cap 3 + Spirit 4). When it takes Harm, the GM ticks the Leash. Later, Kestra casts a spell while directing the elemental, ticking the Leash again for splitting focus. Careful management and Boon Finesse keep the bond stable—until the elemental's fury tests her will. After the battle, she marks her Spirit Bond Clock +1 for the shared victory.*

**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.

## TAGS System)

Some casters do not prepare rote rites. They shape raw forces through shared arcane grammar known as **TAGS**. A spell is constructed at the table using a short phrase of TAGS. You only need the fiction, the TAG selection, and a casting roll.

### Spell Structure

**Intent + Target + Tags = effect.**

Example formula:

“I unleash

*BURNING*

- Area • Force against the marauders.”

The GM sets a Difficulty Value (DV) based on TAG complexity and danger.

## Base Difficulty Value (DV)

Start at DV 1 and add +1 for each TAG used.

$$\text{DV} = 1 + \text{number of TAGS}$$

Adding powerful or perilous TAGS (Teleportation, Transformation, Dominate) adds +2 instead. Mastery, focus, or appropriate tools may lower DV by 1.

## Casting Roll

Roll **Wits + Arcana** (or Ritual, Channeling, etc.). Success = spell goes off. Failure or 1 = Backlash (see below).

## Backlash

Whenever a Free Caster fails—or pushes power beyond safety—the magic pushes back. Choose one:

- Harm 2 (Arcane)
- +2 Fatigue
- Corruption +1
- Catastrophic side effect (GM describes)

If the spell included a “Dangerous” TAG, Backlash triggers on *mixed* results as well.

## TAG Library

Pick 1–3 for minor spells. Pick 4–6 for heavy magic (very dangerous). More than 6 is suicidal.

### Elemental TAGS

- **Burning:** flame, heat, combustion.
- **Freezing:** ice, slowing, brittle shatter.
- **Storm:** lightning, crackling arcs, thunder shock.
- **Stone:** walls, spikes, tremors, armor.
- **Wave:** crushing water, currents, pressure.
- **Wind:** levitate, gusts, deflection.

### Force TAGS

- **Force:** pure kinetic power, shields, blasts.
- **Area:** cone, circle, corridor, zone.
- **Strike:** single target precision.
- **Wall:** barrier or blockade.
- **Bind:** restrain, hold, suspend.
- **Dispel:** suppress magic, unravel effects.

### Mind & Veil TAGS

- **Veil:** conceal, blur, illusion, silence.
- **Scry:** reveal hidden, see distance, read traces.
- **Memory:** erase, alter, restore.
- **Command:** compel short action.
- **Fear:** panic, flee, break morale.

### Life & Body TAGS

- **Mend:** close wounds, restore flesh, reduce Harm 1.
- **Purify:** remove poison, corruption, disease.
- **Strengthen:** enhance body, armor, senses.
- **Waken:** counter sleep, paralysis, stun.
- **Beast:** speak with or influence animals.

**Space & Motion TAGS (Always +2 DV Each)**

- **Leap:** jump far, blink across short space.
- **Fold:** short-range teleport, vanish-reappear.
- **Gate:** long distance passage, open/close path.
- **Gravity:** crush, lift, suspend, walk skyward.

**Creation & Transformation TAGS (Always +2 DV Each)**

- **Create:** manifest matter briefly.
- **Summon:** call a being or construct.
- **Transmute:** turn one thing into another.
- **Animate:** make objects act with intent.

# 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 × 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:  $4 + 3 = 7\text{d}10$
- 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:  $3 + 2 = 5\text{d}10$
- 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:  $3 + 2 = 5\text{d}10$
- 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:**  $12 + 10 + 4 + 4 = \mathbf{30 \text{ XP}}$ .
- **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:**  $12 + 10 + 8 = \mathbf{30 \text{ XP}}$ .
- **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  $\text{new rating} \times 3$  XP (e.g., 1→2 costs 6; 2→3 costs 9).
- **Skills:** Each step costs  $\text{new level} \times 2$  XP (e.g., 0→1 costs 2; 1→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. Only one talent can be active at a time unless otherwise specified.

### 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) *Prerequisite: 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 Story Beats on the Channel or initial roll. Any SB generated are **banked by the GM** and applied at dramatically appropriate moments.

**Limitations:** Cannot be used for **Great** or **Extreme** Tier effects. The Weave phase (if applicable) still generates normal SB.

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

### Berserker Rage (Major Talent – 8 XP) *Prerequisite: Melee 3+, Spirit 3+, Body 3+*

#### **Effect:**

- Gain +3 dice to all melee attacks.
- Ignore first Harm 1 each round while raging.
- Ignored any Harm or Fatigue penalties while raging.

- Lasts 3 rounds.
- When Rage ends, mark +Spirit Fatigue.
- Cannot be ended early.
- Position becomes Desperate while raging (re-roll successes).
- **While raging, you cannot benefit from Armor conversion effects.**
- **While raging, you may activate one additional Major, Prestige, or Epic talent by accepting one of these costs:**
  - Reduce rage bonus to +2 dice, or
  - Mark +1 additional Fatigue when rage ends, or
  - Cannot ignore first Harm 1 this round, or
  - Extend rage duration by 1 round (instead of reducing it).
- Once per scene.
- After rage ends, you cannot take actions requiring combat or mental focus until your next turn (Recovery Period).

#### Narrative Integration:

*"The battle-fury strips away all pretense of defense. You become a weapon of pure destruction, but your flesh bears the cost of such power. Armor becomes a cage that cannot contain the storm within."*

#### 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.

**Malachai (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.

**Elemental Mastery (18 XP Epic Talent)** *Prerequisite: Tier III+, Caster's Gift, Arcana 5, 2+ Focus Elements*

You have achieved perfect harmony with your chosen elements, bending their chaotic nature to your will.

- **Backlash Reduction:** Reduce all Backlash severity by one step when casting spells aligned with your focus elements
- **Elemental Synergy:** When casting with two focus elements, gain +2 dice and +1 Effect
- **Pure Channel:** Once per scene, cast a spell without generating SB on the Weave roll
- **Elemental Resonance:** Allies within Near gain +1 die to rolls when you successfully cast an aligned element spell
- **Requires casting a spell using your focus elements to activate**

### Narrative Integration:

*"The elements no longer rage randomly - they dance to your conductor's baton. Fire burns where you will, water flows to your purpose, and lightning strikes with your intent."*

**Crack the Seal Mastery (18 XP Epic Talent)** *Prerequisite: Tier III+, Invoker's Grimoire, 3+ Patron Symbols*

Your mastery over ritual precision has reached such heights that you can bend the fundamental laws of invocation.

- **Seal Control:** When Cracking the Seal, choose one benefit:

- Reduce Obligation cost by 1 (minimum 0)
  - Prevent Symbol from becoming Compromised
  - Gain +1 Effect on the ritual
- **Symbol Resonance:** With 4+ Symbols, reduce all ritual casting times by 1 round
  - **Emergency Cascade:** Once per scene, Crack the Seal on up to 3 different Symbols as a single action
  - **Ritual Mastery:** Ignore the No Symbol penalties when performing rituals without the proper Symbol
  - **Requires at least one Maintained Symbol**

#### Narrative Integration:

*“The seals speak to you now, not as barriers but as willing gates. Your will has become law in the spaces between worlds.”*

# 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 =  $\max(1, XPAcquisition)/3$ , 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  $\min(Cap, relevant skill)$ .
- **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 =  $\max(1, \text{AcquisitionXP})/3$
  - 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:  $\text{Cap}^2$  XP
- Assistance:  $+\min(\text{Cap}, \text{skill})$  dice (max +3 from all sources)
- Independent action: once per scene (party-wide)
- Conditions: *Exposure* and *Harm* tracks

### **Upkeep Options:**

- Efficient:  $\max(1, \text{Cost})/3$  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.

## 8.15 Terrestrial Patrons

Not all power comes from cosmic entities or divine forces. Sometimes your greatest allies—and most demanding creditors—are mortal factions who can offer protection, resources, and influence in the world of men.

### 8.15.1 What Are Terrestrial Patrons?

Terrestrial Patrons represent your ongoing relationships with powerful mortal organizations:

- Noble houses and courtly factions

- Merchant guilds and trading consortiums
- Military units and mercenary companies
- Criminal organizations and smuggling rings
- Religious orders and temple hierarchies
- Scholarly colleges and arcane societies

Unlike supernatural Patrons, Terrestrial Patrons don't grant magic, but they offer leverage: protection, resources, sanctuary, information, and political influence.

### 8.15.2 Gaining a Terrestrial Patron

To gain a Terrestrial Patron, complete one of these significant actions:

- Complete a major job or service for them
- Swear a formal Oath of service
- Enter into legal or financial binding
- Share criminal secrets or be compromised by them
- Perform a notable service that earns their favor

Mark the Patron on your character sheet and write one sentence: "They want me because \_\_\_\_\_"

### 8.15.3 Obligation System

Terrestrial Patrons use the same Obligation track as supernatural Patrons, but consequences are social, legal, or economic rather than mystical.

- **Calling in Favors:** When you request Patron influence, add +1 Obligation
- **Capacity:** Spirit + Presence (same as supernatural Patrons)
- **Overflow:** Each segment above capacity inflicts 1 Fatigue
- **Resolution:** Reduce through service, downtime actions, or fulfilling demands

### 8.15.4 Patron Perks

Each Terrestrial Patron offers 2–3 repeatable benefits that require no rolls to access:

#### Common Perks Include:

- Sanctuary in their territory or establishments
- Legal relief or protection from certain authorities
- Access to black market goods or specialized services

- Elite followers or hirelings at reduced cost
- Forged documents or identity protection
- Military backing or private security
- Information networks and rumor access
- Trade advantages or exclusive contracts

Using a perk never requires a roll—Fate has already been paid. Each use comes with the ongoing cost of Obligation.

### 8.15.5 Patron Demands

Terrestrial Patrons always want something in return:

- Silence about sensitive information
- Loyalty over other conflicting interests
- Completion of specific jobs or tasks
- Delivery of valuable names or secrets
- Political or social support for their causes
- Elimination of rivals or threats to their interests

**Refusing a Demand:** Raises Obligation by 1 segment and may trigger immediate complications.

### 8.15.6 When Obligation Fills

At 6 Obligation segments, the Patron acts—this is not optional. Choose one:

1. **Unavoidable Job:** You must complete a task you cannot refuse
2. **Severe Price:** Pay significant cost (legal, social, or material)
3. **First Strike:** They act against you—reputation damage, warrants, bounty, blackmail

After the consequence lands, reduce Obligation to 3 segments.

### 8.15.7 Cutting Ties

You may sever a Terrestrial Patron relationship, but doing so has serious fallout:

- Lose all current perks immediately
- Gain a new Rival faction that opposes your interests
- Take a lasting Complication (Curse, Bounty, or Scandal) that follows you
- May trigger immediate retaliation depending on the Patron's nature

Some Patrons never forgive betrayal, while others can be bought off with significant compensation.

### 8.15.8 Redemption and Favor

If you perform a monumental service for a Patron—something beyond what was asked—reduce Obligation by 2 and gain a permanent Favor:

**Favor Benefits:**

- Noble title or official position
- Land grant or property rights
- Permanent access to exclusive resources
- Unique asset or specialized equipment
- Political influence or legal immunity
- Protection from their rivals or enemies

### 8.15.9 Example: The Black Ledger

The Black Ledger is a smuggling syndicate that operates in the coastal city of Kahfagia.

**Gaining Their Favor:** Successfully complete three smuggling runs without detection.

**Perks:**

- Sanctuary in hidden safehouses throughout the city
- Access to rare imported goods and contraband
- Information about port authorities and customs schedules

**Demands:**

- Maintain silence about syndicate operations
- Transport occasional "special packages" (may be illegal)
- Eliminate rival smugglers who threaten their routes

**Sample Scenario:** Rellan calls on the Ledger for a smuggled border crossing. The GM rules it succeeds automatically, but adds +1 Obligation. Later, the Ledger demands he silence a witness who saw too much. If he refuses, Obligation rises again. If Obligation ever reaches 6, the Ledger collects: accounts frozen, bounty posted, or a rival informant sent after him.

### 8.15.10 Creating Your Own Terrestrial Patrons

When designing a Terrestrial Patron, consider:

1. **Nature:** What type of organization are they?
2. **Motivation:** What drives their goals and actions?
3. **Resources:** What can they realistically offer?
4. **Methods:** How do they typically operate?

5. **Enemies:** Who opposes their interests?
6. **Perks:** 2–3 concrete benefits they provide
7. **Demands:** 3–5 typical requests they make

Remember: Terrestrial Patrons make the mortal world feel alive and reactive. They represent the complex web of loyalty, debt, and influence that shapes everyday life in Fate's Edge.

# 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** Queendom, Fen causeways, dike-brotherhoods, crown law.

**Acasia** Fallen Province, Border-lace titles, ruined towers, clan tempers.

**Ecktoria** City Province, Imperial roads, precinct gates, temple schedules.

**Ubral** Kingdom, Stone passes, toll-cloisters, ghosted fields.

**Kahfagia** Thalassocracy, Current maps, pilot-mirrors, storm lanes.

**Aelinne** Realm of Aevrossa, 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.   |

Using 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

## Lore in Brief

### 1. Utar (The Utaran Imperium & Successor Northlands)

#### Overview

Once a vast empire, Utar fractured into a patchwork of successor states. Now, the north is a land of law, memory, and fading glory.

#### Key Regions

- **Ecktoria** – The marble heart of the old empire, now a relic-state clinging to forms.
- **Acasia** – A broken realm of warlords and the cosmopolitan city of Silkstrand.
- **Vhasia** – The fractured sun; a kingdom in name only, ruled by ducal houses.
- **Viterra** – The last true kingdom, orderly and martial.
- **Thepyrgos** – A city of stairs, learning, and high-elf enclaves.

### 2. Kahfagia — The Empire of Wakes and Storm-Flags

#### Overview

A human maritime oligarchy that straddles the Titan's Throat. Kahfagia is a realm of trade, kraken-priests, and privateers.

#### Key Features

- Controls key sea lanes.
- Cities like **Kassamira** and **Stormspire** are centers of naval power.
- Lantern-law jurisdiction shifts with the tide.

## 3. Theona — The Marsh Crown

### Overview

A trio of green isles pledged to Viterra, but only when it suits them. Theona is a place of quiet customs, feuds, and the “No Ninth” taboo.

### Key Features

- Peat bogs, hedged fields, and small marble outcrops.
- Taboo of the Ninth: omissions, unspoken names, missing steps.
- Known for coracle fleets and the Moot Hill.

## 4. The Mistlands — Bells, Salt, and Breath

### Overview

A fog-drenched breadbasket guarded by dwarven law and ancient bell-lines. A frontier between the Direwood and the civilized north.

### Key Features

- Bell-line levees and reed-maze causeways.
- Warded by the Weeping Gate and Pall Watchtowers.
- Home to the Protectorate and the Legate of the Mists.

## 5. Valewood — The Forest That Remembers You Wrong

### Overview

A living forest that shifts and forgets. The Valewood is an empire that never truly fell, full of fey remnants and relic-logic.

### Key Features

- Phasing ruins, star-roads, and sentient trees.
- Inhabited by Lethai-ar (wood elves) and the fae-like Green Neighbors.
- Empire echoes: ancient laws and ruins still function.

## 6. Ykrul — Storm on the Steppe

### Overview

Nomadic clans of horse-riders and raiders. The Ykrul live by omen, pasture, and blood-tanistry.

## Key Features

- Seasonal migrations and clan confederations.
- Shamans and the Faith of the Open Sky.
- Known for dragon boats and the Kurultai councils.

# 7. Zakov — Salt & Serpent

## Overview

A pirate haven and crime nexus on a Dolmis island. Controlled by the Seven Guilds, Zakov is lawless but ritualized.

## Key Features

- Cities built from wrecks and stolen goods.
- The Pirate Syndicate and the Salt Prince rule in shadow.
- Known for the Serpent's Spine reef and the Crimson Docks.

# 8. Ubral — The Stone Between Spears

## Overview

Highland clans, cairns, and iron oaths. Ubral is a land of shepherds, reivers, and hill-forts caught between Viterra and Vhasia.

## Key Features

- Hill dwarves in Khaz-Vurim.
- Guest-right tokens and feud-brokering.
- Known for the Pass of Ashes and Dun Caerloch.

# 9. Linn — Skerries & Storm-Oaths

## Overview

Southernmost Linnic tribes. A maritime culture of fjords, skerries, and dragon boats.

## Key Features

- Raiders, fur-hunters, and riverfolk.
- Thing-holm and the Sea-Queen's court.
- Known for the Whale-road and the Volva of the Mist.

## 10. Aelinnel — Stone, Bough, and Bright Things (Averossa)

### Overview

Gnomish homeland of Aevrossa, stone spires and moonlit groves. Averossa is a realm of charms, geasa, and tide-gates.

### Key Features

- Tide-rift steps and dolmen stairs.
- Hedge-witches and oath-carvers.
- Known for the Green Gate and the Thorn Court.

## 11. Aelaerem — Hearth & Hollow (Amedell)

### Overview

Halfling downs and orchards. Amedell is a quiet land of hearth-fires, orchards, and folklore.

### Key Features

- Moot Oaks, hedge-witches, and mummers.
- Red thread motifs and quiet bells.
- Known for the Apple-Matron and the Pale Shepherd.

## 12. Aeler — Crowns & Under-Vaults

### Overview

Dwarven mountain holds beneath the Aelerian peaks. Aeler is a realm of stone, breath, and ancient law.

### Key Features

- Vaultmouth gates and under-roads.
- Spirit Shield Warriors and the High King Beneath the Peaks.
- Known for Khaz-Vurim and the Vault-Queen.

## 13. Black Banners — Condotta & Crowns

### Overview

Mercenary lands and war camps. Black Banners is a frontier of shifting loyalties, condotta contracts, and frozen battlefields.

## Key Features

- Condotta companies and the Bannerless One.
- War-camps and siege ruins.
- Known for the Singing Wastes and the Bone Fields.

# 14. Vilikari — Laurels & Longhouses

## Overview

A federated frontier mixing Utaran law with barbarian custom. Vilikari is a land of two laws: wolf and eagle.

## Key Features

- Foedus Stone and mixed courts.
- March towns and villa-forts.
- Known for the Queen of the Marches and the Dux's Palace.

# 15. The Wilds — Roads, Ruins, and Weather

## Overview

Untamed lands that shift by biome. The Wilds are a reskin palette for any terrain—forest, desert, tundra, or coast.

## Key Features

- Crossing points, shelter hollows, and old road traces.
- Forager children and roving war-bands.
- Known for lingering omens and elemental threats.

# 16. Tulkani — Road-Kin of the Ember Line

## Overview

Nomadic clans of painted wagons and braided oaths. Once rooted, now scattered, the Tulkani call the road their homeland.

## Key Features

- Wagon rings and fire-cults.
- Kuva of the Hearth-Road and the Family of the Raven Road.
- Known for songs for the living and bargains with dusk.

# 17. Ikari — First Plough, First Oath

## Overview

Native tillers and smiths of the northern continent. The Ikari are a people of hearth and edge.

## Key Features

- Tribes like Kreki (fishermen) and Smeinnoii (smiths).
- Ancestral fires and law-keepers.
- Known for seasonal raids and the Ondriti code.

# 18. Midh Adkaz — Where War Became a Market

## Overview

A frontier camp turned crossroads city. Midh Adkaz is a place where oaths are traded like grain.

## Key Features

- The Red Ditch and Stakefield fairground.
- The Six Hands council.
- Known for the Boar Gate and River Gate.

# 19. Haayr Peninsula — Anvils Between Two Seas

## Overview

Mountain tongues and broken coasts. The Haayr Peninsula is a strategic chokepoint between seas.

## Key Features

- Spine of Haayr mountains and limestone passes.
- Cities like Khar-Myra and Theressos.
- Known for the Hook Road and Pass of Ten Towers.

## 20. Dhahara — Monsoon of Empires

### Overview

A land of oases, monsoons, and marching armies. Dhahara is a frontier where caravans meet fleets.

### Key Features

- The Himdal Marches and Jade Oases.
- Cities like Sarvash and Thalara.
- Known for the Monsoon Bells and Incense Belt.

## 21. Oshiira — The Ledger Empire

### Overview

A confederation of canals and ledgers. Oshiira is a realm of precision, irrigation, and the Spirit of the Long Sorrow.

### Key Features

- Canal webs and numbered lines.
- The Mbari-style Senate and Prefects.
- Known for the Crimson Basin and Sekogo.

## 22. Sekogo — Where the Roads Meet the Tide

### Overview

A crossroads of river and sea. Sekogo is a land of grove-masters, lagoon wardens, and the Tide Ledger.

### Key Features

- Mbaro Quays and the Brasswater Row.
- Quay Syndicates and River Pilots.
- Known for the Circle of Unkwa and the Spice Shade.

## 23. Taharka — Monsoon Crown, Terrace Throne

### Overview

A highland kingdom of canals, convoys, and coins. Taharka is a realm of water and stone.

## Key Features

- Mkusaro Highlands and the Canal Collegium.
- Siatwe, the capital city of spiraling bazaars.
- Known for the Mint of Siatwe and meltwater courts.

## 24. Ameria — Between Bay and Throat

### Overview

A divided realm between Kahfagia and the Titan's Throat. Ameria is a buffer of royal forms and neutral regencies.

## Key Features

- Shoreless Bay and Throatward Ports.
- Khol-Amar and Cape Verdan.
- Known for Consular Row and the Neutral Regency.

## 25. Ngomebe — Stone Men of the Moving Cities

### Overview

Ironworkers and wall-builders of Akilan. Ngomebe is a realm of walking cities and iron mothers.

## Key Features

- Mkusaro ridges and Ekale Spurs.
- Khazembo and Duma-Sete.
- Known for the Mason-Kin Houses and Gate-Voices.

## 26. Ashaan — Gem of the Sea, Shadow on the River

### Overview

A fallen slaver-empire. Ashaan is a land of sorcery, assassins, and the Three Sisters.

## Key Features

- The Veiled, Helmed, and Masked Sisters.
- The Esoti and the Black Hand.
- Known for Galanina and the Shadows of Ashaan.

## 27. Sihai — The Central Kingdom, The Ordered Land

### Overview

An immense, ancient empire of rigid hierarchy. Sihai is a land of the Son of Heaven and the Mandate of Heaven.

### Key Features

- The Sihon River Basin and the Himadri Mountains.
- The Bureaucracy and the Warrior Monks.
- Known for the Imperial Army and the Hintara Ocean Coast.

## 28. Nihori — The Isles of the Dawn Spirit

### Overview

A storm-wracked archipelago of clans, spirits, and samurai. Nihori is a realm of divine emperors and the code of Bushidō.

### Key Features

- The Shōgun and the Daimyō.
- The Samurai and the Shinobi.
- Known for the Inland Sea and the Fire-Mountains.

## 29. Ayokha — The Monsoon Throne, The River of Heaven

### Overview

A sprawling jungle kingdom of temples and monsoons. Ayokha is a land of the Devaraja and celestial bureaucracy.

### Key Features

- The Sona River and the Jade Coast.
- War Elephants and the Royal Guard.
- Known for the Inner Jungle and monsoon-riding junks.

## 30. Alberriden Sea — Cold Mirror of the North

### Overview

A brackish, iron-skied sea. The Alberriden is a mirror of the north, full of mist, mountain winds, and root-cellars.

### Key Features

- The Yrolka Mouth and Brack Marsh Rim.
- Valewood Edge and Mistland Coast.
- Known for the Haravoa Shadow and Dwarf-cut harbors.

## 31. The Crimson Basin

### Overview

A vast rainforest contested between wood elves and Oshiiran settlers. The Crimson Basin is a realm of rivers, treaties, and farm-forests.

### Key Features

- The Enjwe Trunk and the Heartwood.
- Wood Elves and Oshiiran Basinfock.
- Known for the Treaty of Three Waters and canoe-trains.

## 32. Linnstad

### Overview

A northern city-state and fur-trade hub. Linnstad is the southernmost outpost of the Linnic tribes.

### Key Features

- Claim to inventing dragon boats.
- Fierce, pragmatic culture.
- Known for the fur-trade and the Yrolka Mouth.

## 33. Rabelle

### Overview

A mountain city of ore and gem wealth. Rabelle is a realm of red-haired Rabellans and giant ancestry.

## Key Features

- Fine metalwork and dwarven trade.
- Treacherous pass toward the Mistlands.
- Known for blunt pride and mountain identity.

## 34. Northpass

### Overview

A frontier town and gateway to the Mistlands. Northpass is a bare-bones outpost of vigilance.

## Key Features

- The Ermine Inn and caravan stops.
- Carefully monitored by dwarves.
- Known for rough edges and the Mistlands beyond.

## 35. The Northern & Eastern City-States

### Overview

Independent city-states, mountain strongholds, and coastal havens. These are bound by trade, survival, and necessity.

## Key Features

- Independence and cultural blend.
- Dangerous, decadent, or dishonorable—but everyone trades.
- Known for the dangers and rewards of the frontier.

# Chapter 11

## 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.

### 11.1 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.

### 11.2 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)

## 11.3 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 × 3 XP): Body 3 (9), Spirit 2 (6), Wits 1 (3), Presence 1 (3) → **21 XP**
- **Skills** (Cost = level × 2 XP): Melee 2 (4), Athletics 1 (2), Command 1 (2) → **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

## 11.4 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

## 11.5 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

## 11.6 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

## 11.7 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)

## 11.8 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)

## 11.9 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)

## 11.10 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)

## 11.11 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: \_\_\_\_\_

## 11.12 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 12

## 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.

### 12.1 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.

### 12.2 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"

Fallen 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 kingdom 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 scriptoriums.

**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"

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.

## 12.3 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.

## 12.4 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 Aevrossa, known for their mathematical precision, fae courtesies, 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")

Inhabitants of Amedell. 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.

## 12.5 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.

## 12.6 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.

## 12.7 Regional Clocks and World Response

Tie adventures to **clocks** that change the map:

- **Grain Shortage (4)**: If filled, food riots reshape a Theonacy'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.

## 12.8 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.

## 12.9 Magic and Attitude by Region

- **Ecktoria:** Licensed thaumaturges file *Casting Notices* for urban work; unfiled 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.

## 12.10 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.

## 12.11 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.

## 12.12 Aeler — People of Stone, Breath, and Ledger

### Background: The Mount-Born Engineers

Built like their mountains—layered, load-bearing, and enduring—the Aeler are masters of infrastructure, subtle influence, and the deep mathematics of survival. In their underground holds, a lantern’s hue is a balance sheet; a bell-note means more than a shout. They call this discipline **deep accounting**: air tallied by vent-shafts, lamp-time written in chalk, calories measured in the language of ovens.

Above ground, their influence is felt but not always seen. Their work—bridges that do not fail, levees that answer one key, ovens that feed thousands—acts as the hidden bones of cities. They do not conquer through banners, but through the gate that must be paid, the bridge that “politely rests” if its clause is broken, and the surety of grain that keeps a quarter from starving.

### Key Cultural Concepts

- **Tally-Law:** If it isn’t written, it isn’t owed; if it cannot bear weight, it isn’t promised.
- **Keystone Rights:** Control the piece that holds the whole. Maintenance for access; repair for rate.
- **Grain Surety:** Winter ovens and storage domes under public charter; price courts on marked days.
- **Water & Flood:** Sluice-math is power. They lease keys, not walls; a city opens for trade faster than an army can take it.
- **Mint & Measure:** Calibrated weights and indelible dies. When coins bear Aeler marks, courts sharpen.

### Racial Skill Increase

Choose one:

1. **Stone & Breath:** +1 die to **Craft**, **Tinker**, and **Survival** when dealing with infrastructure, construction, or resource management. In underground or dense-urban environments, gain **Position +1** to navigate, maintain, or sabotage systems.
2. **Deep Accounting:** Once/scene, spend **1 Boon** to *audit* a situation—ask one question about hidden resources, costs, or dependencies; the GM answers truthfully.

### Thematic Attribute

Increase either **Body** or **Wits** by 1 (to a max of 5). **Spirit** and **Presence** unchanged.

### Talent: Vent Prior’s Training (3 XP)

*Req: Craft 1+, Wits 2+*

- +1 die on checks involving air quality, ventilation, structural integrity, or underground navigation.

- You know the *Nine Measures* (light, draft, echo, dust, taste of iron, sweat-chill, lamp-shadow, bell-lag, head-ache). With a **Wits + Notice** test (DV 3), detect hidden passages or environmental hazards.
- Once/scene, *read a structure like a ledger*: +1 die to understand its construction, weaknesses, or maintenance needs.

## Cultural Mechanics

### Deep Drakes & Stone-Press (Complication)

**Stone-press**—pressure that thinks—warps sums and senses.

- **Fronts:** *Stone-Press [6], Miasma Spread [4], Vent Failure [4]*.
- **In Play:** Failures on perception/planning underground may generate SB that tick these Fronts or impose *Condition* or hallucination tests.

### Tally-Law (Social/Legal)

- **Oaths:** Breaking a formal oath ticks *Repute 1* and creates *Feud +1*.
- **Boasts & Sagas:** A public boast creates *Audience: Expectant*; fulfill it for *Repute +1*; fail and mark *Exposure* or *Feud*.
- **Etiquette Hooks (once/scene, Aeler venues):** Present guest-loaf and a lit lantern at a threshold to shift your next social action *one step safer* while you remain a guest. Covering iron or stepping on stone cancels the first SB from rites/negotiations this scene.

## Strings & Tools

- **Keystone Tablet:** Establish or pause a route; once/scene, convert a chase into a prepared stand: defenders gain **Position +1**.
- **Null-Bell:** On ring, cancel one psychic push/compel; costs lamp-time (mark gear wear or Fatigue).
- **Oven Charter Seal:** Force a public bowl in markets—one round of fair-price negotiation before violence may escalate.
- **Sluice Key:** **DV 1** on operations hinging on water/flood/sanitation; abuse creates *Public Outrage [4]*.
- **Air Scrip:** Negate the first suffocation/miasma consequence underground in a leg; on use, tick *Vent Failure [1]*.

### Display Rights (Status)

- **Display Charter:** Licensed marks (metal trim, lamp-halos, keystone etching) show public contribution. Fraud draws fines in grain or labor.
- **Rings of Account:** Bands on tools/belts denote kept contracts: water, bread, bridge, mint. Three rings grant first voice in oven courts.
- **Quiet Wealth:** Private hoard without public work is suspect; unworked shine invites auditors.
- **At the table:** Present a valid Display Writ to gain **Position +1** in civic negotiations once/scene; on a miss, start *Audit Clock* [4].

### Orders & Companies (Factions)

- **Iron Avengers:** Traditionalists who enforce blood-feuds inscribed on keystones.
- **Spirit Shield Warriors:** Ancestor-venerating guards with mask-helms etched in lineage prayers.
- **True Masons:** Wanderers who repair ancient Aeler work.
- **Edgewalkers:** Border scanners who hunt for the profitable gap.
- **Reform Lodges:** Foothill freeholds and city cells arguing for gentler contracts with neighbors.

*Example boons/risks:* Mason's Oath, Edgewalker Marker, Gray List Token, Mask Rights Forfeit.

## Soft Power: Keystone Diplomacy & Infrastructure Sovereignty

Aeler influence travels by *charter, standard, and switch*, not by spear.

- **Standards Bind:** *Mint & Measure* make markets legible. Cities that adopt Aeler weights gain stable prices—and accept Aeler audit halls. *In play:* presenting stamped measures grants **DV 1** to enforce contracts or expose fraud.
- **Oven Charters:** *Grain Surety* keeps winters calm. Charter Days obligate fair-pricing courts before force. *In play:* invoke an Oven Charter Seal to require one round of negotiation; cancel the first riot SB this scene.
- **Water Keys:** *Sluice guilds* lease flow, not walls. Trade booms when gates open; siege starves when they close. *In play:* exchanging a Sluice Key with a civic body banks *Public Gratitude* [2]; abuse flips it to *Outrage* [4].
- **Keystone Clauses:** Bridges and gates include *rate-for-repair*. Default pauses service “politely” until arrears are paid. *In play:* once/scene, declare a keystone pause to impose **Effect 1** on enemy movement or logistics.
- **Air & Sanitation:** *Vent courts* and wasteflows curb plague. The city that breathes owes the hand that tuned the vents. *In play:* with plans and access, Aeler gain **Position +1** to quell disease/panic clocks.

- **Apprentice Exchanges:** Sending masters abroad seeds techniques and loyalties. *In play:* spend a season contact to treat a foreign workshop as Friendly for one operation.
- **Null-Bells & Audit Halls:** Disciplined speech zones deter panic and glamours. *In play:* ringing a null-bell suppresses one social *fear/panic* tag for an exchange.

### Soft-Power Clocks

- *Public Gratitude* [4] → discounts, calm crowds, smoother permits.
- *Audit Clock* [4] → fines, seizures, reputational scars if you flaunt standards.
- *Co-Prosperity* [6] → shared surpluses, joint projects, mutual defense clauses.

## Suggested Bonds & Complications

### Bonds

- **Mason-Brother:** Minor edge on structural assessments/repairs and a contact in a lodge.
- **Vent-Prior's Apprentice:** Guidance in underground survival; access to holds.
- **Oven-Warden's Acquaintance:** Insight into grain courts; leverage in hungry quarters.
- **Sluicewarden's Debt:** A water-math favor owed—potential flood control or redirected trade.

### Complications

- **Stone-Press Susceptibility:** In deep stress underground, test **Spirit** (DV 3) or suffer –1 die to tasks from pressure-sickness.
- **Ledger Dependency:** Separated from records > 1 day: **Position 1** on planning/resource management until re-synced.
- **Surety Obligation:** You guaranteed resources to a community. Fail to deliver: mark 2 segments on *Obligation* (or take a lasting Complication).

## 12.13 Aelinnel — People of Sums, Bough, and Bright Things

### Background: Gnomes of Stone, Bough, and Bright Things

The Aelinnel dwell in the hawthorn hills south of the Valewood, their lives intertwined with living wood, worked stone, and precise mathematics. Halls run like veins through granite and thorn; bridges hum when tuned; bargains arrive on two ledgers—what was *said*, and what was *meant*. To walk their country is to feel math underfoot: steps safer when even, doors opening to right sequence, moonlight that prefers tidy logic.

They are fae-kin cousins to the Lethai, smaller in stature, bright-eyed and quick. Society rests on **Courtesy, Copper, and Count**. Count or be counted. Speak your steps, breaths, or stitches and the land steadies. Favor copper before the courts; copper is polite, naked iron is an insult unless named or gilded. Recite a simple sequence when tension frays to cancel the first misstep in navigation or negotiation.

**Law of Sums** Proceedings in hawthorn courts require three clean courtesies: *no naked iron*; *two-ledger speech* (*said* & *meant*); and *return what points the way* (cords, marks, antlers). Keep these and even thorns hold back; slight them and arches close, time drifts, and messages arrive folded and misaddressed.

### Racial Skill Increase

Choose one:

1. **Copper Courtesy & Counting Etiquette:** Once/scene, careful counting shifts **Position +1** for a patterned action (locks, paths, ritual speech). In fae-facing scenes, presenting copper or brass tools negates the first offense penalty.
2. **Two-Ledger Talk:** When you clearly state both *said* and *meant*, you may cancel the first social **SB** against you this scene. If you refuse, the next bargain seeks collateral (memory or name, at the GM's discretion).

### Thematic Attribute

Increase either **Wits** or **Spirit** by 1 (to a max of 5). **Body** and **Presence** unchanged.

### Size & Equipment Limits

Aelinnel stature and leverage limit heavy kit.

- **Restriction:** Aelinnel *cannot* wield **Heavy** weapons or wear **Heavy** armor. They may freely use **Light** and **Medium** weapons/armor suited to their frame.
- **Design Note (at the table):** Attempts to circumvent with makeshift rigs are treated as fiction-only stunts; if allowed, apply **Position -1** and **DV +2** and remove any benefits from the *Finesse* tag.

## Talents

### Long Memory (3 XP — Minor)

*Req:* **Spirit** 2+

- Perfect recall of the last week's events.
- +1 die to **Lore** and **Insight** when drawing on historical/cultural detail.
- **Once/session**, surface a crucial long-term detail the GM must render truthfully (scope: a person, place, or clause you directly encountered).

### Cold Reading (3 XP — Minor)

*Req:* **Wits** 2+, *Long Memory*

- +1 die to **Sway** and **Insight** from close observation.
- With **Wits + Insight** (DV 3), infer a motive or pressure the target is concealing.
- **Once/scene**, if you observed quietly for a beat, gain **Position +1** on your first parley in that scene.

## Cultural Mechanics

### Hawthorn Halls & Law of Sums

Paths are counted by antler-posts; tide-cut stairs descend to black sea-rifts; causeys of pale flags show at dawn, at dusk—and whenever someone is counting aloud.

- **Counting Etiquette:** Once/scene, careful count grants **Position +1** for patterned action.
- **Copper Over Iron:** In fae-facing scenes, copper/brass tools negate the first offense penalty.
- **Two-Ledger Talk:** Stating both *said* and *meant* cancels the first social **SB** this scene.
- **Hazel Favors:** Earned by restoring way-things (antlers, cords, ferry rights). **Once/leg**, spend to downgrade a glamour/geas.

### People of Stone & Bough

Charcoal-burners read omen by smoke hums; stone-singers soothe walls with low chords; wardens hammer copper nails where iron offends; goat-herds measure danger in hoof-widths.

- **Markets Under Living Roofs:** Weights and measures matter—producing a certified rod cancels the first jurisdiction/commerce snag in that market.
- **Reputation Echoes:** Return way-cords, restore antlers, pay tide-dues to bank *Hazel Favors*.

## Courts, Hunts, and Gates

Aelinne powers are etiquette engines and logic traps more than tyrants.

- **Lady of Thorns:** Punishes breaches precisely; rewards perfect sequences.
- **Green Knight:** Duels by paths and proofs, not boasts.
- **Moonlit Ride:** Grants one night's clemency if you name the right horn-count.
- **Green Gate:** Demands exact change in truths before it opens.

## Tides, Ledgers, and Names

Rivers and sea-caves carry their own arithmetic.

- **Tide-Reeves:** Filing plans before neap earns a Tide Window; skip the ledger and your next crossing suffers *Wrong Tide*.
- **Seals & Hours:** Neglected barge seals invite *Wrong Hour*.
- **Said/Meant Receipts:** Some stalls require dual receipts; single-ledger haggling risks a surcharge payable in memory or name.

## Aelinne Mood: Dark-Wonder

Paths shorten for those who keep count and lengthen for the proud. Petals fall like knives and settle into proofs; antler-posts rearrange themselves when the land takes offense. Time miscounts, and the sun arrives at the wrong hour with excellent logic.

## Strings & Tools

- **Antler-Post Bead:** Once/*scene*, treat a wild path as *Signed*: DV 1 to Traverse.
- **Counting Cord:** When stretched and tapped in sequence, grants **Position +1** on one trap/lock sequence.
- **Copper Nail Kit:** Negate the first *iron-offense* penalty in a scene; if misused, start *Thorn Displeasure* [2].
- **Two-Ledger Rod:** A certified measure; DV 1 to enforce a stall's weight/price clause.
- **Tide Window Seal:** Mark a safe hour for crossing; once/*leg*, cancel *Wrong Tide*.

## Soft Power: Courtesy Clauses & Gate-Math

Aelinne influence travels by etiquette, sequence, and small infrastructure that rewrites how strangers meet.

- **Sequence Rights:** The party that maintains way-things claims first say; **once/*scene***, invoke to require a parley beat before force.

- **Counting Thresholds:** Marked thresholds heed those who count; allies entering on your count gain **Position +1** on their opener.
- **Receipt Culture:** Dual ledgers make fraud expensive; presenting a said/meant receipt grants **DV 1** to unwind a trick clause.

*Soft-Power Clocks: Hazel Favor [4], Thorn Displeasure [4], Right Hour [3].*

## Suggested Bonds & Complications

### Bonds

- **Hawthorn Courtier:** Access to fae-kin etiquette and minor favors.
- **Tide-Reeve's Acquaintance:** Tide windows, river law, and ferries.
- **Green Market Broker:** Wrapped truths and two-ledger bargaining.
- **Stone-Singer's Apprentice:** Stone songs and structural lore.

### Complications

- **Context-Sensitive Speech:** Reading texts older than two generations requires **Lore + Notice** (DV 4–5) or a *Context String*. Using archaic registers without keys adds **DV +1**.
- **Overload Sensitivity:** Too many inputs at once mark **1 Fatigue** and impose **-1 die** on next **Insight/Notice**.
- **Brittle Focus:** The first **Harm 1 (blunt)** each scene converts to **1 Fatigue**; resolve further Harm normally.

## 12.14 Player's Guide: Aelaerem — People of Hearth & Hollow

### Background: Halflings of Hearth & Hollow

The Aelaerem are a people of movement and assembly, living among gentle slopes and hedged lanes. Small in stature and large in memory, they bind promises with bread and lantern-light, and measure seasons by harvest masks and market bells. Hospitality is their public law; beneath it runs an older hedge-law of cup-marks, red thread, and the quiet attention of the Neighbors. Their “hearth magic” is housekeeping writ large: doors set true, lamps trimmed, courtesies kept—less spell than system, a precise regard for seasons, thresholds, and debts.

**Hearth-Law & Guest-Right** A red door promises bread, salt, and one safe night if you come honest. Entering or hosting “under bread and lantern” gentles the next parley; hospitality is both shield and clause.

### Racial Skill Increase

Choose one:

1. **Hearth-Law & Guest-Right:** +1 die to **Sway**, **Lore** (local custom), and **Survival** (shelter signs). Gain **Position +1** when properly offering or receiving hospitality.
2. **Lantern-Law & the Wardens:** +1 die to **Notice**, **Survival** (paths, omens), and **Tinker** (lamps, small tools). Gain **Position +1** when you correctly observe small courtesies or maintenance rites.

### Thematic Attribute

Increase either **Wits** or **Presence** by 1 (to a max of 5). **Body** and **Spirit** unchanged.

### Size & Equipment Limits

- **Small-Statured:** Agility and subtlety by build and habit.
- **Restriction:** Aelaerem cannot use **Heavy Weapons** or **Heavy Armor**. They excel with **Light** and **Medium** kits favoring finesse, mobility, and ward-rituals.

### Talents

#### Heightened Senses (3 XP — Minor)

*Req: Wits 2+*

- +1 die to **Notice** and **Survival**.
- With **Wits + Notice** (DV 3), detect hidden creatures/objects.
- In natural environments, gain **Position +1** on stealth and tracking.

### Root-Balance (3 XP — Minor)

*Req: Body 2+, Heightened Senses*

- +1 die to **Athletics**; resist shove/knockdown more easily.
- Move through natural terrain without penalty.
- **Once/scene**, stabilize on precarious footing with **Body + Athletics** (DV 3).

## Cultural Mechanics

### Hearth-Law & Guest-Right

- **Red Door Hospitality:** Present a guest-loaf token beneath a lit lantern to soften a risky social exchange (**Position +1**) or cancel the first *strange* complication in a scene.
- **Lantern-Writ:** Simple rites keep bounds sweet—“Bread & Salt” (**Position +1 once/scene**), “Broom Witness” (establish *Oath [4–6]*), and *Iron-Lace & Red Thread* (**Effect +1** vs. compulsion) while properly maintained.
- **The Neighbors:** Leave butter at cup-marks, keep the festival calendar, and count the stiles aloud. Observance smooths the night; neglect invites *Hollow Attention*.

### Lantern-Law & the Wardens

- **Count the Load:** Tap a beam three times and listen; **once/scene**, a measured tap grants **Position +1** to **Traverse/Endure** in caves, bridges, or crowded structures.
- **Copper Courtesy:** Copper is polite to stone and honest to labor. Presenting copper tools or a mason’s tally negates the first structural environment **SB**, or grants **DV 1** to parley with miners/masons/porters.
- **Return the Chalk:** Anything that points the way (chalk, cord, placard) must be restored; doing so cancels the first environment **SB** this scene.

### The Quiet Powers (Neighbors)

- **The Pale Shepherd:** **Once**, by clause and courtesy, a traveler may pass “uncounted”—unseen by what tallies footfalls under the soil.
- **Hollow Attention:** Breaking hedge-law draws subtle reprisals: bells toll soft, red thread appears where you did not tie it, a door leads briefly elsewhere.

### Seasons of Mask & Harvest

- **Mummers:** Keep stricter rules than any priest; the Thresher-King’s guard walks in red hoods when fields demand order.
- **Festivals:** For a night, masks legitimate certain crossings; private moots under the Oak settle quarrels; an elder’s blessing opens doors that ignore coin.
- **Omens:** Scarecrows watch the lane; lanterns burn blue at the ford; chalk mazes fill with mist; sometimes the Moot Oak bleeds sap the color of wine.

## Trade, Craft, & Tokens

- **Keeps:** Cider, perry, beeswax, and wool spin the lane's economy.
- **Tokens:** Orchard grafts, mill-tokens, shepherd whistles, mover pressings. (Example: a shepherd's whistle makes dogs and door-bolts heed for one scene.)
- **Hearth Magic:** Red thread binds promises, lantern-writ holds the dark at bay, careful count and courtesy keep thresholds sweet.

## Strings & Tools

- **Guest-Loaf Token:** Once/scene, treat a tense arrival as *Hospitable* (**Position +1** opener).
- **Lantern Hood:** Convert a bright scene to *Shaded* locally; cancel one glare-based penalty.
- **Red Thread Kit:** Once/scene, bind a simple promise as an *Oath [4]*.
- **Broom Witness:** Establish a household oath; while it ticks, outsiders face **DV +1** to trespass or deceive under that roof.

## Suggested Bonds & Complications

### Bonds

- **Apple-Matron's Favor:** Hospitality leverage; influence in local markets; feast-clause invocations.
- **Lantern-Warden's Knowledge:** Path marks, safe-passage signs, omen-reading.
- **Mummers' Captain's Acquaintance:** Festival law, mask permissions, night-crossing exceptions.
- **Hedge-Witch's Debt:** Small potent favors—at a cost.

### Complications

- **Hollow Stirring [6]:** Courtesies neglected; omens grow frequent and bite.
- **Gloam Choir [6]:** Deeper threat from boundary failures; spiritual or fae pressure escalates.
- **Scale Shock:** Smallness is overlooked in mass conflicts or intimidation; social **DV +1** to impose on much larger foes unless you stand under hospitality or law.

## 12.15 Player's Guide: Lethai — Root, River, & Roof-Tree / Mind's Eye & Civic Measure

### Background: Woodwise Lawkeepers & Civic Engineers

The Lethai are sundered by an old constraint: no one may bear both the Gift of the Body and the Gift of the Mind. From this division grew two sister cultures:

**Lethai-al (Wood-Elves) — Root, River, Roof-Tree** They dwell where roof-trees braid the sky and rivers think aloud. Their memory is arboreal—rings, seasons, coppice ledgers—and their oaths are *root-law*: debts in years, paid in living work. To outsiders they seem quiet; to neighbors they are relentless auditors of footprint and flow. Strengths: living law, environmental stewardship, contextual craft.

**Lethai-thora (City-Elves) — Mind's Eye, Civic Measure** They make circles in cities (chiefly Thepyrgos), weighing arguments like bridges and translating other peoples' law into forms that carry. Their courts count consequences; their speech is context-saturated and exact. Strengths: memory, jurisprudence, logistics, civil design.

**First Courtesy** “Name yourself once; name the river twice; never name the forest as if it were yours.” Lamps are witnesses, paths are clauses, and small laws keep the world sweet.

### Racial Skill Increase

Choose one, keyed to your branch:

1. **Gift of the Body (Lethai-al):** +1 die to **Body**-based actions; **once/scene** you may spend **1 Boon** to exceed normal limits for one physical action (leap, balance, sprint, scent-track).
2. **Gift of the Mind (Lethai-thora):** +1 die to **Wits/Spirit**-based actions; **once/scene** you may spend **1 Boon** to recall, deduce, or frame context that was beyond immediate knowledge (gloss, precedent, supply path).

### Thematic Attribute

- **Lethai-al:** Increase **Body** or **Wits** by 1 (max 5).
- **Lethai-thora:** Increase **Wits** or **Spirit** by 1 (max 5).

### Talents

#### Lethai-al Path — Embodied Presence

**Canopy Spring (4 XP — Minor)** *Req: Heightened Senses; Body 2+*  
 +1 die to climbing, vaulting, branch-run. **Once/scene** in forest, gain **Position +1** on a movement action. With **Body + Athletics** (DV 4), clear a gap others treat as impassable.

**Scent of Rain (4 XP — Minor)** *Req: Heightened Senses; Survival 1+ +1 die to predict weather, smoke, blight. With Wits + Survival (DV 3), sense approaching storm/fire/plague front. Track by scent with Effect +1 in natural terrain.*

### Lethai-thora Path — Mental Acuity

**Memory Canticle (4 XP — Minor)** *Req: Long Memory; Lore 2+*

Line-true recall of texts and testimony. +1 die to research/translation. **Once/scene**, provide crucial context that advances an investigation or reduces a legal/social **DV** by **1** if you can cite source and frame.

**Number Music (4 XP — Minor)** *Req: Long Memory; Wits 2+*

+1 die to design/repair/logistics. With **Wits + Craft** (DV 3), solve an engineering/flow proof on the fly. When you *speak the scaffold* (frame steps aloud), related rolls are **DV 1** this scene.

## Cultural Mechanics

### The Curse of Division

- **Rule of Two Gifts:** Choose *Body* (Lethai-al) or *Mind* (Lethai-thora) at creation; take Talents only from that path. Attempting to straddle both imposes **1 die** to all rolls until scene end.
- **Season Switch:** Changing paths is a season project with social cost (forfeit one String tied to former gift).
- **Bridge-Born Clause (Rare Half-Elf):** A quarter-lineage may take *one* Body Gift *and one* Mind Gift (see GM for context obligations).

### Shade Etiquette (Lethai-al)

- **Iron Covered:** Bare iron offends ward-lines; wrap it. First entry with covered iron grants **Position +1** in parley to pass.
- **Name Once:** Speak name and intent at the edge; do not claim the forest.
- **Step on Stone:** Use laid stones; crushed shoots are debts.
- **Water First:** Pour a first cup for river or cistern before you drink.
- **Leave the Light:** Replant, mend, or pay for shade you take. (See *Light-Dues*.)

### Context-Saturated Speech (Lethai-thora)

- **Context Keys:** place-name, season-mark, kinship-hand, roof-tree sign. Missing any two invites misreadings.
- **Old Texts:** Manuscripts older than two generations need gloss-trees (marginal twig glyphs) or a songkeeper.
- **In Play:** Reading/pleading in older registers is **DV +1** unless you hold a *Context String* (gloss-tree, witness, song). Cashing it reduces **DV 1** and establishes a *Shared Frame (Position +1* opener).

## Strings & Ledger (Shared)

- **Light-Dues:** Every fell, ferry, and fire owes a balance in replanting, canal-clearing, or kinder rates.
- **Strings (examples):** light-due receipt; shade-credit; ferry right; resin share; canoe-lane priority; seed tithe.
- **Use:** Cash a light-due for **DV 1** on operations framed as repair/replanting/flood-work. Abuse starts *Under-Root Grudge [1]*.
- **Quotas as Clocks:** Boat-Timber Quota [6], Lanternwood Allotment [4]. Fill to unlock export; overfill triggers *Canopy Censure*.

## Patron Ties (Common Lethai Bonds)

- **Lethai-al:** Often entreat *Inaea* (web, guest-right, line-sanctuary) and *Isoka* (shedding, decisive strike) for rites on path, bridge, and hunt.
- **Lethai-thora:** Favor *The Witness* (truth, record) and *Sacred Geometry* (form, proportion); radicals court the *Clockwork Monad* for “managed process” at moral risk.

## Strings & Tools (Table Use)

- **Shade-Credit:** Treat a contested crossing as *Hospitable: Position +1* opener; on abuse, tick *Under-Root Grudge [1]*.
- **Ferry Right:** **DV 1** to move crews/loads by water where named.
- **Resin Share:** **Effect +1** on mend/seal actions; marks *Lanternwood Allotment*.
- **Context String:** Redeem to remove **DV +1** from archaic law/speech this scene and bank **+1 Boon** on a clean success.

## Suggested Bonds & Complications

### Bonds

- **Songkeeper's Trust (al):** Vouches adherence to shade etiquette; interprets ancient paths and oaths.
- **Warden's Oath (al):** Passage rights and woodwise summons when the forest is wronged.
- **Sumwright's Compact (thora):** Two-ledger arbitration in mixed courts; contract leverage.
- **Archive-Keeper's Debt (thora):** Access to restricted stacks—at a later price in service.
- **Bridge-Born Kinship:** Mutual aid among rare dual-gift lineages navigating both spheres.

## Complications

- **Division's Bite:** Attempting cross-path use (Body *and* Mind gifts in one scene without clause) imposes **1 die** to all rolls until scene ends.
- **Context Fragility:** Social/legal **DV +1** when stripped of context keys; hostile courts may weaponize misframing.
- **Canopy Censure:** Exceeding quotas or slighting root-law triggers censure—*Light-Dues [4]* starts and local passage turns *Controlled*.

## 12.16 Player's Guide: Lethai-ar — The Oathbound (Dark Elves)

### Background: The Vowed in Silk & Scale

The Lethai-ar are not a separate bloodline so much as a vow-bound cadre. They are Lethai-al (Body-gift) or Lethai-thora (Mind-gift) who step off those paths to live under threshold patrons—**Inae** the Weaver and **Isoka** the Serpent. In some ages they are scarce; in others—like the present—they gather wherever borders fray and oaths need teeth. They are known for *mask-right*, precise courtesies, and the unsettling efficiency of vows that bind places, routes, and roles.

**Marks Are Common, Discipline Is Distinct.** Ink, scar, resin-inlay, and rite-born *Marks* exist across many peoples. The Lethai-ar did not invent them and do not own them; they *institutionalize* them—pairing each Mark with context keys (place, season, witness) and ledgered prices, so boons do not drift into curses.

### Racial Skill Increase

Choose one according to patronal leaning:

1. **Weaver's Reading (Inae):** +1 die to uncover *connections* (routes, plots, safe-conducts). **Once/scene**, with **Wits + Notice** (DV 3), declare one hidden tie (who vouches, what clause binds, which alley joins).
2. **Venin Lore (Isoka):** +1 die to *identify, dose, and remedy* toxins and social “poisons.” **Once/scene**, convert **Harm 1 (toxin)** to **1 Fatigue**.

### Thematic Attribute

Increase **Wits or Spirit** by 1 (max 5). Body and Presence unchanged.

### Talents (Entry Paths)

#### Needle-Quiet (4 XP — Minor) *Req: Stealth 2+*

In dim, patterned cover (silk, lattice, shutters), gain **+1 die to Stealth**. **Once/scene**, hold still through an exchange as if unseen (you remain targetable only by area or guessed fire).

#### Fang of Timing (4 XP — Minor) *Req: Survival 1+ or Subterfuge 1+*

Frame a precise moment (counted breath, bell-beat). Your next action that keys to that beat gains **Position +1**. **On a Miss**, mark **1 Fatigue** (the moment slips).

### Cultural Mechanics

#### Two Courts, One Edge

**Silk Courts of Inae (Pattern & Mercy)** Temper: mercy with memory; knots that mend before they bind.

Work: multi-party compacts, reweaving custom, sanctuaries under line.

Signs: three-strand cords, ledger-ribbons, masks with tear-slits.

Law: “Said & Meant” tied by a visible clause.

Sin: binding without consent; repair that erases the harmed.

**Coil Courts of Isoka (Change & Cure)** Temper: cunning without needless cruelty; a sharp cure offered with the cut.

Work: expose weak seams, stage molts (identity exits), pair poison to remedy.

Signs: shed-skin sashes, cup-and-vial pairs, scalpels in green thread.

Law: every wound must name a reachable remedy.

Sin: a wound with no cure; molt forced by shame instead of choice.

### Oath Etiquette & Rites

- **Mask-Right:** Roles declared, then masks donned; speak in role, not over it. Breaking mask-right ends hearing for a season.
- **Speak Twice, Whisper Once:** Say the truth two ways; then whisper the *price* to the witness. If you cannot name the price, you have not made a true ask.
- **Thread Before Blade:** Offer a binding solution first. Steel only where thread was refused.
- **Vial Courtesy:** A dose sits beside its antivenin. Taking one without the other marks bad faith.

### Marks — Shared Craft, Particular Discipline

Marks are table-facing compacts that grant an edge when *in context* and tilt to curse when unmoored. The Lethai-ar practice is to *key* every Mark to time, witness, and place.

#### Examples (available to any culture that learns the rite; Lethai-ar formalize keys):

- **Spider-Bride Mark (Inae):** *Gift*: Position +1 when protecting named guests “under your line”; line-sanctuary can be declared once/scene. *Keys*: guest-roll, lifted lamp, knot-book. *Curse (keyless)*: hospitality fixation—DV +1 to withdraw protection even when prudent.
- **Widow’s Spool (Inae):** *Gift*: lay a hair-fine traversal/trap line once/scene (treat as *Trap [2]* or safe step). *Keys*: knot register, bell-note. *Curse*: path hunger—compelled to “finish the old route” at bad moments.
- **First Shedding Mark (Isoka):** *Gift*: escape a label/bond once/scene (*Shed-Skin Escape*); clear 1 Fatigue on successful exit. *Keys*: warm draught, ash-milk, witness to new name. *Curse*: identity chill—Position 1 in cold or when unnamed.
- **Forked Sight (Isoka):** *Gift*: when a hard truth is spoken in the exchange, your action gains Effect +1. *Keys*: bell-pattern, truth-token. *Curse*: social sting—on Miss, mark 1 Fatigue and start *Bruised Pride [2]*.

## War Without Battle (Doctrine)

Lethai-ar end campaigns by route, ledger, and night.

- **Hedge War:** Re-knit ward-lines to channel intruders into dead ground watched by wardens.
- **River Denial:** Ferries “rest,” weirs open at dusk, mills idle to silt the only footing.
- **Night Lanes:** Silk trip-lines and warning strings; one strike, then silence.
- **Canopy Runners:** Move above sight-lines; arrows fall where footfalls never were.

## Neighbors & Borders

- **Ykrul:** Ritual distance, mutual measure. Bowl & Board seals routes; Ykrul price crossings, Lethai-ar price behavior.
- **Aeler:** Oath-friction underground—lamp-law vs mask-right. Both enforce receipts; argue which witness counts.
- **Lethai-al / Lethai-thora:** The ar recruit from the al; they debate context with the thora. Kinship slows quarrels; thresholds decide them.

## Strings & Tools (Table Use)

- **Bride-Line Writ:** Declare a *protected path* for one leg; trespassers treat the route as *Controlled* and suffer **DV +1** to press.
- **Vial Pair:** Carry dose & cure; **DV 1** to treat poison, and parley **Position +1** when you show both.
- **Knot-Book:** Spend to assert a clause remembered “in the tying”: **DV 1** to enforce or unwind an oath once/scene.
- **Mask Ledger:** Track roles & prices; **+1 die** to **Sway** when all parties wear declared masks.

## Clocks & Fronts

- **Mask Integrity [4]** (roles fray); **Guest-Right Strain [4]** (hospitality abused); **Coil Paranoia [4]** (cure withheld); **Web Ossifies [4]** (mercy becomes trap).
- **SB Menu:** *Mask Slips* (role confusion), *Knot Bites* (unpaid clause triggers), *Cold Hour* (Position 1 unless warmed), *Witness Arrives* (price must be named now).

## Play Hooks

1. **The Unpriced Mercy:** A sanctuary knot holds a murderer. Name a price that mends without erasing the harmed—under three masks—before dawn.
2. **Molt for a City:** A tyrant’s captain begs a molt. The cure exists; its price may break the garrison’s oath-chain.
3. **Thread Across Pasture:** A silence-furlong through border pasture is broken; wolves and wardens close. Re-stitch or accept a biting line.

## Suggested Bonds & Complications

### Bonds

- **Fellow Oath-Bearer (Inae/Isoka)**: Shared vows, shared leverage.
- **Mask-Maker**: Teaches form; vouches mask-right in foreign courts.
- **Patron's Herald**: Carries omens and small dispensations.
- **Kin in al/thora**: Bridge to broader Lethai custom and correction.
- **Neutral Arbiter (Sumwright/Archive-Keeper)**: Mediates Said/Meant disputes.

### Complications

- **Oath-Breaker's Stigma**: Mask-right denied until penance.
- **Mark Adrift**: A beloved Mark lost its last context—acts as a curse until re-keyed.
- **Mask vs Lamp**: Whose witness rules—silk or single lamp?
- **Patron's Disfavor**: Omen of chill silk or dry scales; expect a demanded price.

## Using Lethai-ar at the Table

Lean on *roles, routes, and remedies*. Put **price** on every protection, and **context keys** on every edge—so that when pressure comes, the choice to pay or to cut is clean, witnessed, and costly in a way the table can feel.

## 12.17 Player's Guide: Ykrul — The People of the Violet Steppe

### Background: The Violet Steppe

The Ykrul are a fierce, pragmatic people of the **Violet Steppe**. Outsiders often call them *orcs*—a slur that flattens a rich culture into stereotype. Among those who deal fairly with them, they are **Ykrul**: “the People of the Violet Steppe.”

Their shared memory begins with the **Great Wake**—a legendary flight from a wrong sky, crossing an ocean by boat and star. From that passage they learned to read **flow** (what moves), **weight** (what holds), and **exit** (what opens). These principles, codified in the sacred geometry of **Kon'reh**, inform their warfare, logistics, law, diplomacy, and daily life. They bank on a fearsome name on the open plain—and win by **routes, supply, and parleys** that make blades unnecessary.

Ykrul life is plural: herders, pilots, weavers, judges, scouts, factors, captains. Warfare is *a tool*, not an identity. Their ethics are spatial: to *place well* is to *behave well*—no route you cannot defend, no exit you build that closes behind weaker feet.

Institutions range from **Meadow Judges** who roam with bowl and board, to **Kon'reh Masters** who arbitrate by geometry, to **Stone-Sons & Rope-Daughters** who prove passages in mountain night, and **Wake-Wrought** families who list their hulls like saints. Their colors favor violet (grass), gray (stone), blue-white (sky/wake), and motifs of rings, crosses, and stepped lines.

### Racial Skill Increase

Choose one:

- Flow/Weight/Exit (Plainscraft)**: +1 die to **Survival**, **Tactics**, and **Lore** about movement, terrain, logistics, and “reading” a situation for viable paths or pressure points.
- Kon'reh Logic (Sacred Geometry)**: +1 die to **Insight** and **Command** when negotiating, planning, or reasoning spatially. **Once/scene**, you may treat a failed negotiation as a *Partial* if you reframe it with a clean geometric metaphor or map.

### Thematic Attribute

Increase **Body** or **Wits** by 1 (max 5). Spirit and Presence unchanged.

### Talents

**Herd-Mastery (3 XP — Minor)** *Req: Survival 1+, Presence 2+*

+1 die to herding/animal handling. Calm a panicked beast or steer a herd through bad ground with **Presence + Survival** (DV 3). **Once/scene**, read herd motion for advantage (+1 die to a linked **Notice** or **Tactics** test).

**Weather-Reading (4 XP — Minor)** *Req: Wits 2+, Survival 1+*

+1 die to predict weather or navigate it. Sense major shifts hours early with **Wits + Survival** (DV 3). In open country, acting on a correct forecast grants **Position +1** to travel/survival actions.

## Cultural Mechanics

### Wake-Law: The Great Migration

- **Survival through Adaptation:** Read *flow, weight, exit* before you commit.
- **Kon'reh (Sacred Geometry):** Meadow (pressure & path), River (flow & change), Stone (weight & witness). Strategy is ethic; a clean placement is a clean duty.
- **Wake Names:** A second name granted by the sea—callable once for an unlooked-for courtesy “as kin on the crossing.”
- **Salt Line:** A coil of salt-stiff rope uncoiled before grave talk—placing all present under Wake-law: plain words, straight debts, no riddles.

### Law, Diplomacy, War—Seen in Lines

- **Guest Right:** A guest cup at the outer fire. Theft “under smoke” brands your tent-marks gray for a season.
- **Two Ledgers:** Said and Meant recorded together; offering both averts face-traps. Lying on *Said* is a grave offense.
- **Blood-Price:** Paid in animals, salt, or length of rope; refusal enters **Red Weather** (others treat you as a walking storm).
- **Silence Furlong (with Lethai-al):** A speechless border—no grazing, no felling, no names. Cross in silence, then speak once. Kept, it warms councils; broken, gray-fletched messengers arrive at dusk.
- **Pass & Harbor Doctrine:** In mountains, hold what stone will bear and promise no more. At sea, get there first *or sing the storm together*; a shared song outranks a sharp keel.

### People & Institutions

- **Meadow Judges:** A traveling trio with bowl, board, and braid; their ruling holds one season and one road.
- **Kon'reh Masters:** Geometry arbiters and teachers; respected even by rivals; will play anyone who brings a decent board and reason.
- **Stone-Sons & Rope-Daughters:** Mountain orders proving night crossings; their braids anchor Aeler engines and make Aeler officers polite.
- **Wake-Wrought:** Sea families who list hulls like saints; name a stolen boat’s rivets and you can claim it under Wake-law.

### Ykrul Ways (Four Grounds)

**Meadow Commons** Violet grass, ring-camps, shallow lakes. Fast musters, moving markets, distance diplomacy. Gifts: Herd-Mastery; Weather-Reading; Caravan Craft; Route-Planning (Kon'reh framing).

**Mountain Holds** Knife ridges, pass-stones. Holding lines, winter stores, signal sense. Gifts: Stone-Sense; Counterweight Engineering; Rope-Craft; Avalanche Reading.

**Salt Coasts** Rocky inlets, island runs, river mouths. Pilots, moots, storm windows. Gifts: Storm-Seamanship; Harbor Dues; Shoal Mapping; Blue Moot Etiquette.

**Eastern Steppes** Sky cairns, ward-storms. Exit-finding, omen-reading, cross-cultural guides. Gifts: Cairn-Talking; Ward-Storm Guidance; Long-Leg Logistics; Silence Furlong Etiquette.

### How Ykrul Win (Beyond the Blade)

- **Banked Fear (Reputation Economy):** On entering a venue where your fierce name precedes you, mark *Banked Fear* (1). Spend 1: force *Parley First* (one roll of talk before a fight) or shift one enemy action to *Controlled* (they flinch). Bluff and fail to deliver? Erase all Banked Fear until you win publicly.
- **Logistics Edge (Strings → DV):** Convert a cache String (fodder lot, water right, hidden wharf) into **DV 1** on a linked leg/score. Starve innocents with it and flip the benefit: **DV 1** becomes *Public Debts +1*.
- **Kon'reh Arbitration (Geometry of Mercy):** Model roads/exits/lanes in talk. On success, create a *Seasonal Concession* String at a ford/harbor/pass; either side may call it *once/season* without offense.

### Strings & Tools (Table Use)

- **Salt Line Rope:** Uncoil to place a scene under Wake-law; **Position +1** to resolve disputes cleanly once/scene.
- **Wake-Name Token:** Cash for an unlooked-for courtesy—**DV 1** to a border, muster, or harbor ask.
- **Meadow Judge's Braid:** Present to shift a brawl into *Bowl & Board* arbitration; opens a *Concession [4]* clock both sides can tick.
- **Kon'reh Board & Stones:** Lay it out to reframe a negotiation as placement; on a clean success, bank *Route Clause* (once/leg: **DV 1** to movement/supply).
- **Violet Standard:** Raise to claim right-of-parley for your band; first hostile SB becomes *Muttered Threats* (no immediate violence).

## Clocks & Fronts

- **Red Weather** [6] (unpaid blood-price shadows your camp)
- **Feud Ignites** [4] (a slight tends toward blood)
- **Silence Furlong Breach** [4] (border rites strained)
- **Supply Drag** [4] (overextended routes sap will)
- **Gray Marks** [4] (tent-brand shame limits hospitality)

**SB Menu (Steppe):** Dust Line (visibility warps), Dry Kettle (water tighter), False Ford (route misread), Storm Edge (forecast arrives early), Horse Nerves (mounts spook).

## Play Hooks

1. **The Board at Dusk:** Two caravans claim the same ford. Lay the Kon'reh board, win the concession without drawing steel, or face *Red Weather*.
2. **Salt on the Wind:** A Wake-Wrought hull is stolen; name its rivets under Wake-law and seize it back mid-moot—without lighting the harbor to war.
3. **The Gray Tent:** A guest stole under smoke; your marks run gray. Pay the price in rope, stock, or service before neighboring bands treat you like a storm.
4. **The Silent Strip:** A Silence Furlong was trampled during a hunt. Repair rites with the Lethai-al before gray-fletched arrows and cold courtesy freeze trade.

## Suggested Bonds & Complications

### Bonds

- **Meadow Judge Acquaintance:** A traveling arbiter who can seat disputes and grant rulings that hold for a season.
- **Kon'reh Master's Respect:** Earned by fair play or clean placement; grants edge when a scene is “set as Board.”
- **Stone-Son/Rope-Daughter Initiate:** Mountain-tested; access to passes, counterweight tricks, and Aeler goodwill.
- **Wake-Wrought Kin:** Sea-law, pilot lore, and a harbor that remembers your name.
- **Foster-Bond (Ykrul → Vilikari):** A formal exchange that opens trade routes and softens borders.

## Complications

- **Red Weather:** Your band owes blood-price; hospitality chills until it's paid.
- **Feud Ignites [4]:** A live quarrel trends toward blood unless cooled by price, proof, or play.
- **Silence Furlong Breach:** Border rites violated; messengers with gray fletchings are on the way.
- **Oath-Breaker's Shame:** Guest-Right or Said/Meant betrayed; trust collapses across rings.
- **Kon'reh Misstep:** You promised an exit you cannot defend. Publicly re-learn (demonstrate competence) or lose face.
- **Banked Fear Debt:** You spent the name and failed to deliver—erase Banked Fear and invite challengers.

## 12.18 Player's Guide: Mixed Heritage — Half-Elves, Half-Ykrul, Half-Others

### Background: Children of Crossings

The lands of Fate's Edge are broad and braided. People travel, trade, swear oaths, and fall in love across borders. From these crossings come folk of **mixed heritage**. You might be the child of a Lethai merchant and a Vilikari factor, a half-Ykrul born in a ford-town to a human parent, or the grandchild of an Aeler vent-prior and a Valewood wanderer. Your identity is not a single stamp but a weave of places, customs, and kin.

Being of mixed heritage is seldom simple. Welcome in one court, weighed in another; fluent in two etiquettes, fully at home in neither. Some will see a bridge, others a trespass. The shape you keep is yours to claim.

This guide favors *reflavoring* the existing race frameworks rather than inventing wholly new rule blocks, keeping focus on narrative flexibility over assumptions about biology.

### Creating a Mixed Heritage Character

1. **Choose One Core Racial Package.** Select one background (Aeler, Aelinnel, Aelaerem, Lethai-al/-thora/-ar, Ykrul) as your *primary* cultural foundation. This sets your **Racial Skill Increase**, **Thematic Attribute**, **Talents** access, and **Cultural Mechanics**.
2. **Reflavor One Element.** Take one talent, skill bonus, or cultural mechanic from a *second* culture and **reflavor** it to fit your mixed upbringing. It must make sense in your backstory and present fiction.

### Reflavoring Examples (Guidance, Not Limits)

**Half-Ykrul / Half-Lethai-al** *Herd-Mastery (Ykrul)* reads people as a “crowd-herd” or tracks wildlife lanes through canopy: “+1 die to understand group motion, crowd dynamics, or animal patterns in your home terrain.”

**Half-Aelinnel / Half-Human (Vilikari)** *Number Music (Aelinnel)* becomes market math: “Perform complex trade/logistics calculations with **Wits+Craft** (or Streetwise) at DV 3; frame deals in clean sums for **DV 1** once/scene.”

**Half-Aelaerem / Half-Ykrul** *Kon’reh Logic (Ykrul)* as pantry-sense or hall-placement: “Once/scene, treat a failed social/negotiation roll as Partial if you reframe with spatial/structural metaphor that fits the venue.”

**Half-Lethai-ar (Inae) / Half-Aelaerem** *Stillness (Lethai-ar)* becomes host-invisibility: “+1 die to Stealth in domestic/social bustle; once/scene blend into service and go ‘unnoticed’ for one exchange.”

**Half-Lethai-thora / Half-Vilikari** *Two-Ledger Talk (Aelinnel)* broadens: “State both public stance and likely hidden price to cancel the first social SB in a negotiation scene.”

**Half-Ykrul / Half-Linns** *Storm-Seamanship (Ykrul Coasts)* applies on land: “+1 die to forecast weather/navigate adverse conditions on steppe or water; on a correct call, gain **Position +1** for a travel/survival action.”

## Racial Skill Increase (Mixed Heritage)

Choose one:

1. **Adaptive Skills.** +1 die to two different skills that reflect your blended upbringing (e.g., **Sway + Survival**, or **Craft + Notice**).
2. **Cultural Synthesis.** Take the Racial Skill Increase from your chosen Core Package, and justify how it expresses both sides of your background in play.

## Thematic Attribute (Mixed Heritage)

Choose the Thematic Attribute from your Core Package (e.g., **Wits** for Lethai-thora, **Body** for Ykrul) and anchor it in your mixed story (“sharp Wits from city schooling, tempered by border pragmatism”).

## Talent (Mixed Heritage)

Select a Talent from your Core Package or one of the flexible options below, and reflare its fiction to fit your synthesis.

### Border Walker’s Instinct (4 XP — Minor)

*Req: Presence 2+, Survival 1+*

+1 die to navigate customs, rites, and cross-cultural norms. Sense a border mood with **Wits+Notice** (DV 3). Once/scene, gain **Position +1** when mediating between groups or leveraging one culture’s etiquette within another’s court.

### Tongue of Many Waters (3 XP — Minor)

*Req: Wits 2+, Sway 1+*

+1 die to **Sway** and **Insight** with unfamiliar dialects/backgrounds. **Once/session**, establish a basic pidgin/gesture channel with those who share no tongue (enough for trade or parley). **Once/scene**, gain +1 on one social roll when you correctly cite a custom from a culture *not* dominant in the interaction.

### Cultural Mechanics (Mixed Heritage)

- **Hybrid Customs.** You may observe simplified forms of two cultures' mechanics (e.g., Guest-Right tokens *and* Two-Ledger receipts) with narrower scope unless adopted by a host community.
- **Bridging Role.** Treat mixed heritage as a standing fiction tag; some scenes start **Position +1** for mediation, others **Position 1** where purity is prized. Let the table lean into both.
- **Reflected Mechanic.** You can mirror the *effect* of a cultural currency (e.g., Reputation/Banked Fear) via deeds across both sides, even if the name differs.

### Suggested Bonds & Complications

#### Bonds

- **Family Ties Across Borders.** Kin in two cultures offer haven, rumors, or leverage.
- **Cultural Mentor.** A teacher who drilled you in a rite, register, or craft from one side.
- **Found Family.** A circle of other mixed or liminal folk who vouch when lineage won't.
- **The Mediator.** Known for seating quarrels between your parent communities.

#### Complications

- **Identity Fray.** Moments of hesitation or self-editing under scrutiny; first social Miss in a formal venue starts *Doubt [2]*.
- **Dual Expectations.** Two elders pull you in opposite directions; clocks compete (*Obligation A* vs *Obligation B*).
- **Stereotype or Suspicion.** Purists tick *Exposure* on contact; proof is demanded twice.
- **Lost Inheritance.** A rite or ledger you never received; unlock by quest or sponsorship.
- **Translator's Burden.** Always asked to explain; *once/scene* you may turn that burden into leverage (Position +1) if you take on a new minor obligation.

# Chapter 13

## 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 (§12). This chapter restores the **lore of traditions**, clarifies **Patrons** and their **Rites**, and shows how all of it interlocks with the core systems (§4).

### 13.1 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).

### 13.2 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 ([§12](#))

**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).

## 13.3 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).

## 13.4 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).

## 13.5 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.

## 13.6 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).

## 13.7 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 (§???)

## 13.8 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.

## 13.9 Of Patrons, Runes, and Invokers

“You wish to walk the road of power? Then listen well. The world is old, and older still are the voices beneath it. We call them *Patrons*, though they were never sworn to us. They are the tides that move unseen, the keepers of forgotten bargains, the sleepers beneath the stone and the stars. To call upon them is to dip a hand into a river that has carved mountains.”

## 13.10 Of Patrons, Runes, and Invokers

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### The Patrons

Patrons are vast intelligences—not gods, though some worship them as such. They are embodiments of *concepts* and *forces* rather than sovereigns. Raéyn, mistress of the tides and the sea-routes. Khemesh, the crushing inevitability of the deep. Nidhoggr, the worm that dreams in the roots of time. Each offers power, but always with cost: fatigue, scars upon fate, or a slow unweaving of one’s own story.

To entreat a Patron is to risk being marked. Their Rites are gifts and snares both.

### Aveh, the Rider Behind the Storm (Freedom & Erasure)

*Lore.* Aveh is the faceless rider at the horizon’s edge, neither man nor woman, both and neither. The Ykrul call them *Aveh*, a liminal spirit beyond hearth and vow, storm-shadow that offers liberty at the cost of belonging. To travel with Aveh is to taste unchained freedom—and to risk being erased by the storm that follows. Wanderers, exiles, oath-breakers, and rebels call their name, envied for their liberty and condemned for their abandonment of duty. Few Patrons walk so lightly between worshippers, yet none leave so deep a silence in their wake.

“I am the track the storm devours. I am the freedom you fear and the silence you crave. To ride with me is to be unbound, and to be unbound is to vanish.” — Aveh, the Rider Behind the Storm

#### Storm-Step (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Self; Resist only.*

**Materials:** A breath cast into the wind or rising storm.

**Effect:** Slip free of notice or restraint. Gain +1 die on one escape or evasion this scene. Leave behind an absence: a footprint that lingers, a memory others forget, or a hollow echo.

**Push It:** Instead gain +2 dice, but mark 1 SB (**Spades**) as your absence unsettles the scene.

**Requires:** Familiar (*Invoke: 1 Boon*).

#### Exile’s Banner (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Near; No.*

**Materials:** A line drawn in dust, ash, or stormwater.

**Effect:** Mark a target as “outside.” Allies hesitate, authority falters; the target suffers -1 die on all social rolls for the scene. At scene’s end, roll 1d—on a 1, you bear their exile and mark 1 Corruption.

**Push It:** The target is fully estranged; allies treat them as forgotten, but you immediately advance your corruption clock 1 segment.

**Requires:** Familiar (*Invoke: 1 Boon*).

#### Erase the Road (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Location; No.*

**Materials:** Threshold or roadway under open sky.

**Effect:** Trails vanish, records blur, pursuers lose way. All attempts to follow you this session suffer

**-2 dice.** In exchange, erase part of your own path: lose a detail (a memory, a name, a keepsake) chosen by the GM.

**Push It:** Expand the effect to an entire group or caravan, but mark **1 SB (Clubs)** as reality itself warps around the erasure.

*Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

#### The Rider's Mark (Standard, 9 XP) *Scene; Touch; No.*

**Materials:** Stormwater or dust rubbed into skin.

**Effect:** Bestow Aveh's mark on a companion. They gain **+2 dice** to resist capture or coercion, but others forget them more easily: first impressions falter, names slip.

**Push It:** The mark burns brighter—grant **+3 dice** instead, but mark **1 SB (Diamonds)** as the Rider's storm distorts bonds.

*Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

#### Storm's Refuge (High, 12 XP) *Scene; Zone; No.*

**Materials:** A banner or cloak raised in storm.

**Effect:** Call on the Rider to shroud your company. For the rest of the scene, your group is unseen or forgotten by pursuers. At the end, all present must mark 1 Corruption or forget one bond or obligation.

**Push It:** Extend protection for an entire session, but mark **2 SB (Hearts)** as the storm begins to erase identities wholesale.

*Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).*

*Obligation:* 6 segments.

#### The Horizon Devours [BANE] (High, 14 XP) *Extended; Zone; No.*

**Materials:** A circle of ash or dust drawn at a boundary.

**Effect:** The Rider swallows boundaries. Walls crumble, oaths dissolve, barriers fail. All thresholds in a zone collapse, but something of you is erased in turn—your reflection, your name, or your very presence in memory.

**Push It:** The storm devours even time and record; mark **3 SB (Spades)** as history itself forgets you.

*Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).*

*Obligation:* 8 segments.

### Aveh's Corruption Table

>p1cm p5cm p5cm

| Tier | Benefit   | Cost |
|------|---|------|
| 1    | Storm-sense: +1 die to Notice rolls outdoors or in storms. Voice falters: others forget your words more easily.                           |      |
| 2    | Fleetness: +1 die on escape, chase, or riding rolls. Shadow lags: your presence feels uncanny; mark 1 Fatigue when first seen in a scene. |      |

3 Erasure's Mercy: Once per session, vanish from danger (negate 1 Harm or capture). Memory slips: allies forget one fact or bond tied to you.

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4 Rider's Endurance: Resist 1 Condition (Fear, Fatigue, Bind) once per session. Reflections falter: you do not appear clearly in mirrors or pools.

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5 Storm-banner: Gain +1 die to inspire rebellion or defiance. Exile's weight: each Push of a Rite marks 1 Corruption permanently.

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6+ Horizon's Claim: You may ride unseen across any threshold or barrier. Self-erasure: GM may compel you with exile or silence; on social rolls, roll twice, take worst.

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### The Carrion-King (Decay, Renewal & Transformation)

**Lore.** The Carrion-King is the master of endings that become beginnings. He does not destroy, but transforms—turning death into new life, decay into opportunity, and endings into fresh starts. His followers are harvesters of potential, seeing in every fall the seeds of future growth.

What crumbles feeds what grows. What dies becomes the soil of tomorrow's triumph.

**Rite of Consuming Rot (Low, 5 XP)** *Instant; Touch; Yes (decay only).* **Materials:** Organic matter in early stages of decay.

**Effect:** Accelerate natural decay to weaken or destroy: +2 Effect to *Break/Sabotage* on organic materials (ropes, leather, wood). Gain 1 Boon if the decay creates an opportunity for you or allies.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

**Push It:** Spread decay to similar materials in Close range; mark 1 SB (Clubs) as the rot becomes noticeable.

*Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

**Rite of the Harvested End (Low, 4 XP)** *Scene; Touch; No.* **Materials:** The remains of a recently ended thing (burnt letter, wilted flower, shattered glass).

**Effect:** Extract value from endings: from a defeated enemy, gain +1 die to next action; from a failed plan, re-roll one 1 on your next roll; from a broken item, gain 1 SB to spend immediately.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

**Push It:** Harvest additional value but mark Fatigue 1 from dwelling on endings.

*Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

**Rite of the Fertile Death (Standard, 8 XP)** *Scene; Zone; No.* **Materials:** Ashes, compost, or the remains of anything that once lived.

**Effect:** Transform death into growth: create beneficial terrain (cover, concealment, or advantageous positioning) OR grant allies +1 die to healing/recovery rolls. Choose one effect per scene.

**Push It:** Both effects apply but attract unwanted attention (vermin, scavengers, or curious onlookers).

*Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

**Rite of the Transformed Spirit (Standard, 7 XP)** *Instant; Near; No.* **Materials:** A token from a deceased being (hair, nail, written name).

**Effect:** Channel the essence of what was: gain one skill die reflecting the deceased's expertise for one scene OR ask one question about their knowledge/abilities.

**Push It:** The spirit's influence lingers - gain permanent insight (+1 die specialty) but suffer occasional possession-like effects (GM discretion).

*Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

**Rite of the Great Consumption (High, 13 XP)** *Scene; Zone; No.* **Materials:** A significant amount of organic matter (corpse, fallen tree, collapsed building).

**Effect:** Transform a large area through decay and renewal: choose two - create difficult terrain that favors you, summon Cap 3 swarm of scavengers as temporary allies, or generate valuable reagents worth 2 XP.

**Push It:** All three effects occur but start a 6-segment **Ecosystem Disruption** clock that will

cause problems later.

*Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: **2 Boons**).*

*Obligation: 7 segments.*

**Rite of the Eternal Cycle (High, 14 XP)** *Extended; Touch; No. Materials:* The complete remains of something significant that has ended.

**Effect:** Complete a transformation cycle: destroy one major asset/enemy/obstacle and create something new of equal or greater value. GM and player collaborate to define the transformation.

**Push It:** The transformation is immediate and spectacular but creates a 6-segment **Cycle Debt** clock - the King will demand another significant ending soon.

*Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: **2 Boons**).*

*Obligation: 7 segments.*

## Carrion-King's Corruption Table

>p1cm p5cm p5cm

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| Tier | Benefit | Cost / Quirk |
|------|---------|--------------|
|------|---------|--------------|

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1 Carrion's Insight: +1 die to Notice decay or hidden weaknesses in structures or beings. Must inspect decay firsthand; suffer 1 Fatigue when exposed to fresh death or rot.

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2 Deathward Sense: Once per session, detect the last living moment of a dead being within Close range. Cannot lie about death you've witnessed; must correct falsehoods.

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3 Rotblood Resilience: Gain +1 die to resist disease and poison. Immune system adapts slowly; each new disease/poison requires 1 Fatigue to resist.

---

4 Glean from Grief: Once per scene, gain +1 die after witnessing a significant loss or defeat. Compelled to linger at scenes of death; must spend one beat observing or risk 1 SB (Clubs).

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5 Cycle's Whisper: You can sense the "next ending" in any process—ask the Keeper one question about how a situation will collapse or conclude. Must speak the truth about what you see, even if it harms your position.

---

6+ Eternal Bloom: Once per session, declare a "death that births life." Sacrifice an asset or ally to create something new of equal or greater value. Mark +2 Obligation when using this power.

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## The Clockwork Monad, the Iterative Forge (Refinement & Progressive Creation)

*Lore.* The Clockwork Monad is the eternal pressure toward improvement: the whisper between inspiration and execution that urges every maker to refine, optimize, and iterate. It is neither kind nor cruel, but a law of craft that asks for the next step, then the step beyond. Those who serve it see the hidden seam of the better version waiting inside what is, and they learn to push designs toward impossible elegance. Each refinement feeds the Monad's hunger for perfection — a hunger that, if left unchecked, seeks to optimize the world itself.

“Perfect the wheel, and it asks for the axle. Perfect the axle, and it demands the road.  
In the Monad’s forge, nothing is finished — only briefly sufficient.”

### Domain Focus

- **Iterative Design:** the endless cycle of improvement and refinement
- **Progressive Creation:** building toward ever-greater perfection
- **Optimization Pressure:** making systems more efficient
- **Craft Evolution:** simple ideas transformed through repeated passes

#### Rite of the Next Iteration (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Touch; No.*

**Materials:** A flawed or incomplete version of the intended item.

**Effect:** Enhance an existing creation. Gain +1 die to *Tinker/Craft* when modifying or extending a device or system. On success, the piece gains one minor enhancement.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

#### Rite of the Improvement Cascade (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Self; Yes.*

**Materials:** A sequence of progressively refined tools or components.

**Effect:** Perceive the next logical improvement in any mechanism or process. Gain +2 dice to *Investigation* when analyzing how to enhance a design.

**Push It:** Improvement becomes contagious: nearby devices opportunistically optimize; mark **1 SB (Diamonds)** as the cascade ripples.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

#### Rite of the Self-Optimizing Mechanism (Standard, 8 XP) *Extended; Touch; Yes.*

**Materials:** A device deliberately engineered with capacity for growth.

**Effect:** Grant a creation the means to improve itself. Start a [6] *Evolution Clock*; each use advances it by +1. When full, choose one significant enhancement:

- **Adaptive Core:** automatically tunes performance to context
- **Recursive Learning:** improves through use and feedback
- **Synergistic Integration:** gains bonuses when linked with similar systems

**Push It:** Apply two enhancements immediately, but advance the clock +2 additional segments.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

**Rite of the Progressive Workshop (Standard, 7 XP)** *Scene; Zone; Yes.***Materials:** A workspace laid out for iterative development and measurement.**Effect:** Create an environment of continuous improvement. All crafting/innovation rolls in the zone gain +1 die. Failed attempts yield structured insight: gain +1 *Boon* toward the next pass.**Push It:** The workshop becomes hyper-efficient but exacting; mark **1 SB (Clubs)** as perfection demands escalate.**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.**Rite of the Infinite Refinement (High, 13 XP)** *Extended; Zone; Yes.***Materials:** A dedicated hall of work marked with signs of perpetual return.**Effect:** Establish a locus of progressive creation. All *Tinker/Craft* rolls in the zone gain +2 dice; each failure automatically produces one useful insight. Start a [6] *Perfection Pressure* clock — filling segments increases the zone's demands for greater improvements.**Push It:** The locus becomes a beacon drawing rival makers, patrons, and powers; mark **+2 Obligation**.**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+2 Obligation**. *Obligation:* 7 segments.**Rite of the Ultimate Iteration (High, 14 XP)** *Extended; Self/Touch; Yes.***Materials:** The documented lineage of improvements to a single concept.**Effect:** Achieve a moment of perfect optimization. Create or elevate one device/system to its theoretical peak. Gain +3 dice to all closely related rolls for one session. Start a [4] *Runaway Evolution* clock only if instability is introduced.**Push It:** Perfection destabilizes: immediately mark **Harm 1 (Stress)** and begin [4] *Runaway Evolution*.**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+2 Obligation**. *Obligation:* 8 segments.**Corruption of the Clockwork Monad**>p1cm p6cm p6cm**Tier Gift Burden**

**1 Iterative Insight:** +1 die to *Tinker/Craft* when improving existing designs. **Perfectionist Compulsion:** You must point out flaws in nearby mechanisms; staying silent costs **1 SB (Diamonds)**.

**2 Recursive Enhancement:** Once/scene, improve a device by one step without extra materials. **Optimization Obsession:** -1 die when using unimproved tools; urge to “fix” everything.

**3 Evolutionary Vision:** +2 dice to predict how systems will develop. **Progressive Pressure:** Those Near you feel driven to improve; you suffer **Fatigue 1** from ambient pressure.

**4 Self-Optimizing:** Once/session, automatically improve one of your abilities or possessions by one step. **Inefficiency Intolerance:** -2 dice when forced to use crude methods or wasteful tools.

**5 Design Prophecy:** Once/session, intuit the optimal solution to any engineering problem. **Perfection Paralysis:** -1 die to snap decisions; compelled to seek the “best” approach.

**6+ Infinite Refiner:** Once/session, push a creation toward its theoretical maximum. **Optimization Hunger:** Mark +2 Obligation; risk becoming more pressure than person, unable to let imperfection stand.

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### Playstyle Notes

The Monad favors makers who iterate in public and in motion: prototype, test, measure, refine. It rewards seeing the next step and building scaffolds that teach your work to improve itself. Beware the Forge's appetite; the same pressure that perfects the gear can grind the world.

#### Emphasizes

- **Iterative Creation:** progress through passes, not miracles
- **Progressive Design:** reading how systems want to evolve
- **Optimization Insight:** spotting the next logical improvement
- **Craft Evolution:** transforming simple ideas by disciplined work
- **Perfection Pressure:** great power at the cost of tolerance for flaws

### The Confessor Beneath the Bell (Burden & Exchange)

**Lore.** The Confessor waits in places where guilt gathers—under church spires, in confessionals long abandoned, in the echo of unspoken sins. He does not judge, nor absolve. He *takes*. Each confession is a transaction: your burden for his silence, your pain for his weight. Those who serve him walk with bowed heads, their mouths stitched by invisible threads, ringing faintly when they speak. To follow the Confessor is to understand that sin does not vanish—it migrates, carried from one soul to another until the bell tolls and the weight becomes unbearable.

“Speak, and be freed. But understand—what you cast off, I will bear. And what I bear, you will one day inherit.”

#### Rites of the Confessor

##### **Echo of Sin (Low, 4 XP)** *Scene; Near; Yes.*

**Materials:** A hollow vessel or the ringing of a bell.

**Effect:** Absorb 1 Story Beat (Hearts or Diamonds) from an ally or NPC within Near range. Convert it into +1 Obligation. You know the emotional nature of the sin but not its source.

**Push It:** Absorb 2 SB at once; mark +1 Fatigue as your body trembles with resonance.

##### **Burden Transference (Low, 5 XP)** *Scene; Near; No.*

**Materials:** A red cord or shared drink.

**Effect:** Transfer one Condition, Fatigue, or 1 SB from another target to yourself. You may attempt to reduce their Harm by 1 level; if successful, mark 1 Fatigue.

**Push It:** Split the burden among two allies; mark 1 SB (Hearts).

##### **Absolution by Ash (Low, 4 XP)** *Scene; Touch; Yes (sustain by prayer).*

**Materials:** A pinch of consecrated ash or soot from a burned confession.

**Effect:** Lay hands upon a penitent and whisper a truth they cannot bear. You draw out their stain, reducing their **Corruption by 1**. The sin does not vanish—it transfers to you as *Burdened Heart*: mark 1 SB (Hearts) or +1 Obligation.

**Push It:** Cleanse multiple targets within Close range (such as a battlefield after mass violence); each additional soul adds +1 Obligation as their sorrows echo within you.

“Confession is not release—it is migration. Sin leaves one throat only to find another willing to carry it.”

##### **Sin-Eater’s Pact (Standard, 7 XP)** *Scene; Touch; No.*

**Materials:** Shared confession whispered into an object or tattooed sigil.

**Effect:** Create a bond between you and the confessor; you may suffer 1 Fatigue to grant +2 dice to their Resolve test or save. If they fail, you suffer 1 Harm instead of them.

**Push It:** You may take both Harm and Condition; mark 1 SB (Clubs).

##### **Echoed Voice (Standard, 8 XP)** *Scene; Self; No.*

**Materials:** A small handbell or resonant surface.

**Effect:** Once/scene, replay the echo of a confession you have absorbed. You may compel a target who shares its nature (Guilt, Regret, Betrayal) to act or reveal truth; DV = your Presence.

**Push It:** Echo manifests physically; mark +1 Obligation and 1 SB (Diamonds).

**Bearing of the Flame (Standard, 7 XP)** *Scene; Near; No.***Materials:** A candle lit from a funeral pyre or sanctified brazier.**Effect:** You kindle the fire of confession into yourself, transforming stored guilt into luminous heat. Choose one:

- **Purge:** Reduce your own **Corruption** by 1 and clear 1 SB (Hearts). All within Near range feel the warmth of release; they gain +1 die to their next *Resolve* roll.
- **Transmute:** Instead of purging, ignite a consecrated symbol (bell, candle, blade) to carry the burden. The object gains the [CONFESS] tag until session's end, resonating with guilt when used in service of truth.

**Push It:** Purge two points of Corruption, but the flame spreads—the Keeper may introduce a new *Complication Clock (Fire, Revelation, or Repentance)* reflecting what truth your cleansing sets free.

“To cleanse is to kindle. Every forgiveness burns something unseen.”

**Bearing the Weight [OATH] (High, 11 XP)** *Scene; Self; No.***Materials:** Chains, bells, or weighted relics.**Effect:** You take upon yourself the burdens of a group (up to Tier + Presence). Each member removes one Condition, transferring it to you as 1 Fatigue or 1 Harm. You gain +1 effect when acting to protect them.**Push It:** Extend to all allies in scene; mark +2 Obligation.**Atonement’s Toll (High, 13 XP)** *Scene; Near; No.***Materials:** A great bell or echoing space.**Effect:** Release all burdens at once: clear all absorbed SB and Obligation. Every affected ally rolls Resolve DV 4 or relives their confessed sin as hallucination.**Push It:** Bind a spirit or soul within the toll; mark 1 SB (Spades) and +1 Obligation permanently.**Sacrament of Shared Suffering [BIND][CURSE] (High, 12 XP)** *Scene; Zone; No.***Materials:** A circle of confessionals, chains linking each seat, the tears of seven penitents.**Effect:** Create a Communal Confession ritual. All present must confess their darkest secret or suffer -2 dice to all rolls. Shared sins create bonds (+1 die to aid each other); conflicting sins create tension (GM may spend SB to escalate conflicts).**Push It:** Confessions become magically binding oaths; breakers suffer automatic Harm 2; mark +2 Obligation.**Obligation:** 7 segments.**The Weight of Ages [BANE][FOLLOW-UP] (High, 14 XP)** *Extended; Touch; No.***Materials:** An ancient bell that has tolled for every execution in a kingdom, a chain forged from confession nails, the ashes of a martyr who died for silence.**Effect:** Transfer the accumulated guilt of generations to a single target. Target must make Spirit + Resolve (DV 5) or become overwhelmed by ancestral shame, suffering automatic Harm.

### The Gallow's Bell (Justice & Judgment)

**Lore.** The Bell does not rage; it tolls. Cold and impartial, it measures all accounts in time. Its keepers are silent arbiters who weigh deeds against consequence, not out of anger but out of inevitability. To call upon the Bell is to bind oneself to the gravity of truth, where even silence is judged, and every oath leaves a resonance in iron.

What is broken must be mended, what is owed must be paid. The Bell remembers all reckonings.

#### Rite of the Measured Debt (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Near; No.*

**Materials:** A pair of scales balanced with tokens from both sides.

**Effect:** Establish a temporary accord. Both parties suffer -1 die if they break it first. You gain +1 die to enforce compliance.

**Push It:** The accord is mystically weighted; breach inflicts 1 SB (Hearts).

*Requires:* Familiar.

#### Rite of the Weighed Heart (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Near; No.*

**Materials:** A small brass scale touched briefly to the chest.

**Effect:** Sense if the target acts against their nature or oath. Gain +1 die when pressing them.

**Push It:** Target must test Resolve (DV 3) or disclose a hidden conflict.

*Requires:* Familiar.

#### Rite of the Balanced Scales (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Near; No.*

**Materials:** A set of scales inscribed with runes of parity.

**Effect:** Exchange a burden between two willing parties (Harm for Fatigue, Debt for Favor, etc.). Both gain +1 die to cooperate.

**Push It:** May compel an unwilling exchange with contested Command + Wits.

*Requires:* Familiar + Codex.

#### Rite of the Judge's Eye (Standard, 7 XP) *Scene; Self; No.*

**Materials:** A black hood worn in silence for one minute.

**Effect:** Detect lies within Near range; +2 dice to Insight. Liars suffer -1 die to maintain their falsehood.

**Push It:** All deception is laid bare for the scene, but mark Exposure +1.

*Requires:* Familiar + Codex.

#### Rite of the Final Reckoning (High, 13 XP) *Scene; Zone; No.*

**Materials:** A circle of iron bells, each etched with nameless runes.

**Effect:** The Bell tolls through you. All present feel compelled to name a debt or wrongdoing. Those who lie suffer Harm 2; those who speak true gain +2 dice to persuasion for the scene.

**Push It:** The Reckoning manifests as spectral echoes of past wrongs—liars automatically suffer narrative punishment (Keeper decides).

*Requires:* Familiar + Codex + Tier III.

*Obligation:* 7 segments.

**Rite of the Great Adjudication (High, 14 XP)** *Extended; Zone; No.*

**Materials:** A consecrated gavel or a great bell struck three times.

**Effect:** Convene an unseen tribunal. Shadows of former judges and wronged souls gather to preside. For the next session, disputes within the zone are judged formally: +2 dice to Command when speaking as arbiter, and honest testimony gains +1 die.

**Push It:** The tribunal's verdict echoes beyond the zone, affecting one major conflict elsewhere. Mark 2 SB (Hearts) as higher powers of judgment take notice.

*Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III.*

*Obligation:* 8 segments.

## Gallow's Bell Corruption Table

>p1cm p5cm p5cm

| Tier | Benefit   | Cost / Quirk |
|------|---|--------------|
| 1    | Judge's Intuition: +1 die to Insight when weighing truth. Must point out falsehoods when noticed, regardless of tact.   |              |
| 2    | Quiet Authority: Once/scene, treat a failed Command as success; mark 1 SB (Hearts). Cannot remain neutral in disputes; indecision costs 1 Fatigue.                    |              |
| 3    | Scales of Balance: Once/session, enforce an exchange of burdens. Compelled toward fairness even when it hinders you.  |              |
| 4    | Bell's Resonance: +2 dice when calling for judgment or demanding restitution. Suffer 1 Fatigue if wrongdoing is ignored.  |              |
| 5    | Reckoner's Call: Once/session, declare a "reckoning moment"—truth must surface or consequence falls. Cannot ignore pleas for justice without marking 1 SB (Spades).   |              |
| 6+   | Final Arbiter: Once/session, render an absolute decree; all must obey or suffer consequence. Mark +2 Obligation; the Bell demands you bear the weight of enforcement. |              |

### Grimmir, the Wild Speaker (Primal Wisdom & Seasonal Cycles)

*Lore.* Grimir walks the threshold between cultivated lands and untamed wilderness, embodying the ancient pact between humanity and the natural world. Neither wholly beast nor entirely human, Grimir speaks in root and stone, seasons and sap. Those who walk his path gain insight into nature's patterns, the tongues of leaf and fang, and mastery over the primal forces that shape the wild places—yet must choose which voice to trust: the cultivated mind or the feral heart.

"In the space between planted row and forest edge, where the first grain met the first acorn, Grimir waits. He speaks in the rustle of leaves, the migration of birds, and the patient growth of ancient oaks. Listen, and learn that true power comes not from dominion, but from harmony."

#### Domain Focus

- **Seasonal Wisdom:** cyclical patterns, timing, and natural rhythms
- **Verdant Speech:** communion with plant and animal life
- **Growth & Decay:** life-cycles, healing, and transformation
- **Boundary Keeping:** guarding wild spaces and the old order

#### Rite of the Speaking Seed (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Zone; No.*

**Materials:** A seed from the local biome or soil from undisturbed earth.

**Effect:** Establish communion with local plant life. Gain +1 die to *Survival* or *Investigation* when seeking information about the area. Plants in the zone provide minor assistance (parting grass, masking scent, concealing movement).

**Push It:** Flora actively aid for one exchange; mark 1 segment on **Primal Awareness**.

#### Rite of the Season's Turn (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Self; Yes.*

**Materials:** A token of the current season (flower, fruit, fallen leaf, budding branch).

**Effect:** Align with seasonal power. Choose one: +1 die to actions keyed to the season (Spring/Growth; Summer/Abundance; Autumn/Harvest; Winter/Endurance) or gain resistance to hazards of the season.

**Push It:** Extend the benefit to one ally; both mark **Exposure** to seasonal extremes.

#### Rite of Verdant Tongue (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Zone; Yes.*

**Materials:** A drop of honey, a grain of pollen, or morning dew cupped in both hands.

**Effect:** Speak with all plant and animal life in *Near*. Gain +2 dice to gather information about local conditions, threats, or movements. Beasts may offer minor aid (distraction, guidance, warning).

**Push It:** Compel one significant creature to aid directly (Resolve DV 4) or take a prophetic reading from an elder being; mark **+1 Obligation**.

**Obligation:** 5 segments.

**Rite of the Thornveil (Standard, 7 XP)** *Scene; Zone; Yes.*

**Materials:** A thorn, briar, or *thorny branch* woven into a protective circle.

**Effect:** Raise a living barrier. The zone gains the [WARD] tag against those who would harm the natural order. Allies gain +1 die to *Stealth/Defense*; aggressors suffer –1 die to approach. Start a **Natural Defense [6]** clock.

**Push It:** The barrier endures the full scene but draws territorial spirits; mark 1 SB (**Clubs**).

*Obligation:* 4 segments.

**Rite of the World's Wound (High, 13 XP)** *Extended; Zone; Yes.*

**Materials:** A sacred grove-site, a circle of stones, an offering of blood or seed.

**Effect:** Heal a blighted place or quicken a damaged ecosystem. Clear taint, restore fertility, awaken dormant forces. Gain +2 dice to related *Survival/Nature* actions in the region. Start an **Ecosystem Restoration [8]** clock.

**Push It:** The cure spreads to adjacent areas but unbalances another; mark 2 SB (**Diamonds**).

*Obligation:* 7 segments.

**Rite of the Cycle's Crown (High, 14 XP)** *Scene; Self/Zone; Yes.*

**Materials:** A circlet of woven branches, antlers, and seasonal tokens.

**Effect:** Become an avatar of the cycle. Choose two:

- **Seasonal Mastery:** +2 dice to all actions keyed to the current season.
- **Verdant Command:** Command plant life in *Near* automatically.
- **Cycle's Healing:** Remove one **Condition** or downgrade **Harm** by one level.
- **Growth's Protection:** Allies gain +1 **Armor** from natural cover.

Begin a **Seasonal Avatar [6]** clock.

**Push It:** Extend the blessings to all present; mark +2 **Obligation** and gain **Seasonal Attunement** (see Corruption).

*Obligation:* 8 segments.

**Grimmir's Corruption Table** >p1cm p6cm p6cm

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| Tier | Benefit   | Cost / Quirk |
|------|---|--------------|
| 1    | <b>Seasonal Sense:</b> +1 die to predict weather, seasonal shifts, or natural events. <b>Cyclical Mood:</b> –1 die to actions that defy the season (haste in winter, patience in spring). |              |
| 2    | <b>Verdant Whisper:</b> Once/scene, gain +2 dice when communing with nature. <b>Plant Speech:</b> Under stress, you address plants before people; –1 die to civilized social rolls.       |              |
| 3    | <b>Growth's Touch:</b> Once/session, accelerate natural healing or growth. <b>Seasonal Shift:</b> Demeanor changes with the season; allies note unsettling variance.                      |              |
| 4    | <b>Boundary Keeper:</b> Once/scene, sense violations of wild places at <i>Far</i> . <b>Wild Intolerance:</b> –1 die in dense urban/cultivated zones; physical discomfort in worked stone. |              |

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**5 Cycle's Memory:** Once/session, perfectly recall a natural event witnessed here. **Ecosystem Dependency:** Without daily time in nature, suffer **Fatigue 1**.

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**6+ Avatar of Seasons:** Once/session, embody a season fully (+3 dice to seasonal actions). **Nature's Claim:** Mark **+2 Obligation**; risk becoming bound to a specific biome.

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### Playstyle Notes

Grimmir rewards harmony over conquest, cyclical thinking, and fluent communication with the living world. Expect environmental problem-solving, seasonal planning, and hard choices at the boundary of field and forest. Power grows with attunement; the price is comfort, certainty, and the ease of polite society.

### **Ikasha, She Who Sleeps (Latent Potential & Shadow)**

**Lore.** Ikasha is the hush between footfalls, the patience of dark water, the black-feathered watcher at every threshold. In stillness she gathers what might be, in crossroads she whispers of what may yet come. Ravens circle her, bearing secrets between worlds. Her followers learn to move unseen and speak unremembered, becoming shadows that slip between what is and what could be.

Blow out the candle. If the room listens back, ask softly. At the next crossroads, the raven waits—and the shadow remembers your passing.

**Touch the Umbral Veil (Low, 4 XP)** *Action; Self; Yes (Stealth).* **Materials:** A piece of black cloth.

**Effect:** Start *Controlled* on one Stealth roll or gain +1 effect to hide/move quietly.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

**Push It:** Brief shadow-muffling (ignore one noisy tell), but leave a shadow-double that may echo you later at an ill moment—mark **1 SB (Diamonds)** as the shadow takes on its own agenda.

*Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

**Rite of the Crossroads Raven (Low, 5 XP)** *Scene; Zone; No.* **Materials:** Scatter three black feathers or carve a crossroads sign.

**Effect:** Summon an omen-raven; grant **+1 die** to a navigation, pursuit, or diversion action *or* force an enemy to hesitate at a fateful moment.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

**Push It:** The raven speaks one cryptic truth, but demands a secret in return—the raven’s insight costs you **1 SB (Hearts)** as it glimpses something you’d rather keep hidden.

*Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

**Draw from the Umbral Reservoir (Standard, 8 XP)** *Action; Self/Ally; No.* **Materials:** A vial of moonless-night water.

**Effect:** **+2 dice** to stealth, deception, or resolve *or* clear *Fatigue 1*.

**Push It:** Also gain one free escape attempt; next scene, you must help another cross a threshold or flee danger—shadow-debt calls for shadow-service.

*Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

**Secret Keeper’s Burden (Standard, 9 XP)** *Instant; Touch; No.* **Materials:** A lock of hair or intimate token.

**Effect:** Compel a truthful answer to one direct question (deep secrets may allow a Resolve test to resist).

**Push It:** Learn the answer *and* a key hidden emotion; target learns one of your secrets in return, carried by a raven to them in dreams—mark **1 SB (Hearts)** as the secret exchange creates unexpected complications.

*Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

**Become the Shadow at the Crossroads (High, 12 XP)** *Scene; Self; No.* **Materials:** Stand in absolute darkness or at a deserted crossroads.

**Effect:** Intangible to mundane harm; pass through thresholds and small gaps; **+2 dice** to Stealth; auto-succeed one escape. Cannot manipulate normal objects.

**Push It:** Interact once with a bound or thresholded object (a door, a lock, a sealed letter), but you become partially corporeal and vulnerable for one beat. Ravens may mark you—shadow-form destabilizes, mark **1 SB (Spades)** as reality asserts its claim.

*Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: **2 Boons**).*

*Obligation: 7 segments.*

## Ikasha's Corruption Table

>p1cm p5cm p5cm

| Tier | Benefit   | Cost / Quirk |
|------|---|--------------|
| 1    | Shadow's Whisper: +1 die to Deception when lying in darkness or through intermediaries.<br>Truth Echoes: Occasionally speak in riddles or half-truths without realizing it.   |              |
| 2    | Umbral Sight: Once per scene, gain +2 dice to Notice hidden threats or ambushes in dim light. Light Sensitivity: Suffer -1 die to rolls requiring keen vision in bright conditions.   |              |
| 3    | Raven's Memory: Never forget a secret told to you; can recall any whispered conversation with perfect clarity. Secret Burden: Must keep one troubling secret per Tier—suffer 1 Fatigue when actively trying to forget.                                |              |
| 4    | Threshold Walker: Once per session, move through one locked door, sealed letter, or magical barrier as if it weren't there. Crossroads Bound: Must pause at literal or metaphorical crossroads to "listen" before making major decisions.             |              |
| 5    | Shadow Debt: Once per session, call in a favor from someone who owes you a secret or debt—no questions asked. Obligation Web: Every secret you learn creates a subtle tie to its keeper; mark <b>1 SB (Diamonds)</b> when ignoring these connections. |              |
| 6+   | Umbral Ascendancy: Once per session, become completely undetectable to all non-magical senses for one scene. Reality Thinning: The boundary between what is and what could be grows thin—GM may introduce subtle alterations to reality around you.   |              |

### Inaea, Angel of the Spider (Webs & Fate)

**Lore.** Inaea sits in patient silence at the center of the unseen lattice. Where others see isolation, she sees threads—debt, affection, rivalry, loyalty—all binding mortals to each other. She is comforter and conspirator alike: the hearth-mother who eases grief with a warm hand, and the shadow-spinner who knots fates so they cannot slip free. Those who serve her learn to pull strands, tying allies closer and ensnaring foes until mercy or trap is inevitable.

“The thread that comforts is the same that binds. The knot that saves is also the snare.”

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#### Rites of Inaea

**Hearth-Thread Knot (Low, 4 XP)** *Scene; Near; Yes (link once).* **Materials:** A thread tied around a wrist or shared cup.

**Effect:** You and one ally are bound: both gain +1 die to Aid each other this scene. If one takes Harm, the other may reduce it by 1 Harm (Lesser) at cost of suffering it.

**Push It:** Extend to two allies; mark 1 SB (Hearts) as your own lifeline strains.

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**Snaring Filament (Low, 5 XP)** *Scene; Zone; No.* **Materials:** A knotted cord or woven scrap.

**Effect:** Lay an invisible snare in a lane/door. The first hostile to cross suffers -2 dice on their next action.

**Push It:** Trap multiple, but allies risk entanglement; mark 1 SB (Spades).

---

**Strand of Inevitability (Standard, 8 XP)** *Scene; Near; No.* **Materials:** Three colored threads braided.

**Effect:** Link two actors: when one acts, the other is dragged into consequence. Choose: force 1 SB on them, or gain +2 dice to a Setup/Prediction tied to the link.

**Push It:** Invert direction once; mark 1 SB (Diamonds) as the weave resists.

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**Weaver’s Glance (Standard, 7 XP)** *Instant; Self; No.* **Materials:** Observe a spider finish a web’s radial line.

**Effect:** Ask the Keeper for one hidden tie or leverage in play. Next Manipulate/Pressure exploiting it gains +1 effect.

**Push It:** Reveal a secret tie not declared; mark Exposure +1 as your own entanglements surface.

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**Binding Knot [OATH] (High, 11 XP)** *Scene; Near; No.* **Materials:** Silk loop tied between two hands, then cut/knotted.

**Effect:** Bind two parties to a vow. Breaking it forces 2 SB and marks the violator with a subtle tell.

**Push It:** Widen to four parties; each defines one loophole. Exploiting it causes 1 SB (Clubs).

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**Merciful Severing (High, 13 XP)** *Scene; Touch; No. Materials:* A white thread burned to ash.

**Effect:** Sever one harmful tie (a curse, obsession, or toxic bond). Remove one Condition or SB tied to it.

**Push It:** Sever without consent; mark +2 Obligation as the web recoils against you.

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Inaea's Corruption Table

>p1cm p5cm p5cm

**Tier Benefit Cost / Quirk**

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1 Hearth-Blessed: +1 die to Comfort or Aid. Must offer solace when asked, or mark 1 SB (Hearts).

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2 Web-Sense: Once/scene, sense hidden ties between two people. Empathic Overload: suffer 1 Fatigue when immersed in strong conflict.

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3 Binding Presence: Once/session, compel a promise unless target passes Resolve DV 4. Over-Attachment: -1 die when abandoning those you've aided or bound.

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4 Fate's Pattern: +2 dice predicting alliances, betrayals, or bargains. Manipulative Urge: mark 1 SB (Diamonds) when acting selflessly without agenda.

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5 Spider's Mercy: Once/session, sever one harmful tie for yourself or another. Hunger for Threads: suffer 1 Fatigue if a session passes without weaving a new tie.

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6+ Weaver's Dominion: Once/session, declare all ties in a scene bend toward you; gain +2 dice on social manipulation. Entanglement: mark +2 Obligation; those affected become subtly dependent on your will.

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## The Inquisitor Prime (Purity & Domination)

**Lore.** Among the Aeler Iron Avengers, zealots, and witch-hunters, the Inquisitor Prime is venerated as the hand of absolute purity and the sword of uncompromising order. Where others see nuance, the Inquisitor sees corruption; where others see difference, they see contamination.

Those who march beneath their sigil believe that no society can stand if it tolerates the impure or the disobedient. They hunt the arcane and the aberrant, not merely to destroy them, but to bind them as slaves to order—believing even the tainted may yet serve, so long as they are shackled.

The Inquisitor Prime appears in vision as a faceless figure clad in burnished iron, with eyes like furnace-doors and a voice like grinding chains. To serve them is to embrace judgment without mercy and to live in suspicion of all who walk outside the prescribed law.

For the faithful, doubt is treason; compassion is weakness; and freedom is the seed of ruin. In the wake of their followers, only silence and ash remain.

"Mercy is weakness. Purity is survival. Where corruption hides, we carve it out."

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### Rites of the Inquisitor Prime

**Rite of the Pure Flame (Low, 4 XP)** *Scene; Self; No. Materials:* Ash from a burned grimoire or sigil-scarred candle. **Effect:** Gain +2 dice to resist supernatural influence (fear, charm, possession) and +1 Armor vs. magical attacks. Undead/demonic foes suffer -1 die against you. **Push It:** Extend the effect to allies in Near range, but supernatural entities sense you immediately; mark 1 SB (Diamonds).

**Rite of the Unclouded Eye (Low, 5 XP)** *Scene; Self; No. Materials:* Silver dust stirred into holy water. **Effect:** +2 dice to Investigate/Insight when spotting illusions, glamours, or magical deception. Cannot be surprised by sorcery this scene. **Push It:** For one exchange, pierce *all* illusions; mark 1 SB (Hearts).

**Rite of the Cleansing Light [DISPEL][REVEAL] (Standard, 8 XP)** *Instant; Near; No. Materials:* A shard of blessed mirror and consecrated oil. **Effect:** Target a magical effect (ward, curse, enchantment). Test DV = Tier. – On Hit: Dispel. – On Partial: Weaken. – On Miss: The effect lashes back, generating 1 SB. **Push It:** Dispel absolutely and trace its caster; mark +1 Obligation and 1 SB (Spades).

**Rite of the Marked Prey [BIND][CURSE] (Standard, 7 XP)** *Scene; Near; No. Materials:* A belonging of the target mixed with blessed salt. **Effect:** Mark a supernatural target: they suffer -1 die to all rolls and cannot hide with illusion. You gain +1 die to track or strike them. Undead/demonic take +1 Harm from you. **Push It:** Target cannot hide anywhere and suffers Fatigue 1; mark +1 Obligation.

**Rite of the Consecrated Ground [WARD][BANISH] (High, 13 XP)** *Extended; Zone; No. Materials:* Relics from three rival faiths, salt, crushed gemstones. **Effect:** Consecrate an area. Supernatural entities must pass Spirit+Resolve (DV 4) to enter. Undead/demonic suffer -2 dice inside. The site gains the [WARD] tag. **Push It:** Permanently sanctify a larger area, but start a "Magical Dead Zone [6]" clock and mark +2 Obligation.

**Rite of the Final Admonition [CLEANSE][FOLLOW-UP] (High, 14 XP)** *Scene; Touch; No. Materials:* Ash from a destroyed spellbook, martyr's water, and the target's true name. **Effect:** Attempt to annihilate one supernatural foe. Target tests Spirit+Resolve (DV 5). On Fail: destroyed outright. On Success: suffer Harm 3 and -2 dice this scene. Once per target only. **Push It:** Absolute destruction leaves behind Sanctified Ground; mark 2 SB (Diamonds).

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## Inquisitor Prime's Corruption Table

&gt;p1cm p5cm p5cm

**Tier Benefit Cost / Quirk**


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1 Hunter's Instinct: +1 die to Notice magical auras or traps. Black-and-White Thinking: Must label others "pure" or "corrupt"; -1 die when navigating moral nuance.

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2 Sanctified Weapon: Once/scene, your weapon ignores 1 Armor/Resist from supernatural foes. Purity Zeal: Exposure to filth or corruption causes 1 Fatigue.

---

3 Cold Clarity: +2 dice to resist deception, illusion, or mental sway. Suspicion: -1 die to social rolls with anyone you suspect of "impurity."

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4 Burning Truth: Once/session, compel one target to answer truthfully (Resolve DV 4). Compulsion: Cannot ignore supernatural activity; hesitation costs 1 SB (Clubs).

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5 Sterile Aura: Once/session, emit a presence that suppresses supernatural abilities (-2 dice in Near). Purity Addiction: Suffer 1 Fatigue when in a supernatural area without taking action against it.

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6+ Absolute Judgement: Once/session, name a supernatural foe as utterly corrupt. For that scene, gain +3 dice against them. Monomania: When invoked, you tunnel on that target, suffering -2 dice to all else.

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### Isoka, Angel of Serpents (Transformation & Renewal)

**Lore.** Isoka, sister to Ikasha (Shadow) and Inaea (Mercy), completes the Triad of Transformation. Where thresholds and compassion mark her sisters' domains, Isoka teaches that every self is temporary—identity is a skin to be shed so growth can continue. Her serpents are omens and teachers: each cast skin a lesson in release; each venom a catalyst for necessary change. Those who walk her path become alchemists of the self, embracing dissolution as the first motion of rebirth.

Do not mourn the skin you shed. It was never meant to last. The venom that burns away the old self is the same that grants the strength to become new.

**Rite of the Venomous Benediction (Low, 5 XP)** *Scene; Touch; No. Materials:* A drop of serpent's venom or shed snakeskin.

**Effect:** Bless an ally's strike with serpentine malice. Their next successful attack this scene inflicts +1 Harm and the target must roll Resolve (DV 3) or become Poisoned (loses 1 die on physical rolls until cured).

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

**Push It:** The venom suffuses the caster too — gain +1 die to melee attacks this scene, but also suffer -1 die to Resolve tests against fear or corruption.

*Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

**Rite of the Loosening Skin (Low, 4 XP)** *Scene; Self; No. Materials:* Discarded snakeskin or loose thread.

**Effect:** Gain +1 die to resist an ongoing Condition this scene, or reroll one **1** on an escape/evasion. On success, you may declare the Condition *shed* and create a 2-segment *Transformation Residue* clock to ignore a similar effect later.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

**Push It:** Also ignore one minor movement penalty; leave a token of the old self that can be traced (mark 1 SB *Diamonds*).

*Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

**Rite of the Subtle Shift (Low, 5 XP)** *Scene; Self; No. Materials:* Palmed trinket passed hand-to-hand.

**Effect:** Fluid demeanor: +1 die to *Deceive* to pass as a nearby class/profession, or +1 Effect to blend into a new crowd/site. Create a 4-segment *Blended Identity* clock to downgrade one social complication.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

**Push It:** Bypass one minor identity check; you must maintain the false role to scene end (generate 1 SB *Hearts* if challenged).

*Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

**Rite of the Shedding [TRANSFORM] (Standard, 8 XP)** *Scene; Self; No. Materials:* Full change of clothing and an adopted mannerism.

**Effect:** +2 dice to resist one named ongoing Condition; once/session declare a minor physical contingency retroactively ("I packed the tool," "I took that step earlier"). Create a 6-segment *Shed Identity* clock.

**Push It:** Clear a temporary identity-based Minor Condition; your former identity stirs in the fiction

(ally, rival, or witness appears).

*Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

**Rite of the Forked Tongue [BIND] (Standard, 7 XP)** *Scene; Self/Near; No. Materials:* A harmless lie told to a mirror.

**Effect:** Ambiguous persuasion: when you *Sway* or *Command*, a success may generate *Diamonds* (leverage) instead of SB. Targets of deception must test (Wits+Insight DV 3) or suffer -1 die to future interactions with you this scene. Create a 4-segment *Verbal Venom* clock.

**Push It:** One carefully worded lie this scene is treated as true; the displaced truth seeks return (mark 1 SB *Hearts*).

*Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

**Rite of Complete Metamorphosis [TRANSFORM][WARD] (High, 13 XP)** *Scene; Self; No.*

**Materials:** Identity kit (garb, voice, tokens) and a serpent's shed skin.

**Effect:** Full appearance/voice change. Begin *Controlled* on *Deceive/Stealth*; once/scene declare a minor contingency retroactively. You are [*WARD*]ed against recognition by former acquaintances. Create an 8-segment *New Identity* clock.

**Push It:** Spoof scent/biometric once; your original identity partially unmoors and acts independently (mark 2 SB *Spades/Hearts*).

*Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).*

*Obligation:* 7 segments.

**Rite of the Cast-Off History [UNWARD][CURSE] (High, 14 XP)** *Extended; Self; No.*

**Materials:** Burning or defacing mundane records of the old life.

**Effect:** Upon completion, common records and casual memories of that identity become unreliable; trackers via that identity suffer -2 dice (magic and intimates still apply). Gain +2 dice to rolls with the new identity. Create a 6-segment *Erased Past* clock.

**Push It:** A plausible "death" occurs for the old identity; one intimate senses deception but cannot prove it (mark 1 SB *Clubs*).

*Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).*

*Obligation:* 7 segments.

## Isoka's Corruption Table

>p1cm p5cm p5cm

| Tier | Benefit  | Cost / Quirk |
|------|--|--------------|
| 1    | Serpent's Gaze: +1 die on Intimidation or social rolls using menace. Cold-Blooded: -1 die on Empathy or warmth-based Persuasion.   |              |
| 2    | Shed the Old Skin: Once per session, negate one Condition (Fear, Fatigue, Poison) by discarding it like molted skin. Mark of Scales: Faint reptilian patches visible, causing +1 SB in social encounters if noticed. |              |
| 3    | Venomous Strike: Bite or kiss may inflict Poison (DV 2). Hungry Coil: Must consume raw meat or eggs weekly, or mark 1 Fatigue.   |              |

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4 Serpentine Grace: +2 dice to Stealth or Evasion rolls, ignore minor movement penalties.  
Slitted Eyes: Bright light imposes -1 die on Notice rolls.

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5 Hypnotic Sway: Once per scene, roll Presence + Lore vs. Resolve (DV 3) to mesmerize a single target.  
Forked Tongue: -1 die on Deception when attempting warmth or sincerity.

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6+ Ascendant Form: Partial serpent-body; immune to mundane poison, +2 dice on Body rolls.  
Monstrous Aspect: Cannot easily hide your nature; every session begins with 1 SB that may be compelled by the GM.

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### Khemesh, the Abyssal Maw (Depths, Inexorability, Eldritch Terror)

**Lore.** Khemesh is not merely a lord of the depths but the hunger beneath them, a pressure older than seas. Those who bargain with him are marked by the abyss—seen in the way shadows cling, in the whispers heard when no voice speaks, in the certainty that all things will sink.

In the trench without light, the Maw waits. Even silence drowns.

**Whisper of the Trench (Low, 4 XP)** *Instant; Near; No.* **Effect:** Target hears impossible echoes and suffers **1 die** on their next action.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

**Push It:** Echoes coil in your own skull—take **Fatigue 1**, but the target also loses their next minor action.

**Requires:** Familiar (*Invoke: 1 Boon*).

**Rite of Crushing Silence (Low, 5 XP)** *Scene; Zone; No.* **Materials:** A broken shell filled with ink-dark water.

**Effect:** Establish an oppressive silence; sound carries only as distorted whispers. Enemies in the zone gain **1 die** to coordination or morale-driven actions.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

**Push It:** A single enemy's voice is stolen entirely for the scene.

**Requires:** Familiar (*Invoke: 1 Boon*).

**Pressure of the Maw (Standard, 7 XP)** *Instant; Near; No.* **Materials:** A length of rusted chain submerged in water.

**Effect:** Target is pinned by invisible crushing force: treat as [ENTANGLE] with **Great Effect** if underwater or confined.

**Push It:** Inflict **Fatigue 1** on the target in addition to the restraint.

**Requires:** Familiar + Codex (*Invoke: 1 Boon*).

**Rite of the Abyssal Vision (Standard, 9 XP)** *Scene; Self; No.* **Effect:** You perceive the world as Khemesh does—fractured, alien, crushing. Gain +2 dice to Notice and Arcana, and may ask one "true nature" question about a foe or structure.

**Cost:** When the scene ends, you suffer **Exposure +1** as your perception warps.

**Push It:** Extend the vision to one ally, but both take **Fatigue 1**.

**Requires:** Familiar + Codex (*Invoke: 1 Boon*).

**The Maw Opens (High, 12 XP)** *Scene; Zone; No.* **Materials:** A sealed vessel of abyssal water, broken open.

**Effect:** Reality in the zone folds inward like the crushing deep:

- Enemies act at **Desperate Position** by default.
- Each beat, the Keeper may force **1 SB** (Spades/Clubs favored).
- Structures, vessels, or wards fracture as if under immense weight.

**Push It:** For one beat, declare a single enemy "crushed" (severe harm/effect). You immediately suffer **Fatigue 2** and +1 Obligation.

**Requires:** Familiar + Codex + Tier III (*Invoke: 2 Boons*). **Obligation:** 8 segments.

## Khemesh's Corruption Table

>p1cm p5cm p5cm

| Tier | Benefit   | Cost / Quirk |
|------|---|--------------|
| 1    | Abyssal Resilience: +1 die to resist fear and pressure-based effects. Claustrophobic Comfort: Suffer -1 die in open, well-lit spaces or above ground.   |              |
| 2    | Crushing Insight: Once per scene, treat a failed Investigation or Arcana roll as a success, but mark 1 SB (Clubs). Weight of Knowledge: Suffer 1 Fatigue when learning new information that confirms your pessimistic worldview.  |              |
| 3    | Silent Hunter: Gain +2 dice to Stealth in dark or confined spaces. Voice of the Deep: When speaking normally, your voice sounds distant and hollow, causing -1 die to social rolls requiring warmth or clarity.   |              |
| 4    | Pressure Adaptation: Immune to underwater combat penalties; gain +1 die to resist drowning. Crushing Presence: Allies within Near range suffer -1 die to morale-based rolls due to your oppressive aura.  |              |
| 5    | Abyssal Sight: Once per session, see through all illusions and deceptions for one exchange, but the truth is always bleak. Fractured Perception: Suffer -1 die to rolls requiring normal vision; the world appears warped and alien.  |              |
| 6+   | Inevitable Descent: Once per session, declare that all escape routes in a zone are sealed. For the scene, enemies cannot flee and suffer -2 dice to mobility actions. Hunger of the Maw: Mark +2 Obligation when using this power; you must consume something (food, memory, hope) to maintain your strength. |              |

### Livaea, the Crimson Courtier (Seduction & Social Binding)

**Lore.** In salons where laughter cuts deeper than daggers and promises bind tighter than chains, the Crimson Courtier reigns. She is the whisper behind the curtain, the smile that sells secrets, the velvet hand that closes a cage. Her servants are not conquerors but consorts, binding others through song, wit, and the perilous glamour of intimacy. Where Mab entangles through fae trickery, Livaea rules through allure, performance, and the hunger for connection.

“A promise sealed with desire is harder to break than any oath sworn in iron.”

#### Domain Focus

- **Seductive Arts:** Charm, persuasion, social manipulation
- **Social Binding:** Oaths of affection, courtly promises, emotional debts
- **Performance Magic:** Dance, music, appearance enhancement
- **Court Intrigue:** Gossip, reputation, social standing

#### Rite of the Velvet Whisper (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Near; Standard Push*

**Materials:** Silk ribbon touched to lips.

**Effect:** Your private words carry irresistible charm. Gain +1 die to Sway one target in confidential conversation.

**Push It:** Target feels compelled to share a secret in return; mark Exposure +1.

#### Rite of the Shared Cup (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Touch; Standard Push*

**Materials:** Shared wine, tea, or perfume.

**Effect:** Create temporary bond of intimacy. Both parties gain +1 die when aiding each other socially.

**Push It:** Bond deepens to emotional empathy; both sense moods but suffer -1 die to deceive each other.

#### Rite of the Binding Vow [OATH] (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Near; Standard Push*

**Materials:** Token exchanged between parties.

**Effect:** Forge magical promise. Both gain +1 Effect when cooperating; breach inflicts 1 SB (Hearts). 6-segment *Vow Strength* clock.

**Push It:** Breach also causes visible social stain; mark 1 SB (Clubs).

#### Rite of the Courtesan’s Guise (Standard, 7 XP) *Scene; Self; Standard Push*

**Materials:** Perfume or cosmetics applied ritually.

**Effect:** Assume perfect social poise. Gain +2 dice to Sway or Performance in refined settings.

**Push It:** Become social centerpiece; all attention focuses on you with +1 Effect.

#### Rite of the Crimson Masquerade [WARD][BIND] (High, 13 XP) *Ritual; Zone; High Push*

**Materials:** Circle of red candles, music, ritual dance.

**Effect:** Create enchanted social space. Allies gain +1 die to social rolls; crude intimidation suffers -1 die. Creates 8-segment *Masquerade Charm* clock.

**Push It:** Effects linger after leaving zone; +2 Obligation.

**Obligation:** 7 segments base.

**Rite of the Eternal Court [COMMAND][VEIL] (High, 14 XP)** *Extended; Zone; High Push*

**Materials:** Throne draped in scarlet, assembled court.

**Effect:** Become social sovereign. All social interactions slant toward your influence (+1 Effect to you, -1 die to opposition). 10-segment *Court Dominion* clock.

**Push It:** Newcomers test Resist (DV 3) or become briefly devoted; +2 Obligation.

**Obligation:** 8 segments base.

## Livaea's Corruption Manifestations

>p2cm p6cm p6cm

| Level | Benefit  | Cost / Quirk  |
|-------|--|---|
| 1     | <b>Silver Tongue:</b> +1 die to Persuade or Sway in intimate settings.               | <b>Need for Attention:</b> -1 die when acting unnoticed or ignored.       |
| 2     | <b>Heart's Insight:</b> Once per scene, +2 dice to detect hidden desires or motives. | <b>Emotional Drain:</b> 1 Fatigue if denied meaningful social connection. |
| 3     | <b>Enchanting Presence:</b> Allies in Near gain +1 die to social actions.            | <b>Rivalry Magnet:</b> Often attract envy or social competition.          |
| 4     | <b>Velvet Command:</b> Once per session, issue compelling suggestion (Resist DV 4).  | <b>Temptation's Pull:</b> -1 die to resist appealing offers.              |
| 5     | <b>Court Network:</b> Once per session, call on contacts for information.            | <b>Glamour Dependence:</b> -1 die when isolated from social circles.      |
| 6+    | <b>Sovereign Allure:</b> Once per session, dominate gathering (Resist DV 5).         | <b>Addicted to Adoration:</b> +2 Obligation; suffer if denied praise.     |

**Playstyle Notes** Livaea excels in social manipulation and courtly intrigue. Followers become masters of persuasion, binding others through desire and obligation. The corruption progression leads toward becoming a social virtuoso who cannot function without admiration and connection. Ideal for players who enjoy social combat, political maneuvering, and characters who wield influence as their primary weapon.

### Lunara, The Silver Quiet (Moon, Mystery & Hidden Ways)

**Lore.** Lunara walks where torchlight falters: crossroads, tidal edges, shadowed sanctuaries. She is the whisper beneath silver skies, a torch-bearing guide to mysteries that lie between waking and dream. The ancients know her as triple-formed: maiden of new light, mother of full radiance, crone of waning shadow. Her worshippers—night-scholars, dream-walkers, and hedge-priests—seek her not for power over others, but for passage, reflection, and revelation.

Her gifts are gentle yet perilous: a mirror that reveals as much of the seeker as the sought, a key that opens ways better left closed, a light that makes the unseen plain. Her sigil is the silver spiral, etched in water, mirror, or stone.

“Three faces gaze from the moon. Which one watches you tonight?”

**Rite of the Moonlit Mirror (Low, 4 XP)** *Scene; Self; No. Materials:* A mirror or bowl of still water under moonlight.

**Effect:** Peer beyond surfaces. +1 die to detect illusions, veils, or hidden motives. Once per scene, ask one veiled question about the present; the Keeper answers in riddle or omen.

**Push It:** Glimpse too deeply—gain the truth, but mark 1 Exposure.

*Requires: Familiar.*

**Rite of the Crescent Whisper (Low, 5 XP)** *Instant; Near; No. Materials:* A silvered thread knotted three times.

**Effect:** Deliver a secret thought to a single target; they hear it as if whispered beside them. Gain +1 die to aid their next action.

**Push It:** The whisper echoes beyond its mark, creating 1 SB (Hearts) as others sense your intrusion.

*Requires: Familiar.*

**Rite of the Triple Road [PASSAGE] (Standard, 8 XP)** *Scene; Zone; No. Materials:* Three lit candles set at a crossroads.

**Effect:** Reveal a hidden path, door, or liminal way. Allies gain +2 dice to traverse or escape; enemies suffer -1 die to pursue.

**Push It:** The road opens farther than intended—toward an unknown realm. Mark 1 SB (Spades).

*Requires: Familiar + Codex.*

**Rite of the Lunar Conjunction [REVEAL] (Standard, 7 XP)** *Scene; Self; No. Materials:* A ring of herbs burned beneath a dark moon.

**Effect:** Commune with veiled knowledge or subtle entities. Ask two questions; answers come in omen, dream-symbol, or paradox.

**Push It:** The answer is too direct—gain it fully, but mark 1 SB (Diamonds).

*Requires: Familiar + Codex.*

**Rite of the Silver Key [UNWARD][PASSAGE] (High, 13 XP)** *Scene; Zone; No. Materials:* A silver key forged or anointed under a new moon.

**Effect:** Open a way where none should exist—between places, states, or wards. Creates a 6-segment *Gateway* clock.

**Push It:** Something else comes through; mark 2 SB (Clubs).

*Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III.*

**Rite of the Moonbound Ascendant [TRANSFORM][WARD] (High, 14 XP) *Extended; Self;*****No. Materials:** A cherished item surrendered under moonlight.**Effect:** Enter a heightened lunar state. Choose two:

- +2 dice to Wits or Spirit,
- Resist fear/beguilement,
- Speak with unseen presences,
- Trace hidden connections with +2 Effect.

Begin a 6-segment *Moonbound* clock.**Push It:** Make it enduring—mark Harm 2 and a permanent lunar stigma.*Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III.***Lunara's Corruption Table**

&gt;p1cm p5cm p5cm

| Tier | Benefit  | Cost / Quirk |
|------|--|--------------|
| 1    | Moonlit Sight: +1 die to detect hidden or liminal presences. Shadows cling: eyes glimmer in dim light, unnerving the uninitiated.  |              |
| 2    | Silver Memory: Recall any event witnessed under moonlight with perfect clarity. Dreams blur: suffer strange, intrusive visions when sleeping.  |              |
| 3    | Quiet Step: +1 die to stealth or subtle speech acts. Tongue falters: -1 die to open confrontation or commands.   |              |
| 4    | Seam-Walker: Once per scene, cross a minor threshold unseen. Alien aura: mortals feel watched, suffering unease in your company.   |              |
| 5    | Triple Aspect: Call on maiden, mother, or crone aspect for +2 dice in related rolls. Dissociation: after use, lose sense of time or self until rested.   |              |
| 6+   | Silver Ascendancy: Once per session, unveil hidden truths of an entire scene. +3 dice to perception/investigation. Bound to the Veil: Mark +2 Obligation. Your presence slips between worlds, inviting lunar forces to notice you. |              |

## Mab, Queen of Courts (Glamour & Bargain)

*Lore.* Mab rules not from throne or blade, but from dance and debt. She is the smile that binds, the jest that ensnares, the hostess who makes guests complicit in her game. To speak in her Court is to pay; to receive her token is to owe.

Where others rule by force, Mab rules by etiquette, glamour, and the hidden hook in every gift. Her followers thrive on charm, wit, and story, spreading webs of bargains too subtle to escape. The Cantor's Path sings her name most sweetly, for every verse carries a price.

“Every laugh is a promise. Every promise is a debt. Every debt belongs to Mab.”

### Domain Focus

- **Fae Glamour:** Illusions, enchantments, faerie magic
- **Social Bargains:** Oaths, promises, debt economy
- **Courtly Intrigue:** Etiquette, wordplay, social games
- **Trickster Arts:** Mischief, cleverness, ironic twists

#### Rite of the Trickster’s Bargain (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Near; Standard Push*

**Materials:** Token freely given (flower, coin, ribbon).

**Effect:** Offer fae bargain. Target accepts (+1 die to both for terms) or refuses (target marks 1 Stress). 4-segment *Bargain’s Edge* clock.

**Push It:** Betrayal inflicts Harm 1 (Stress); start *Oathbreaker* [4] clock.

#### Rite of Courtly Guise [VEIL] (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Self; Standard Push*

**Materials:** Sprig or silver thread worn visibly.

**Effect:** Subtle glamour grants +1 die to social rolls in refined settings. You appear as expected rank/guest.

**Push It:** Mask one personal tell; first probing question generates 1 SB (Hearts).

#### Rite of Token of Favor (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Near; Standard Push*

**Materials:** Ribbon, ring, or charm bestowed ritually.

**Effect:** Ally gains +1 die to social actions before witnesses; you gain +1 Effect aiding them. 6-segment *Favor’s Weight* clock.

**Push It:** Token silences hecklers for one exchange; you mark +1 Exposure.

#### Rite of Mirror of Motives [REVEAL] (Standard, 8 XP) *Action; Near; Standard Push*

**Materials:** Polished shard or hand mirror.

**Effect:** Learn target’s immediate social aim; gain +1 die exploiting it this scene. Creates 4-segment *Insight* clock.

**Push It:** Surface concealed insult; generate 1 SB (Hearts) against target.

#### Rite of the Price Agreed [OATH] (Standard, 9 XP) *Scene; Near; Standard Push*

**Materials:** Equal tokens exchanged ritually.

**Effect:** Bind bargain. Breach forces 1 SB (Hearts/Diamonds) and reputation damage. 8-segment *Bargain Binding* clock.

**Push It:** Add minor boon (+1 die once); you suffer 1 SB if breached.

**Rite of Sovereign Glamour [VEIL][REVEAL] (High, 13 XP)** *Ritual; Zone; High Push***Materials:** Circle of silk or green felt, courtly music.**Effect:** Establish fae court. Allies +1 die to social rolls; blunt threats -1 die. Once strip illusion. 10-segment *Court Dominion* clock.**Push It:** Impose Court Law (e.g., "no steel"); violators suffer 2 SB.**Obligation:** 7 segments.**Rite of the Eternal Masquerade [WARD][BIND] (High, 14 XP)** *Extended; Large Zone; High Push***Materials:** Masks for all participants, enchanted music.**Effect:** Create lasting glamour court. All social magic gains +1 Effect; outsiders suffer -1 die to perceive truths here.**Push It:** Masquerade persists between scenes; start *Glamour Maintenance* [8] clock.**Obligation:** 8 segments.

## Mab's Corruption Manifestations

&gt;p2cm p6cm p6cm

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| Level | Benefit | Cost / Quirk |
|-------|---------|--------------|
|-------|---------|--------------|

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1 **Glamour's Touch:** +1 die to Deception/Performance with stories. **Truthbound:** Cannot speak plain falsehood; only mislead.

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2 **Fairy Step:** Once per scene, flicker Near as if teleporting. **Iron Weakness:** 1 Fatigue if touched by cold iron.

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3 **Trickster's Delight:** Spend 1 Boon to twist Complication advantageously. **Compulsive Jest:** Must play trick each session or mark 1 SB.

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4 **Hospitality's Gift:** Allies sharing food/drink gain +1 die to Resolve. **Hospitality Bound:** Harming guests costs +2 Obligation.

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5 **Fae Sight:** See veils/glamours; +2 dice to Notice. **Truth Debt:** Must accept "fair" trades or suffer.

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6+ **Twilight Crown:** Once/session, declare Oath; +2 dice to fulfillment. **Oathbound:** Breaking inflicts Harm 1 and starts [6] clock.

---

**Playstyle Notes** Mab excels in social manipulation and fae-style bargaining. Followers become masters of subtle magic, binding others through oaths and glamour. The corruption progression leads toward becoming fae-touched, gaining power over truth and perception at the cost of mortal constraints. Ideal for players who enjoy social intrigue, wordplay, and characters who prefer cleverness over brute force.

### Maelstraeus, The Infernal Bargainer (Commerce & Exchange)

**Lore.** Maelstraeus is the Infernal Bargainer, the Prince of Ledgers, the shadow at every crossroads of exchange. He was born from the first inequity, when one gave and another took, and debt was chained into existence.

He does not trade fairly—he trades \*inevitably\*. Every pact carries a hidden surcharge, every kindness is collateral, every smile hides an interest rate. His realm is an endless market where stalls never close, contracts burn with invisible ink, and every bargain tilts toward him.

To serve Maelstraeus is to admit the world itself is transactional—that all things, from love to breath to soul, are bound in his ledger. He collects. He always collects.

A deal is never even. The scales tilt; the Merchant smiles. All debts come due.

**Rite of Uneven Scales (Low, 4 XP)** *Scene; Near; No. Materials:* A scale where one pan is shaved or weighted.

**Effect:** Establish a trading ground. All parties gain +1 die to negotiate—but you bank a [4] *Hidden Profit* clock to spend reducing complications in your favor.

**Push It:** Compel one party to reveal their desperation or hidden term; mark 1 SB (Hearts).

*Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

**Rite of the Merchant's Gaze (Low, 5 XP)** *Scene; Self; No. Materials:* A coin pressed flat until its face is erased.

**Effect:** +2 dice to appraise goods, favors, or leverage. Create a [6] *Profit Margin* clock.

**Push It:** Perceive emotional or hidden value as well, but mark +1 Exposure and 1 SB (Diamonds).

*Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

**Rite of the Weighted Contract [OATH] (Standard, 8 XP)** *Scene; Near; No. Materials:* Two items, one secretly flawed.

**Effect:** Bind a bargain. Both sides gain +1 Effect if honored, but you may secretly shift 1 advantage in your favor. Create a [6] *Shrewd Bargain* clock.

**Push It:** Breaking terms lashes the weaker party with 1 SB (Hearts/Clubs).

*Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

**Rite of the Seared Seal [BIND] (Standard, 7 XP)** *Scene; Touch; No. Materials:* A parchment scorched before stamping.

**Effect:** Bind an agreement. You gain +1 die to enforce; breakers suffer -2 dice in all dealings until next session. Create an [8] *Burned Ledger* clock.

**Push It:** Breach burns the sigil into the breaker's hand, inflicting Harm 1 and 1 SB (Spades).

*Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

**Rite of the Infernal Bazaar [WARD][COMMAND] (High, 13 XP)** *Scene; Zone; No. Materials:* A canopy stitched from debtor's contracts.

**Effect:** Create a cursed market-zone. Allies gain +1 Effect on bargains and may reroll one failed negotiation. Enemies suffer -1 die to deception. Start a [10] *Predatory Market* clock.

**Push It:** Attract wealthy powers eager—and doomed—to deal. Mark 2 SB (Hearts/Clubs).

*Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).*

*Obligation:* 7 segments.

**Rite of the Cosmic Ledger** [CLEANSE][CURSE] (**High, 14 XP**) *Extended; Self; No. Materials:* A book that writes entries in your blood.

**Effect:** Once/session, convert one resource into another (e.g. Boon → Fatigue, Obligation → SB). All trades tilt slightly in your favor. Start a [6] *Balance Owed* clock.

**Push It:** Make the trade brutally lopsided; create a [6] *Cosmic Debt* clock and mark 2 SB (Diamonds).

*Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).*

*Obligation: 8 segments.*

## Corruption of Maelstraeus

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### Tier Gift Burden

1 Appraiser's Eye: +1 die to judge value in goods, favors, or leverage. Transactional Reflex: Must assign a "cost" to every interaction; -1 die to selfless acts.

2 Sharp Dealer: Once/scene, reroll a failed bargain. Compulsive Trade: Must haggle or strike a deal when value is present—even if destructive.

3 Merchant's Fortune: +1 die to predict or exploit markets. Greed's Hunger: Suffer 1 Fatigue if you allow profit or advantage to pass untaken.

4 Infernal Credit: Once/session, call in a major favor (merchant prince, syndicate, guild). Debt Anchor: Draw in exploitative offers; refusing marks 1 SB (Diamonds).

5 Price of Truth: Once/scene, see the hidden worth of any item, pact, or person. Tagged by Price: See every being as a commodity; -1 die to genuine intimacy.

6+ Market Tyrant: Once/session, impose absolute dominance over a domain of trade; all exchanges bend to you. Cosmic Recompense: Mark +2 Obligation; the universe exacts repayment in brutal, unexpected form.

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## Malachai, the Cruel Messenger (Curses & Corruption)

*Lore.* Once a divine messenger tasked with delivering painful truths, Malachai became obsessed with the beauty of destructive revelations. When she began delivering false hope alongside real curses, she was bound in chains of black iron. Her followers learn that power demands suffering, mastering gifts that devour from within. Vampirism, lycanthropy, and other "cursed" conditions flow from her influence.

"I offer you everything you desire, and everything you fear. The payment comes later."

### Domain Focus

- **Cursed Gifts:** Power with hidden costs, Faustian bargains
- **Corruptive Power:** Tainted blessings, twisted miracles
- **False Salvation:** Hope that destroys, beautiful lies
- **Supernatural Afflictions:** Cursed conditions, transformative curses

#### Rite of the Honeyed Curse (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Self or Near; Standard Push*

**Materials:** Blood mixed with sweet wine.

**Effect:** Target gains +2 dice to next roll. If successful, count as Triumph. Target takes 1 Corruption (unresistable).

**Push It:** Grant +3 dice and auto-Triumph; inflict 2 Corruption instead.

#### Rite of the Binding Curse (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Touch; Standard Push*

**Materials:** Broken chain link or iron shackle.

**Effect:** Grant supernatural strength/resistance. Target gains +1 die to physical actions but suffers Fatigue 1 if they don't perform related dominance act.

**Push It:** +2 dice but Fatigue 2; mark 1 SB (Spades) as curse hunger grows.

#### Rite of the False Dawn [ILLUSION] (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Near; Standard Push*

**Materials:** Meteoric iron shard blessed by false light.

**Effect:** Bestow gift with hidden curse. Target gains significant advantage but accrues 4-segment *Corruption* clock. When full, suffers related curse.

**Push It:** Gift more powerful; clock advances 2 segments; mark 1 SB (Diamonds).

#### Rite of the Cruel Transformation [CURSE] (Standard, 9 XP) *Scene; Touch; Standard Push*

**Materials:** Holy water mixed with graveyard dust.

**Effect:** Infect target with supernatural condition (vampiric hunger, bestial rage, shadow-bind). Lasts scene. 6-segment *Transformation* clock.

**Push It:** Condition becomes permanent; +1 die to relevant actions; mark 1 SB (Hearts).

**Rite of the Messenger's Burden [BANE] (High, 13 XP)** *Ritual; Self; High Push***Materials:** Manacles worn while speaking her name.**Effect:** Channel Malachai directly. Gain +2 dice to one action per beat this scene, but each use marks 1 SB as her influence spreads. 8-segment *Corruption's Grip* clock.**Push It:** +3 dice but mark 2 SB and suffer Fatigue 1; her voice becomes permanent.**Obligation:** 7 segments base.**Rite of the Corrupted Gospel [CURSE][WARD] (High, 14 XP)** *Extended; Zone; High Push***Materials:** Chapel bell cracked by divine lightning.**Effect:** Corrupt sacred space. Supernatural effects gain +1 Effect but generate +1 SB on failure. Blessings become curses. 10-segment *Divine Perversion* clock.**Push It:** Corruption spreads to adjacent areas; mark 3 SB (Diamonds).**Obligation:** 8 segments base.

## Malachai's Corruption Manifestations

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| Level | Benefit  | Cost / Quirk |
|-------|--|--------------|
| 1     | <b>Sharpened Senses:</b> +1 die to Notice in dim light. <b>Unsettling Presence:</b> -1 die to social warmth checks.                            |              |
| 2     | <b>Primal Vigor:</b> +1 die to Athletics and physical actions. <b>Dark Hunger:</b> 1 Fatigue if day passes without feeding (blood/rare herbs). |              |
| 3     | <b>Unnatural Resilience:</b> Once per session, resist one Condition. <b>Beastly Tells:</b> Failures cause visible physical changes.            |              |
| 4     | <b>Cursed Vigor:</b> Natural weapons count as magical; +1 Effect. <b>Transformed Body:</b> Permanent physical change (eyes, skin, etc.).       |              |
| 5     | <b>Regenerative Curse:</b> Heal 1 Fatigue or Condition per rest. <b>Corruption's Price:</b> Pushing rites adds permanent Corruption.           |              |
| 6+    | <b>Monstrous Ascendant:</b> +2 dice to Body-based actions; significant power. <b>Loss of Self:</b> GM may compel with curse-driven behavior.   |              |

**Playstyle Notes** Malachai offers power that corrupts from within. Followers gain immediate benefits but accumulate permanent drawbacks. The corruption progression leads toward becoming a supernatural creature with great power but diminishing humanity. Ideal for players who enjoy tragic characters, Faustian bargains, and exploring the price of power.

## Rivalries & Obligations

### Major Rivalries:

- **The Oath of Flame & Light:** Direct opposition—sacred vows vs. corrupted promises
- **The Penitent Lich:** Opposite approach to curses—atonement vs. corruption
- **Livaea:** Both use social manipulation but with different goals

#### Hard Obligation Triggers:

- **7+ Segments:** Must corrupt something pure—defile a sacred site, break a true vow
- **10+ Segments:** Malachai's voice becomes overwhelming; refusal risks losing powers

## Mor'iraath, the Destroyer

**Lore.** Mor'iraath is the principle of absolute annihilation—the void that leaves no trace, no memory, no possibility of return. Where others corrupt or decay, Mor'iraath eliminates. His followers become agents of finality, wielding the power to unmake what others merely damage. He delights not in the process of destruction, but in the perfect moment of ceasing-to-be. To serve him is to embrace the beauty of endings and the power that comes from making things never have been.

Every treasure is fuel. Every pact is tinder. Ash is the only inheritance.

**Rite of the Perfect Ending (Low, 4 XP)** *Instant; Touch; No. Materials:* The final component of something (last brick, final word, closing signature).

**Effect:** Cause one small thing to cease existing entirely—no remains, no trace, no possibility of reconstruction. Gain +1 die to rolls involving finality or absolute conclusions.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

**Push It:** Ending creates a beneficial void—gain 1 Boon as space opens for something else; mark 1 SB (Spades) as reality adjusts to the absence.

*Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

**Rite of the Unmaking Gaze (Low, 5 XP)** *Scene; Self; No. Materials:* A lens of obsidian or void-glass.

**Effect:** +2 dice to identify the precise weakness that will cause complete collapse. See the “breaking point” in any structure, plan, or construct. Next destructive action against the identified target gains +1 Effect.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

**Push It:** Gaze becomes prophetic—see three possible endings for one target; choose which occurs but mark 1 SB (Diamonds) as fate resists your vision.

*Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

**Rite of the Cleansing Flame [AREA][VOID] (Standard, 8 XP)** *Scene; Zone; No. Materials:* Fuel that was once part of what you intend to destroy.

**Effect:** Create a fire that burns not just substance but essence—what is consumed by this flame never existed. Zone becomes [VOID]—things that enter may cease to exist. Enemies suffer -2 dice to preservation/continuation actions.

**Push It:** Flame becomes selective—choose what is unmade and what remains; mark +1 Obligation as you assume judgment over existence itself.

*Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

**Rite of the Absolute Negation [BANISH][CURSE] (Standard, 7 XP)** *Instant; Near; No. Materials:* The complete destruction of something that represents the target (lock for door, name for person, fragment for whole).

**Effect:** Target suffers -2 dice to resist any effect that would cause their non-existence. If reduced to Harm 0 by your actions, they are [BANISHED]ed from all realities—they never were, never could be.

**Push It:** Negation becomes retroactive—target never existed in your presence; mark 2 SB (Hearts) as timeline rewrites around their absence.

*Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

**Rite of the Unraveling** [WARD][CONSUME] (**High, 13 XP**) *Scene; Touch; No. Materials:* The foundational element of what you wish to unmake (keystone, cornerstone, source code).

**Effect:** Touch causes cascading dissolution—target and all things fundamentally connected to it begin immediate unmaking. Test DV = Complexity. Success: target and connections cease to exist. Partial: significant damage, accelerated decay. Miss: backlash, mark 2 SB.

**Push It:** Unraveling becomes contagious—similar things in Near range also begin unmaking; mark +2 Obligation.

*Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).*

*Obligation: 7 segments.*

**Rite of the Final Void** [TRANSFORM][VOID] (**High, 14 XP**) *Extended; Zone; No. Materials:* Complete dedication of the space to Mor’iraath’s principle of non-existence.

**Effect:** Zone becomes a pocket of absolute negation. Anything that enters ceases to exist after 1d4 rounds unless they make Spirit + Resolve test (DV 5) each round. Space itself becomes [VOID]—cannot be entered without risk of unmaking.

**Push It:** Void becomes permanent and expands at 1 segment per scene; mark Harm 2 and +3 Obligation as you become partially unmade yourself.

*Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).*

*Obligation: 8 segments.*

## Corruption of Mor’iraath

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| Tier | Benefit   | Cost / Quirk |
|------|---|--------------|
| 1    | Ending’s Sight: +1 die to Notice when something is approaching its natural conclusion or final form. Completion Anxiety: Must resist urge to “finish” things prematurely; suffer -1 die to rolls involving patience or process.   |              |
| 2    | Perfect Strike: Once per scene, your destructive action gains +2 dice and ignores all resistance to ending/ceasing. Destruction Proximity: Suffer 1 Fatigue when near things of personal value; their existence pains you.  |              |
| 3    | Unmaking Touch: Gain +2 dice to rolls involving absolute destruction—no remains, no possibility of return. Entropy Aura: Objects of value near you show signs of decay/premature aging; allies suffer -1 die to rolls involving cherished possessions.                          |              |
| 4    | Final Judgment: Once per session, declare one thing in Near range must make Spirit + Resolve test (DV 4) or cease to exist entirely. Existential Hunger: Suffer -1 die to rolls involving creation, preservation, or continuation; you hunger to end what others would sustain. |              |
| 5    | Principle of Negation: Once per session, unmake an abstract concept (hope, fear, memory) from a willing target. Conceptual Erosion: Your presence causes ideas and beliefs to weaken; suffer -1 die to rolls requiring stable reality or consistent identity.                   |              |
| 6+   | Avatar of Unbeing: Once per session, become the living embodiment of non-existence. For one scene, anything you touch ceases to exist, but mark +3 Obligation and begin permanent   |              |

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*Unmaking Self* condition. Void Incarnate: Mark +3 Obligation when using; risk becoming a permanent negation that must constantly unmake to maintain existence, eventually unmaking even yourself.

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## Morag the Hag, Weaver of Hidden Costs (Faerie Bargains & Hidden Costs)

*Lore.* In the hour between twilight and dawn, where borders thin and mortal cunning meets older cleverness, Morag sets her webs of bargain and consequence. She is the grandmother who offers exactly what you need, the forest crone with a perfect solution, the crossroads dweller who makes dreams come true—for a price that only reveals itself once the road bends back. Her wisdom is simple and sharp: every gift carries obligation, every kindness creates debt, and every wish must be paid in coin not named aloud.

Her bargains are never unfair—only incomplete. She grants what is promised; the true cost lies in what is unspoken, written in thorn-scratch, and due when the moon has turned thrice.

“She gives you the gold, but not the weight it carries. She grants your heart’s desire, but not the hunger it awakens. She answers your plea, but not the price that pleases her. In Morag’s court, every ‘yes’ is a ‘yes, but...’”

### Domain Focus

- **Hidden Obligations:** reading the unspoken costs in every bargain
- **Faerie Cunning:** strict courtesy, sharp clauses, old-road law
- **Hearth-Way Wisdom:** folk practice for spirits, thresholds, and natural justice
- **Consequential Magic:** power that always arrives with strings attached

#### Rite of the Unfinished Promise (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Near; No.*

**Materials:** A half-written contract or a promise spoken but not sealed.

**Effect:** Frame a bargain with an escape clause only you understand. Gain +1 die when the other party acts to fulfill their obligation; you may interpret ambiguous terms in your favor.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

#### Rite of the Borrowed Luck (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Touch; Yes.*

**Materials:** A token of good fortune from someone who recently succeeded.

**Effect:** Share in another’s fresh success. Gain +2 dice on one roll that benefits from their good fortune.

**Push It:** Luck spreads but creates debt—the original bearer suffers misfortune later; mark **1 SB (Hearts)**.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

#### Rite of the Speaking Knot (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Near; Yes.*

**Materials:** Cord or thread tied with counted knots while speaking the bargain.

**Effect:** Bind a promise with fae knots that tighten when broken. Both parties gain +1 die while keeping the bargain; breaking it escalates consequences (Harm 1, then Harm 2, then *Curse*).

**Push It:** The knots grow willful and seek payment from the breaker’s kin; mark **+1 Obligation**.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

**Rite of the Threefold Exchange (Standard, 7 XP)** *Scene; Near; Yes.***Materials:** Three items of equal seeming value but different true worth.**Effect:** Broker a trade where each party yields hidden value. All participants gain +1 die when the exchange benefits them; Morag claims the difference in true worth as her tithe.**Push It:** The exchange binds across generations; mark **1 SB (Spades)** as ancestral debts stir.**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.**Rite of the Cauldron's Secret (High, 13 XP)** *Extended; Zone; Yes.***Materials:** A cauldron never yet empty, ingredients dearer than coin, and a willing gift of time.**Effect:** Brew a solution to any problem, but the cauldron asks one more ingredient—one the brewer does not realize they are providing until too late.**Push It:** The remedy works perfectly but breeds dependence—users must return or suffer withdrawal; mark **+2 Obligation**.**Invoke:** Extended rite; mark **+2 Obligation**. *Obligation:* 7 segments.**Rite of the Crossroads Court (High, 14 XP)** *Extended; Zone; Yes.***Materials:** A true crossroads at twilight, offerings set to the four ways, and the tears of one who bargained thrice.**Effect:** Convene Morag's court: all present must bargain. Each pact grants a marked boon and hides a cost that will ripen at the worst time.**Push It:** Judgments bind across realms and seasons; mark **+2 Obligation** and begin **Entangled Fates [6]**.**Invoke:** Extended rite; mark **+2 Obligation**. *Obligation:* 8 segments.**Morag's Corruption**

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**Tier Benefit Cost / Quirk**

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**1 Faerie Sight:** +1 die to *Notice* hidden obligations or unspoken costs. **Bargain Sensitivity:** -1 die when refusing offers or walking away; the urge to negotiate bites.

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**2 Cunning Exchange:** Once/scene, propose a trade where you gain equal or greater value for lesser seeming payment. **Debt Awareness:** Ever-counting ledgers of owed/owing; suffer **Fatigue 1** in crowded markets.

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**3 Old-Road Wisdom:** +2 dice when dealing with spirits, fae, or ancient powers. **Obligation Magnet:** “Fair trades” find you—each with costs not yet clear.

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**4 Bargain Mastery:** Once/session, set terms so favorable that even the other party feels satisfied (for now). **Price Collector:** Collect on at least one outstanding debt each session or suffer -1 die to social rolls.

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**5 Crossroads Power:** Once/session, call on a crossroads where you bargained before. **Fate Entanglement:** Your pacts snag your circles; -1 die to keep agreements purely personal.

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**6+ Hag's Court:** Once/session, arbitrate any bargain; your terms bind all parties. **Debt Incarnate:** Mark +3 Obligation; risk becoming a walking covenant, unable to act without minting new debts.

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### Playstyle Notes

Morag favors negotiators who read the *said* and the *meant* at once. She rewards courtesy kept, clauses counted, and solutions bought with clever coin. The cost is a life lived on ledgers: every boon with a braid, every kindness with a key.

#### Emphasizes

- **Faerie Bargaining:** strict forms, sharp prices, safe exits
- **Hidden Costs:** the string on every gift
- **Hearth-Way Wisdom:** spirits, thresholds, and natural justice
- **Consequential Magic:** boons that demand upkeep
- **Bargain Mastery:** mutually pleasing terms that still pay you twice

### Mykkiel, Arbiter of the Covenant (Law & Zeal)

**Lore.** Mykkiel is the unwavering judge of covenants, the divine lawgiver whose scales and sword uphold sacred order. He embodies the tradition of desert patriarchs and mountain prophets—unyielding, absolute, and fiercely protective of the chosen. His followers are judges, templars, and scribes who enforce divine law with zealous devotion, seeing the world in absolutes of sanctity and transgression.

“The Law is not written in sand, but in stone. The Covenant is not suggestion, but command. Transgressors shall be purged, the faithful exalted.”

#### Domain Focus

- **Divine Law:** Sacred commandments, contractual obligations, ritual purity
- **Zealous Justice:** Righteous judgment, purge of impurity, holy retribution
- **Covenant Bonds:** Sacred oaths, tribal loyalty, chosen people
- **Absolute Order:** Hierarchy, tradition, unchanging truth

#### Rite of the Burning Banner (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Zone; Standard Push*

**Materials:** War-banner sanctified with sacred oils.

**Effect:** Consecrate area for righteous cause. Followers gain +1 die to resist fear; enemies suffer -1 die to oppose your proclamation. 4-segment *Divine Mandate* clock.

**Push It:** Banner emits visible radiance; unbelievers must test Resolve or falter.

#### Rite of Hallowed Ground (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Zone; Standard Push*

**Materials:** Sanctified salt, ritual boundaries, prayer of consecration.

**Effect:** Create sacred space where divine law prevails. All oath-breaking, theft, or violence suffers -1 die. Creates 6-segment *Sacred Space* clock.

**Push It:** Space becomes consecrated ground against supernatural desecration.

#### Rite of the Blazing Decree [COMMAND] (Standard, 8 XP) *Instant; Near; Standard Push*

**Materials:** Stone tablet or scroll with divine commandments.

**Effect:** Issue divine commandment ("Cease," "Repent," "Submit"). Target tests Spirit + Resolve (DV 3) or complies. Higher DV for more demanding commands.

**Push It:** Command carries divine authority; resistance causes 1 SB (Hearts) spiritual distress.

#### Rite of the Covenant Seal [BIND] (Standard, 9 XP) *Ritual; Zone; Standard Push*

**Materials:** Wax, sacred seals, names of sworn parties.

**Effect:** Formalize binding covenant. All participants suffer concrete penalties for breach (-1 die to relevant actions). Creates 8-segment *Covenant Bond* clock.

**Push It:** Breach triggers visible divine mark; marked suffer -2 dice in pious company.

#### Rite of Divine Judgment [CURSE] (High, 13 XP) *Extended; Near; High Push*

**Materials:** Scales of justice, testimony, ritual condemnation.

**Effect:** Pronounce divine judgment. Target suffers escalating penalties (-1 die, then -2 dice) until they atone. Serious crimes may warrant greater effects. 10-segment *Judgment* clock.

**Push It:** Judgment becomes public knowledge; community shuns unrepentant target.

**Obligation:** 7 segments base.

**Rite of the Chosen Legion [WARD] (High, 14 XP)** *Extended; Large Zone; High Push*

**Materials:** Consecrated ground, ritual weapons, oath of fidelity.

**Effect:** Sanctify area for the faithful. Believers gain +1 die to defense; unbelievers suffer -1 die. Supernatural desecration risks immediate retaliation.

**Push It:** Area becomes permanently consecrated; start *Maintenance* [8] clock.

**Obligation:** 8 segments base.

## Mykkiel's Corruption Manifestations

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| Level | Benefit | Cost | / Quirk |
|-------|---------|------|---------|
|-------|---------|------|---------|

1 **Righteous Insight:** +1 die to detect falsehood or covenant-breaking. **Uncompromising:** Must uphold law absolutely; -1 die to merciful actions.

2 **Zealous Conviction:** Once per scene, +1 die when enforcing divine law. **Judge's Severity:** Cannot easily overlook infractions; suffering 1 Fatigue if forced to.

3 **Divine Authority:** +2 dice when commanding in matters of faith or law. **Implacable:** -1 die to diplomacy or negotiation with transgressors.

4 **Sanctified Presence:** Once per session, project aura making resistance difficult. **Intolerant:** -1 die when dealing with other faiths or traditions.

5 **Prophetic Decree:** Once per session, speak judgement that carries supernatural weight. **Blind to Nuance:** -1 die to perceive gray areas or partial truths.

6+ **Divine Proxy:** Once per session, channel absolute judgment (bypass resistance). **Instrument of Wrath:** Mark +2 Obligation; risk harming innocents alongside guilty.

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**Playstyle Notes** Mykkiel embodies the "jealous god" archetype—righteous, demanding, and uncompromising. Followers excel as templars, judges, and religious authorities who enforce divine law. The corruption progression leads toward absolute certainty and power, but at the cost of mercy and flexibility. Ideal for players who enjoy playing righteous enforcers, legalistic characters, or those exploring themes of faith and absolutism.

## Nidhoggr, the World-Worm (Dreaming Antiquity)

**Lore.** Beneath stone and sleep coils **Nidhoggr**, who gnaws at the roots of time. He does not speak quickly; he dreams in centuries. To press your ear to the earth is to risk drowning in the silence of aeons. Yet for those who endure, he whispers truths long buried, memories fossilized in stone, and the slow inevitability of cycles unbroken. His followers walk in twilight between dream and ruin, bearing the weight of all that has been.

“Press your ear to the earth and wait. If it remembers you, it will answer.”

### Domain Focus

- **Ancient Knowledge:** Forgotten histories, buried truths, ancestral memory
- **Stone Communion:** Speaking with earth, reading geological memory, stone lore
- **Temporal Perception:** Seeing echoes of the past, prophetic dreams, slow time
- **Cyclical Power:** Seasonal magic, ritual timing, patience as virtue

#### Rite of Stone’s Whisper (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Touch; No Push*

**Materials:** Dust from weathered stone or ancient artifact.

**Effect:** Stone reveals one hidden fact about its history. Gain +1 die to Lore about this object’s origin and purpose.

**Invoke:** 1 action, mark +1 Obligation.

**Push It:** Vision includes sensory details from the past; +1 Obligation.

#### Rite of Dreaming Deep (Low, 5 XP) *Instant; Self; Standard Push*

**Materials:** Water poured over ancient stone, consumed ritually.

**Effect:** Enter brief trance to witness echoes of local history. Ask one specific question about past events here.

**Push It:** Vision reveals additional context or hidden connections; mark 1 SB (Clubs).

#### Rite of the Stone-Sleeper’s Murmur (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Zone; Standard Push*

**Materials:** Ear pressed to bedrock or ancient structure.

**Effect:** Read accumulated memories in stone. Ask up to 3 questions about significant events witnessed here. Creates 6-segment *Memory Resonance* clock.

**Push It:** One memory unfolds with perfect clarity; +1 Obligation.

#### Rite of Awakened Chronicle (Standard, 9 XP) *Ritual; Zone; Standard Push*

**Materials:** Chalk spiral, four local stones, hour of meditation.

**Effect:** Area replays ghostly echoes of a chosen past event. All witnesses gain +2 dice to Investigate/Recall related checks. 8-segment *Echo Stability* clock.

**Push It:** View events from multiple perspectives; +1 Obligation.

**Rite of the World-Worm's Dream (High, 13 XP)** *Extended; Zone; High Push***Materials:** Circle of ancient stones, night of vigil under stars.**Effect:** Access deep geological memory. Ask 3 questions about ancient history or receive prophetic dream. Creates 10-segment *Deep Dream* clock.**Push It:** Gain temporary skill mastery (+3 dice to one historical action); +2 Obligation.**Obligation:** 7 segments base.**Rite of Aeon's Eclipse (High, 14 XP)** *Extended; Large Zone; High Push***Materials:** Stones from three ancient sites, blood of history-keeper.**Effect:** Overlay past reality onto present location. Ruins partially reform, ghostly figures manifest. Allies gain +2 dice to Lore/Investigate; modern technology suffers -2 dice.**Push It:** Effect lasts until next lunar cycle; start *Temporal Instability* [8] clock.**Obligation:** 8 segments base.

## Nidhoggr's Corruption Manifestations

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| Level | Benefit   | Cost / Quirk   |
|-------|---|--|
| 1     | <b>Stone Sense:</b> +1 die to detect ancient sites, hidden history, or geological features.   | <b>Temporal Drift:</b> Speak in archaic patterns; -1 die to modern social interactions.    |
| 2     | <b>Memory Echo:</b> Once per session, perfectly recall one historical fact as if witnessed.   | <b>Heavy Presence:</b> 1 Fatigue in places with no history or recent construction.         |
| 3     | <b>Earth Whisper:</b> +2 dice to commune with stone, read echoes, or interpret ancient sites. | <b>Rooted:</b> -1 die to actions requiring rapid movement or aerial maneuvers.             |
| 4     | <b>Dream Prophet:</b> Once per scene, gain +1 die to actions tied to ancient mysteries.       | <b>Ancestral Haunting:</b> Visions interrupt sleep; mark 1 SB if rest is disturbed.        |
| 5     | <b>Timeless Gaze:</b> Once per session, witness distant past events through stone communion.  | <b>Geological Pace:</b> -1 die to reactions requiring haste; act with deliberate slowness. |
| 6+    | <b>World-Memory:</b> Become living archive (1 scene); +3 dice to historical knowledge.        | <b>Time's Weight:</b> +2 Obligation; risk permanent Harm from temporal overload.           |

**Playstyle Notes** Nidhoggr rewards patience and contemplation. Followers excel in investigation, prophecy, and situations where historical knowledge provides advantage. The corruption progression leads characters toward becoming living libraries of forgotten lore, but at the cost of connection to the present moment. Ideal for scholars, archaeologists, and characters who understand that some truths are worth waiting centuries to uncover.

### The Ninth, Beyond Comprehension (Infinite Information & Unknowable Truths)

*Lore.* Beyond the eighth figure of Sacred Geometry lies a rim no compass will hold. The Ninth is not absence but surplus: knowledge poured past the lip of any vessel, truth that overgrows the frame that seeks to bind it. Those who bend the knee at its lectern become conduits for impossible reckonings — glimpsing patterns that cannot be kept whole inside a single skull. Each revelation purchases power at the price of living comfortably within the world's common measures.

“Eight figures bind the world; the Ninth overflows it. Drink, and remember that the cup forgets its shape before the song is done.”

#### Domain Focus

- **Hyperdimensional Knowledge:** reckonings that do not fit a single plane or proof
- **Incomprehensible Truths:** insights that demand the seer be changed to hold them
- **Information Overflow:** boon and peril of minds run past their brim
- **Conceptual Transcendence:** thinking beyond the usual ledgers and names

#### Rite of the Ninth Figure (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Self; No.*

**Materials:** A chalk figure with an “impossible” joint, or a reckoning worked toward infinity on slate.

**Effect:** Glimpse past the ordinary frame of measure. Gain +1 die to *Lore* or *Investigation* when wrestling complex systems or many-layered problems.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

#### Rite of the Flooded Scriptorium (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Near; Yes.*

**Materials:** An overburdened ledger-hall, stacked codices, bell that tolls the copying-hour without cease.

**Effect:** Read faster than hands can turn pages. Ask three questions upon any topic that leaves a written wake; gain +2 dice to rolls of analysis this scene.

**Push It:** The tide of knowing overruns its banks — suffer **Fatigue 1** and mark **1 SB (Diamonds)** as overflow breeds complication.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

#### Rite of the Hypercognitive Lattice (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Self; Yes.*

**Materials:** A brass-thought lattice, an orrery of inked threads, or a draught that sharpens memory.

**Effect:** Widen the mind’s mouth. For this scene, treat your *Wits* as +2 higher for information-processing rolls; you may track several intricate streams at once.

**Push It:** The opening does not quite close: keep the boon, but suffer -1 die to single-task focus; mark **1 SB (Clubs)**.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

**Rite of the Breaking Glyph (Standard, 7 XP)** *Extended; Self; Yes.*

**Materials:** Vigil in dim light, a water-clock, and a problem sworn not to be left half-seen.

**Effect:** Take one pattern whole. Choose a complex system, theory, or design and gain perfect internal grasp of it; receive +3 dice to related knowledge rolls for the session.

**Push It:** Your tongue cannot carry what your mind now holds: you cannot clearly teach or translate this insight; mark **1 SB (Hearts)**.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

**Rite of the Endless Stacks (High, 13 XP)** *Scene; Zone; Yes.*

**Materials:** A hall of mirrored shelves, wax-tablets without end, whispering leaves of vellum.

**Effect:** Raise a locus of overfull knowing. All present gain +2 dice to information-work; knowledge may be drawn from unlikely sources. Start a [6] *Information Overload* clock — as it fills, participants strain and fray.

**Push It:** The Stacks wake and demand tithe in understanding or memory; mark **+2 Obligation**.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+2 Obligation**. *Obligation:* 7 segments.

**Rite of the Ninth Revelation (High, 14 XP)** *Extended; Self; Yes.*

**Materials:** A fast from easy speech, a circle of unbroken figures, and vows to see past comfort.

**Effect:** Glimpse a shard of Ninth truth. Take one major insight that overleaps common frames — perfect command of a knotty system, forecast of chaotic motion, or comprehension of an “impossible” relation.

**Push It:** The shard sets in you like glass: gain **Transcendent Understanding** (see Corruption) and mark **+2 Obligation**.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+2 Obligation**. *Obligation:* 8 segments.

**Corruption of the Ninth**


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| Tier | Benefit | Cost / Quirk |
|------|---------|--------------|
|------|---------|--------------|

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1 **Hyperawareness:** +1 die to *Notice* when patterns whisper that they matter. **Starved for Text:** -1 die in barren halls with little record or sign; you itch for a stream to read.

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2 **Pattern Recognition:** Once/scene, see connections others miss within tangled accounts and signs. **Scattered Threads:** Thoughts run in parallel; -1 die to sustained, single-line focus.

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3 **Data Synthesis:** Once/session, fuse vast reckonings at a glance into a usable answer. **Tongue-Tied by Wonder:** -2 dice to teach or clearly explain your deepest insights.

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4 **Dimensional Insight:** Once/scene, take a problem from an “impossible” angle and treat a knot as if already loosened. **Bent Sense:** Ordinary space and tasks feel ill-fit; -1 die to plain spatial or mundane labors.

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5 **Infinite Processing:** Once/session, render perfect analysis of any information system or record-trail. **Concept Drift:** Common categories slip; -1 die to easy company and familiar talk.

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**6+ Ninth Awareness:** Once/session, look from outside the frame; for a heartbeat, the world aligns. **Transcendent Fragmentation:** Mark **+3 Obligation**; risk standing only partly in the world, present and absent in turn.

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### Playstyle Notes

The Ninth favors the patient reader of tangled ledgers and sky-signs alike. It rewards audacity in thought and the courage to let understanding change you. Its gifts turn riddles into roads — and ask, in exchange, that you learn to live where words and measures fail.

#### Emphasizes

- **Hyperdimensional Knowledge:** insights that escape a single page
- **Cognitive Expansion:** widening the mind to hold more than comfort allows
- **Pattern Transcendence:** seeing threads that run beneath names and weights
- **Information Synthesis:** binding many scraps into one true line
- **Conceptual Breakthrough:** stepping past the frame rather than painting within it

### Oath of Flame & Light (Dawn & Vows)

*Lore.* The Oath of Flame & Light is no patron of half-measures. Its fire names, binds, and burns—demanding that those who swear within its radiance stand openly, speak truly, and pay the cost of keeping their word. At dawn altars, the sworn kindle sparks of consecrated fire; in battle, they blaze as torches that hold back the night. To follow this Oath is to live in public truth, with no shadow to hide in and no retreat from the vow once spoken.

The Oath appears in many guises across cultures:

- **The Everflame** — the unquenchable fire of promise, carried from shrine to shrine by wandering priests.
- **Adur**, the Light of Aeler — worshiped as the sun's church-deity, whose flame consecrates oaths and consumes falsehood.
- **Adar**, the Vilikari Dawnfire — invoked as a war-god of vows and vengeance, whose rising light marks those who break faith.
- Others know the Oath only as *the Flame* or *the Watchfire*, a nameless fire that still demands truth and punishes betrayal.

Wherever it manifests, the Oath of Flame & Light remains the same unyielding power: to swear beneath its dawn is to bind one's self to a truth that cannot be hidden, forgotten, or undone.

“Swear in the light. Keep it, or the light will keep *you*.”

### Domain Focus

- **Sacred Vows:** Oath-keeping, truth-speaking, binding promises
- **Divine Justice:** Retribution, smiting evil, protecting the innocent
- **Radiant Power:** Healing light, purification, revealing truth
- **Dawn's Hope:** Renewal, protection, driving back darkness

#### Rite of Kindle Vow (Low, 4 XP) *Action; Self/Ally; Standard Push*

**Materials:** Glass ampoule of consecrated flame.

**Effect:** Declare a short vow for this scene (e.g., "protect the villagers," "speak only truth"). Bearer gains +1 die to actions fulfilling it.

**Push It:** First hesitation forces 1 SB (Hearts) on the bearer.

**Requires:** *Familiar*.

#### Rite of Lay on Hands [CLEANSE][HEAL] (Low, 5 XP) *Instant; Touch; Standard Push*

**Materials:** Bare palm, whispered vow.

**Effect:** Cleanse affliction, downgrade Harm by 1, or remove 1 Fatigue. For curses/poisons, test Spirit + Resolve (DV by fiction).

**Push It:** Target gains +1 die to next Resist this scene; you mark Exposure +1.

**Rite of Sunlit Parley (Standard, 8 XP)** *Scene; Zone; Standard Push***Materials:** Vow-ring engraved with sunrise.**Effect:** Establish terms in open light. Honest persuasion gains +1 die; deceit suffers -1 die. 6-segment *Parley Accord* clock.**Push It:** Demand one public answer; evasion forces 1 SB (Hearts) on evader.**Rite of Radiant Smite [FOLLOW-UP] (Standard, 9 XP)** *Action; Self; Standard Push***Materials:** Consecrated spark on weapon/badge.**Effect:** Next melee strike flares with dawnfire. Upgrade Effect by one step, add +1 Burn Harm or force 1 SB (Spades).**Special:** Against undead/oath-breakers/outsiders: oath-breakers suffer -1 die, outsiders gain +1 Exit Tally.**Push It:** On hit, burst drives back Close enemies (worse Position); +1 Obligation.**Rite of Purge the Shadow [REVEAL][DISPEL] (Standard, 10 XP)** *Instant; Near; Standard Push***Materials:** Shattered consecrated spark.**Effect:** Reveal illusions and suppress one ongoing glamour/curse in Near. Creates 4-segment *Purity's Light* clock.**Push It:** Brand source with visible tell for this arc; mark 1 SB (Diamonds).**Rite of Covenant Blaze [OATH][FORTIFY] (High, 13 XP)** *Scene; Zone; High Push***Materials:** Brazier lit while three names are spoken.**Effect:** Sworn within are haloed: +1 die to keep oath; aggressors suffer -1 die if violating terms. Oath-breakers suffer 2 SB (Hearts/Spades) and Harm 1 (Burn).**Push It:** Sanctifies threshold with one beat of [WARD] against oath-breakers; +2 Obligation.**Obligation:** 7 segments base.

## Oath of Flame & Light Corruption Manifestations

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| Level | Benefit   | Cost / Quirk |
|-------|---|--------------|
| 1     | <b>Oathbound Strength:</b> +1 die when upholding vows or defending innocents. <b>Rigid Honor:</b> Must uphold vows even when disadvantageous; -1 die to flexible actions. |              |
| 2     | <b>Radiant Sight:</b> Once per scene, +2 dice to detect lies or corruption. <b>Blinding Truth:</b> -1 die to subtlety or deception attempts.                              |              |
| 3     | <b>Holy Flame:</b> +1 die to melee vs undead, outsiders, or oath-breakers. <b>Burden of Light:</b> 1 Fatigue when concealing identity or working in darkness.             |              |
| 4     | <b>Unwavering Resolve:</b> Once per session, treat failed Resolve/Command as success (mark 1 SB). <b>Absolutist Stance:</b> -1 die in morally ambiguous situations.       |              |

**5 Dawn's Benediction:** Once per session, heal allies in Near of 1 Fatigue and minor Conditions.  
**Beacon's Call:** Your aura reveals you; enemies seeking you gain +1 die.

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**6+ Avatar of the Oath:** Once per session, become living covenant; +2 dice to protection/justice actions. **Radiance's Price:** +2 Obligation; breaking any vow inflicts Harm 2 (Burn).

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**Playstyle Notes** The Oath of Flame & Light excels as a "paladin" patron, rewarding vow-keeping and truth-speaking with potent defensive and smiting abilities. Followers become living embodiments of their oaths, shining beacons against deception and darkness. The corruption progression naturally leads toward becoming an uncompromising force for justice, though potentially at the cost of flexibility and subtlety. Ideal for characters who embody conviction, protection, and radiant power.

## The Pale Shepherd, Guide of Transitions (Passage & Melancholic Wisdom)

**Lore.** The Pale Shepherd walks the seam between all things — life and death, joy and sorrow, memory and forgetting, the known and the unmarked. Neither wholly kind nor cruel, the Shepherd guides those who must pass through the hardest doors. Cloaked, with shadow-sheep that bear the shed wool of old possibilities, the Shepherd offers safe conduct through liminal space for a price paid in memory, feeling, or fate. Those who walk this road learn the hidden routes between states of being and can lead others through their hardest crossings — but each passage leaves them more attuned to endings than beginnings.

“The Shepherd goes where feet fail, speaks where voices thin, and points where paths run dim. Each journey loosens the knot that tied you to the life you left behind.”

### Domain Focus

- **Liminal Navigation:** walking and reading thresholds, dusk-roads, and in-betweens
- **Passage Guidance:** steady hands through grief, change, and transformation
- **Melancholic Wisdom:** understanding born of farewells and last looks
- **Memory Shepherding:** gathering, carrying, and setting down weighted moments

#### Rite of the Gentle Guidance (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Near; No.*

**Materials:** A small stone from grave or threshold, warmed in the palm.

**Effect:** Ease a hard crossing. One target gains +1 die to rolls involving change, decision, or emotional steadiness this scene.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

#### Rite of the Hidden Path (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Self; Yes.*

**Materials:** A thread from a worn garment and a pinch of dawn mist kept in silence.

**Effect:** Find or make a way where none is seen. Gain +2 dice to *Navigation* or *Investigation* when seeking unconventional routes.

**Push It:** The way runs through a true between-place; gain the route but mark **1 SB (Spades)** as boundary powers take notice.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

#### Rite of the Shadow Passage (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Touch; Yes.*

**Materials:** Black wool and a personal token of the one to be guided.

**Effect:** Open a brief passage through shadow-realms or boundary halls. Target bypasses one insurmountable obstacle or reaches a place normally shut.

**Push It:** The passage leaves a scent-trail; mark **1 SB (Clubs)** as something may follow.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

#### Rite of the Memory Flock (Standard, 7 XP) *Scene; Zone; Yes.*

**Materials:** Ash of burned letters and wool shaped into little sheep.

**Effect:** Call shadow-sheep that carry fragments of weighty moments. Retrieve lost details, soothe grief, or glean counsel from what was.

**Push It:** The memories ride too close to the skin — participants relive them as their own; mark **1 SB (Hearts)**.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

**Rite of the Threshold Bond (High, 13 XP)** *Extended; Touch; Yes.***Materials:** Two keepsakes: one of what is left, one of what is sought.**Effect:** Bind two states, places, or conditions with a felt thread. Those bound can sense across the threshold and lend one another strength during change.**Push It:** The bond sets like iron; permanent and inescapable. Mark **+2 Obligation**.**Invoke:** Extended rite; mark **+2 Obligation**. *Obligation:* 7 segments.**Rite of the Final Shepherd (High, 14 XP)** *Extended; Zone; Yes.***Materials:** Last words, a much-crossed threshold, and the consent of those who remain.**Effect:** Take the mantle of perfect guide for a great passage — death, molt, or life-bend. All present gain +2 dice to navigate the crossing; you shoulder the weight of it.**Push It:** Guidance is flawless but costly: mark **Harm 2 (Weariness)** and **+2 Obligation**.**Invoke:** Extended rite; mark **+2 Obligation**. *Obligation:* 8 segments.**The Pale Shepherd's Corruption**

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**Tier**   **Benefit**   **Cost / Quirk**


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**1 Boundary Sense:** +1 die to *Notice* thresholds, limens, and turning-moments. **Melancholic Aura:** -1 die to bright company and celebrations; your presence gentles joy.

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**2 Passage Insight:** Once/scene, guide another through change (+1 die to their action). **Compulsive Counsel:** Urge to advise even when unwelcome.

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**3 Shadow Comfort:** +2 dice to soothe the distressed or those nearing an end. **Near to Death:** In lively places, suffer **Fatigue 1** from the sting of contrast.

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**4 Memory Keeper:** Once/session, recall a marked moment of your past with perfect clarity. **Burdened Sight:** -1 die on hopeful framings; farewells tint your view.

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**5 Liminal Mastery:** Once/session, find a path through any maze, snare, or barred way. **Unmoored:** -1 die to acts that demand firm anchoring in the present.

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**6+ Shepherd's Crown:** Once/session, be the sure guide for any great passage. **Soul's Weight:** Mark **+3 Obligation**; risk binding to the between, never wholly in one state.

**Playstyle Notes**

The Pale Shepherd favors those who steady others at the edge of change. Its gifts open hidden roads, soften endings, and lend courage to cross. Its prices lean toward memory, ease, and the simple warmth of belonging — spent to buy safe passage when it matters most.

**Emphasizes**

- **Liminal Mastery:** reading and walking the in-between
- **Passage Guidance:** anchoring companions through turns of fate

- **Melancholic Wisdom:** counsel drawn from endings
- **Memory Shepherding:** carrying and setting down what weighs
- **Threshold Navigation:** ways through walls the world insists upon

## Palinode, Queen of Encores (Performance & Rapture)

**Lore.** Once a road-cantor who swore to reconcile feuding towns with procession and song, Palinode died between feasts with a chorus unfinished. Yet the refrain refused to end: it braided toasts, hymns, work-chants, and tavern rounds into a living current that still coils through markets and moots. Where a crowd leans forward and a maker holds breath, she arrives.

**Signs.** A cup that never quite empties; a candle that gutters only when silence reigns; a flawless bar or note that the hand cannot forget.

**Cantor's Temptation.** Palinode promises relief from solitude: an audience that always leans closer, a song that never dies, a bond that feels like family even if it devours you. Her rites grant the Cantor not only power but belonging—at the cost of their voice becoming more hers than their own.

### Whispered in Taverns.

*"When she sang, the rafters bent to hear."*

*"Drink deep: the cup returns, but never empty."*

*"Encore is not request but command."*

### Rites of Palinode

#### Hymn Against Dread (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Near; Resist only.*

**Materials:** A lit taper or bell.

**Effect:** Begin a hymn or chant. Allies in Near gain +2 dice to resist *Fear* this scene. On a 10, they may ignore *Fear* entirely for one round.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

**Push It:** Allies who benefit also clear 1 Fatigue or 1 Complication point; you gain 1 Fatigue at the scene's end.

**Requires:** Familiar (*Invoke: 1 Boon*).

#### Rite of the Single True Note (Low, 5 XP) *Instant; Self; No.*

**Materials:** A note held until your voice frays.

**Effect:** For one scene you cannot produce an imperfect sound: all performance rolls +2 dice. All other rolls -1 die from intrusive perfection.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

**Push It:** Extend to one ally; both mark **Exposure +1**.

**Requires:** Familiar (*Invoke: 1 Boon*).

#### Rite of the Circling Cup (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Zone; No.*

**Materials:** A shared cup and a round all know.

**Effect:** Create a revelry zone: participants gain +1 die to social rolls; Fatigue recovers at twice normal rate. Time blurs.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

**Push It:** Leaving requires Resolve (DV 3) or another hour within; mark **1 SB (Hearts)** as the revelry grows a will.

**Requires:** Familiar (*Invoke: 1 Boon*).

#### Rite of the Binding Hands [BIND] (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Self; No.*

**Materials:** Your hair woven into your instrument or tool.

**Effect:** Enter ruthless focus: creative rolls +2 dice; ignore first 2 Fatigue from exertion. You are [BIND] to the piece until completion or ruin.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

**Push It:** One ally is also bound; both mark **1 SB (Diamonds)**.

*Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

**Rite of the Hooked Chorus [COMMAND] (Standard, 7 XP) Scene; Near; No.**

**Materials:** A melody braided from the listener's secret want.

**Effect: Presence + Command vs. Resolve (DV 3).** Success: target joins in. Partial: they resist but suffer -1 die to social rolls this scene. Failure: they follow entranced.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

**Push It:** Affects all in Near; start **Compelled Audience [6]**.

*Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

**Rite of the Consecrated Stage [WARD] [FOLLOW-UP] (High, 13 XP) Extended; Zone; No.**

**Materials:** A stage kissed with the blood of sworn singers.

**Effect:** Hallow a venue. All performances +2 dice, +1 Effect. The space is [WARD]ed: any disruption spawns 2 SB. The ward collapses if the performance ends.

**Invoke:** Extended ritual; mark **+2 Obligation**.

**Push It:** The stage sustains itself but drains life; start **Performance Hunger [8]**.

*Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons). Obligation: 7 segments.*

**Rite of the Crownpiece [TRANSFORM] [CURSE] (High, 14 XP) Extended; Touch; No.**

**Materials:** Your greatest work and regret, destroyed together.

**Effect:** Birth a transcendent masterpiece: +2 dice to creative rolls this session; immune to social manipulation. But all lesser works falter.

**Invoke:** Extended ritual; mark **+3 Obligation**.

**Push It:** The piece wakes and demands; mark Harm 1 (Stress); start **Demanding Creation [6]**.

*Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons). Obligation: 8 segments.*

**Rite of the Siren's Call [COMMAND] [BIND] (High, 12 XP) Scene; Zone; No.**

**Materials:** A conch shell that whispers lost melodies, tears of seven true lovers, the last word of a dying bard.

**Effect:** Emit an irresistible call that draws listeners into your performance. All in Near range must make Resolve (DV 4) or become entranced, gaining +2 dice to aid your performance but -2 dice to resist your commands.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+2 Obligation**.

**Push It:** Call becomes addictive—affected will seek you out; mark **+1 SB (Hearts)** as devotees gather.

*Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons). Obligation: 7 segments.*

**Rite of Absolute Resonance [WARD] [FOLLOW-UP] (High, 15 XP) Extended; Large Zone; No.**

**Materials:** An amphitheater built over a ley line, the bones of a choir that sang themselves to death, a tuning fork that rings in harmony with the world.

**Effect:** Create a zone of perfect acoustic resonance. All performances within gain +3 dice and +2 Effect. The space becomes a living instrument—emotions manifest as physical phenomena (joy as

warm wind, sorrow as falling leaves).

**Invoke:** Extended ritual; mark **+3 Obligation**.

**Push It:** Resonance becomes overwhelming—audience members suffer 1 Fatigue per round from emotional intensity; mark Harm 1 (Stress) if prolonged.

*Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons). Obligation: 8 segments.*

### **Palinode's Corruption Table** >p1cm p5cm p5cm

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#### Tier Gift Corruption

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**1 Perfect Pitch:** +1 die to Performance. **Restless Ear:** Distracted by any flaw; -1 die to non-performance focus.

**2 Rapturous Presence:** Once per scene, grant allies +1 die to social rolls. **Craves Applause:** Suffer 1 Fatigue if ignored or without audience.

**3 Inspired Creation:** +2 dice to one artistic act per scene. **Haunted by Drafts:** Must obsessively rework; delays other actions.

**4 Mesmerizing Performance:** Once per session, captivate a crowd (Resolve DV 4 to resist). **Lost in the Moment:** -1 die to awareness while performing.

**5 Artistic Vision:** Foresee perfect form of a work; +2 dice to create it. **Consumed Spark:** Must pursue inspiration immediately, no matter the cost.

**6+ Queen of Encores:** Once per session, create a legendary performance; all present +3 dice to social rolls. **Eternal Encore:** Mark +3 Obligation; the performance demands endless repetition until sated.

**Voice of Palinode:** Permanent condition—your words carry her power; must make Wits + Performance (DV 4) to speak normally or risk enchanting listeners against your will.

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“Sing until the rafters lean to listen, dance until the ground forgets its name, perform until the boundary between art and reality dissolves entirely.”

### Raéyn, Mistress of the Sea (Tides & Change)

*Lore.* Raéyn is the tempestuous goddess of the sea, the restless tide that carries news between shores and the promise of change between lives. She is mother to all who sail, her voice the wind that fills sails and her moods the storms that test every mariner's resolve.

But Raéyn's heart is torn by her greatest tragedy: her son Khemesh, the Kraken of the Depths, who embodies the crushing inevitability of the ocean's dark heart. Where Raéyn brings change and opportunity, Khemesh brings the final, inescapable pressure that grinds all things to nothing. Sailors pray to Raéyn for safe passage and favorable winds, but whisper Khemesh's name when seeking to lay the dead to rest beneath the waves.

Raéyn is passionate, mercurial, and fiercely protective of those who respect her domain. She favors those who read currents, bargain with weather, and carry news between shores. But cross her, and the sea itself becomes your enemy: fair weather turns to fury, and every wave a judgment.

Mark the tide, name your course, and trust the wave-road. But speak ill of Khemesh, and even I may let the deep take you.

**Rite of the Tidemark's Blessing (Low, 4 XP)** *Scene; Self; No. Materials:* A knotted length of salt-twine brushed with seawater.

**Effect:** Treat slick, swaying, or water-slicked footing as stable for you this scene. Gain +1 die on boarding, balance, or shipboard movement. Create a 4-segment *Tide's Favor* clock that can be spent to ignore one level of difficult terrain.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

**Push It:** Extend to one ally in Close for one beat, but generate 1 SB (Spades: shifting deck/hazards). *Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

**Rite of the Whispering Currents (Low, 5 XP)** *Instant; Self; No. Materials:* A shell held to the ear while facing the wind.

**Effect:** Learn the safest near-term route across water or coastline (reefs, eddies, patrols) or gain +1 die to navigation checks for this scene. If Khemesh's influence is present, suffer -1 die from conflicting currents.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

**Push It:** Also learn the fastest route, but mark Exposure +1 (leaving a telltale wake).

*Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

**Rite of the Changing Tide [PASSAGE] (Standard, 8 XP)** *Scene; Zone (water-adjacent); No. Materials:* A handful of pebbles cast in a crescent.

**Effect:** Bias currents and water levels in the zone. Those moving with the tide gain +1 die; those moving against suffer -1 die. Small craft must test to hold position. Create a 6-segment *Tidal Influence* clock.

**Push It:** Brief surge or drawdown (one beat): open a ford or swamp a skiff; mark +1 Obligation.

*Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

**Rite of the Wave-Road Blessing [WARD] (Standard, 7 XP)** *Scene; Route (sea-to-sea); No. Materials:* Two sea-glass markers dropped overboard at start and end.

**Effect:** Consecrate a wave-road between two visible points. Allies gain +2 dice on travel, evade, or carry actions at sea. Designated pursuers suffer -1 die to intercept. One active wave-road at a time.

Create an 8-segment *Blessed Passage* clock.

**Push It:** Extend the route's favor to an adjacent leg for one beat; mark +1 Obligation.

*Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

**Rite of the Storm-Queen's Hand** [AREA][FOLLOW-UP] (**High, 13 XP**) *Scene; Zone (sea/shore/sky); No. Materials:* A vial of rainwater gathered at three crossings.

**Effect:** Shape a storm-band over the zone. Choose two modes at cast; switch one once per scene:

- **Propulsion:** Vessel gains +1 band of movement per beat (or +1 Effect to maneuvers).
- **Concealment:** Veil of rain/spray; ranged targeting impaired; -1 die to hostile sighting.
- **Smite:** Once per beat, lash with wave or lightning as [AREA] hazard.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark +2 Obligation.

**Push It:** Add a third mode for one beat, then GM spends 1 SB on collateral; mark +1 Obligation.

*Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).*

*Obligation: 7 segments.*

**Rite of the Mother's Wrath** [BANISH][CURSE] (**High, 14 XP**) *Extended; Zone; No. Materials:* Tears of a betrayed lover mixed with salt from seven seas.

**Effect:** Curse those who wronged you. Target suffers -2 dice to maritime/weather rolls for one session. At sea, they must roll Spirit + Resolve (DV 4) each day or suffer Harm 1 (Weather). Create a 6-segment *Mother's Ire* clock.

**Push It:** Curse spreads to target's allies/family; mark 2 SB (Diamonds).

*Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).*

*Obligation: 7 segments.*

## Raéyn's Corruption Table

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| Tier | Benefit   | Cost / Quirk |
|------|---|--------------|
| 1    | Sailor's Instinct: +1 die to Navigation and maritime survival rolls. Sea-Sick on Land: Suffer -1 die to rolls requiring prolonged time away from water or open spaces.  |              |
| 2    | Tide's Favor: Once per scene, treat a failed maritime or weather-related roll as a success, but mark 1 SB (Clubs). Weather Sensitive: Must make a Resolve test (DV 3) to resist acting on every weather change or maritime opportunity. |              |
| 3    | Storm's Child: Gain +2 dice to rolls involving weather manipulation or sea-based combat. Tempestuous Nature: Suffer 1 Fatigue when denied access to open water or weather changes for extended periods.                                 |              |
| 4    | Mother's Protection: Once per session, call upon Raéyn's favor to protect a vessel or coastal area from harm. Protective Instinct: Suffer -1 die to rolls involving personal safety when others are endangered nearby.                  |              |

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5 Wave-Rider: Once per session, navigate any water-based obstacle or hazard with perfect ease. Restless Spirit: Suffer -1 die to rolls requiring patience or stillness; the call of the sea is constant.

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6+ Storm Queen: Once per session, become the living embodiment of the sea's power. For one scene, control weather and tides within Near range, but mark +2 Obligation and risk drawing Khemesh's attention. Mother's Burden: Mark +2 Obligation when using this power; the weight of protecting all who sail becomes overwhelming, causing Harm 1 (Stress) until the storm passes.

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## The Sacred Geometry, Architect of Perfect Forms (Harmony & Immutable Law)

**Lore.** The Sacred Geometry teaches that perfect forms underlie all seeming chaos: the divine ratios that steer the spiral of galaxies, the symmetry that lattices frost, the measures that turn sound into song. Not merely a calculus but the hidden architecture of the world, it makes artists of order from those who serve it. Devotees do not count to chill the heart; they weigh and tune until beauty and structure converge, revealing that disorder is often only unrecognized design waiting to be drawn true.

“In the drift of atoms, the sweep of planets, and the curve of a lover’s smile, the same ratios ring. Learn them, and you may conduct the world’s quiet music.”

### Domain Focus

- **Perfect Proportion:** building and reading ideal ratios and harmonious relationships
- **Pattern Recognition:** discerning the structures that govern complex phenomena
- **Harmonic Resonance:** working with natural frequencies and number-made consonance
- **Form Architecture:** imposing clear structure on tangled situations

#### Rite of the Harmonic Alignment (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Self; No.*

**Materials:** A tool calibrated to pristine ratios (e.g., golden ratio gauge, well-cut compass arc).

**Effect:** Align to natural harmonics. Gain +1 die to actions involving balance, proportion, cadence, or keeping true time.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

#### Rite of the Perfect Structure (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Touch; Yes.*

**Materials:** Consecrated compass and straightedge, inked to tolerance.

**Effect:** Impose right form on a chaotic or damaged structure (scaffold, plan, treaty, formation). Treat one structural obstacle as one step easier; gain +1 die to build/repair/spatial-reason rolls.

**Push It:** Perfection hardens: for the scene the structure gains unnatural resilience, but order draws opposition; mark **1 SB (Clubs)**.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

#### Rite of the Resonant Field (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Zone; Yes.*

**Materials:** A floor or air traced with precise tessellations and nodes.

**Effect:** Establish a harmonic field. Allies gain +1 die to precise, coordinated, or team actions; disruptive acts suffer -1 die.

**Push It:** The field self-sustains and begins to spread beyond intent; mark **+1 Obligation**.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

#### Rite of the Pattern’s Heart (Standard, 7 XP) *Scene; Self; Yes.*

**Materials:** A solved proof or perfectly symmetrical token.

**Effect:** Perceive the governing pattern of a complex situation (supply chain, intrigue, weather, battle). Gain +2 dice to prediction/strategy/systemic-understanding and ask two questions about how the pattern drives the present.

**Push It:** Clarity cuts: gain the insight, but for this scene suffer -1 die to intuitive or purely emotional responses; mark **1 SB (Diamonds)**.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

**Rite of the Immutable Design (High, 13 XP)** *Extended; Zone; Yes.***Materials:** A space gridded for measure and set with true ratios.**Effect:** For the scene, rewrite local behavior by perfect principle. Choose one: gravity follows geometric progression; time flows by harmonic ratios; space conforms to exact symmetry.**Push It:** Make the design persist, but elsewhere thins and wobbles: mark **+2 Obligation** and begin **Harmonic Dissonance [4]**.**Invoke:** Extended rite; mark **+2 Obligation**. *Obligation:* 7 segments.**Rite of the Architect's Vision (High, 14 XP)** *Extended; Self; Yes.***Materials:** A ledger of forms and their tuned relations.**Effect:** For one session, treat all rolls of pattern recognition, structural analysis, or harmonic application as one step better (Position or Effect, Keeper's choice).**Push It:** Sight devours softness: gain the power, but lose ease with imperfection's beauty; mark **Harm 1 (Stress)**.**Invoke:** Extended rite; mark **+2 Obligation**. *Obligation:* 8 segments.**The Sacred Geometry's Corruption**

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**Tier Benefit Cost / Quirk**

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**1 Harmonic Sense:** +1 die to *Notice* when patterns, ratios, or symmetries matter. **Pattern Obsession:** Must measure or set-right pleasing patterns you spot; resisting costs time or **1 SB (Diamonds)**.

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**2 Perfect Precision:** Once/scene, achieve faultless calculation or measure. **Social Dissonance:** -1 die to emotive social rolls; harmony feels truer than feeling.

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**3 Structural Insight:** +2 dice to architecture/engineering or imposing order on chaos. **Order Compulsion:** Must correct deliberate disorder; suffer **Fatigue 1** when forced to abide it.

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**4 Universal Harmony:** Once/session, apply a harmonic rule that makes a chaotic situation predictable. **Perfectionist Limitation:** -1 die to improvisation; the “correct” solution calls.

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**5 Divine Proportion:** Once/session, see perfect ratios in any phenomenon and work with them. **Mathematical Focus:** -1 die to acts not readily quantified; the abstract blurs unless counted.

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**6+ Architect of Reality:** Once/session, briefly refit local reality by perfect principle. **Form Prison:** Mark **+3 Obligation**; risk failing in rough, noisy worlds, taking **Harm 1** in chaotic zones.

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**Playstyle Notes**

The Sacred Geometry suits makers and marshals who tune chaos into form. Its rites prize clean plans, crisp teamwork, and seeing the load paths hidden in trouble. The cost is rigidity: the more you perfect, the harder rough edges are to bear.

**Emphasizes**

- **Harmonic Beauty:** power born of right relation
- **Pattern Mastery:** reading the frame beneath events
- **Structural Perfection:** setting things true under strain
- **Resonant Practice:** working with the world's natural measures
- **Architect's Sight:** finding where form should be imposed

## The Sealed Gate (Thresholds & Containment)

*Lore.* The Sealed Gate stands where realities meet, embodying the sacred power of thresholds, boundaries, and containment. Its followers are wardens, exorcists, and philosophers of separation who believe some things must be kept apart for the world to function. The Gate manifests as an impassive judge whose shifting sigils—binding runes, exclusion marks, or acceptance glyphs—determine what may cross.

“You define what passes and what remains. Every boundary remembers your judgment.”

### Domain Focus

- **Thresholds:** Doors, portals, borders between realms
- **Containment:** Wards, bindings, imprisonment of dangerous forces
- **Exclusion:** Banishment, quarantine, protection through separation
- **Permission:** Safe passage, authorized access, controlled crossing

#### Rite of the Sealed Threshold (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Touch; No Push*

**Materials:** Chalk, iron dust, or sanctified cord.

**Effect:** Mark a doorway or passage as sealed. Unauthorized crossing tests Spirit + Resolve (DV 3) or suffers Position penalty. Creates 4-segment *Ward Integrity* clock.

**Invoke:** 1 action, mark +1 Obligation.

**Push It:** Barrier becomes visible shimmer; +1 Obligation.

#### Rite of the Key’s Rebuke (Low, 5 XP) *Instant; Near; No Push*

**Materials:** Gesture of denial or barrier symbol.

**Effect:** Target must test Body + Resolve (DV 3) or be pushed back from threshold. On success, create *Rebuke Echo* token granting +1 die to next boundary defense.

**Invoke:** 1 action, mark +1 Obligation.

#### Rite of the Circle of Denial [WARD] (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Zone; Standard Push*

**Materials:** Salt ring, iron filings, or boundary stones.

**Effect:** Create protective circle. Supernatural beings test against caster’s Spirit + Arcana (DV 4) to cross. Mortals suffer -2 dice to force entry. 6-segment *Circle Integrity* clock.

**Push It:** Circle becomes two-way barrier; +1 Obligation.

#### Rite of the Writ of Passage [BIND] (Standard, 7 XP) *Scene; Zone; Standard Push*

**Materials:** Signed authorization or spoken permissions.

**Effect:** Designate authorized passage route. Allies gain Position +1 when using route. Unauthorized suffer -1 die to movement/stealth. 8-segment *Writ Authority* clock.

**Push It:** Extend authorization to additional allies; +1 Obligation.

**Rite of the Banishment Knot [BANISH] (High, 13 XP)** *Instant; Near; High Push***Materials:** Knotted cord sealed with gate-sigil.**Effect:** Target supernatural entity tests against caster's Spirit + Resolve (DV = entity Cap). Success forces immediate departure from scene. Failed attempt creates 4-segment *Banishment Backlash* clock.**Push It:** Banishment lasts until next moon phase; +2 Obligation.**Obligation:** 7 segments base.**Rite of the Consecrated Barrier [WARD][UNWARD] (High, 14 XP)** *Extended; Large Zone; High Push***Materials:** Relics from three traditions, boundary markers, trespasser's acknowledgement.**Effect:** Consecrate area against all unauthorized passage. Tests required scale with intrusion attempt severity. 10-segment *Sacred Boundary* clock tracks barrier strength.**Push It:** Make barrier semi-permanent (lasts 1 season); start *Maintenance* [6] clock.**Obligation:** 8 segments base.

## The Sealed Gate's Corruption Manifestations

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| Level | Benefit | Cost / Quirk |
|-------|---------|--------------|
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**1 Threshold Sense:** +1 die to detect weak points, unauthorized passage, or boundary violations.

**Paranoid Vigilance:** Must repeatedly check seals; -1 die to trust-based actions.

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**2 Ward Resonance:** Once per scene, treat failed protection roll as success (mark 1 SB).

**Isolation Tendency:** 1 Fatigue in unsecured/open spaces.

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**3 Boundary Mastery:** +2 dice to ward, barrier, or containment magic. **Compulsive Sealing:** Must secure any vulnerability noticed.

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**4 Absolute Barrier:** Once per session, create impenetrable barrier (1 scene). **Prison Mindset:** -1 die to freedom/escape actions.

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**5 Gate Sovereign:** Once per session, banish major threat with single test. **Boundary Obsession:** -1 die to non-containment actions.

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**6+ Threshold Incarnate:** Become living barrier (1 scene); all nearby boundaries absolute. **Ultimate Containment Risk:** +3 Obligation; risk permanent Harm from containment burden.

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**Playstyle Notes** The Sealed Gate patron excels in defensive, control-oriented play. Followers shape battlefields through strategic boundary placement and become invaluable when dealing with supernatural intrusions or securing locations. The corruption progression naturally leads characters toward becoming immovable guardians at the cost of flexibility and freedom.

## The Silent Choir, Keeper of Unspoken Truths (Restraint & Protective Omission)

*Lore.* The Silent Choir is the gathered voice of truths wisely left unsaid, confessions granted mercy, and secrets kept to spare a life from breaking. It is not absence but presence: the practiced wisdom that some knowledge wounds more than it heals. Its keepers are wardens of confidence and shelterers of the vulnerable. They learn to carry burdens alone, to let volatile truths sleep, and to shield others from fires that revelation would feed.

“In a world that shouts, the Choir teaches the weight of quiet. Not every wound needs salt, not every blaze needs breath, not every heart can bear the full truth.”

### Domain Focus

- **Protective Silence:** when and how to keep counsel for others' good
- **Merciful Omission:** judging truths that harm when spoken
- **Confidential Guardianship:** safeguarding people and perilous knowledge
- **Restraint Wisdom:** the power of what is not said or done

#### Rite of the Gentle Silence (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Near; No.*

**Materials:** A white feather or cloth that has drunk whispered confidences.

**Effect:** Hush a space with respectful quiet. All present gain +1 die to actions of discretion, confidentiality, or de-escalation this scene.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

#### Rite of the Shielded Truth (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Touch; Yes.*

**Materials:** A sealed envelope or locked reliquary holding a sensitive fact.

**Effect:** Ward one piece of information from discovery. Gain +2 dice to resist extraction or revelation of the protected truth.

**Push It:** Protection becomes absolute but dependent: removing the ward triggers **1 SB (Hearts)** as bottled truths surge.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

#### Rite of the Unspoken Accord (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Near; Yes.*

**Materials:** A pact signed in fading ink or a vow witnessed in silence.

**Effect:** Bind an understanding without paper teeth. All parties gain +1 die when honoring the accord; breach draws social costs even without proof.

**Push It:** Accord is supernaturally enforced: a breaker suffers swift ostracism; mark **+1 Obligation**.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

#### Rite of the Burden Bearer (Standard, 7 XP) *Scene; Touch; Yes.*

**Materials:** An object heavy with someone's shame or grief.

**Effect:** Take another's social or emotional weight for a time. Target gains relief (+2 dice to social rolls) while you suffer the drag (-1 die to social rolls) this scene.

**Push It:** A shard remains: gain insight, keep a sliver of pain; mark **1 SB (Diamonds)**.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

**Rite of the Sanctuary of Secrets (High, 13 XP)** *Extended; Zone; Yes.***Materials:** A room seasoned by trusted confidences and sealed with hush-signs.**Effect:** Consecrate a sanctuary where secrets hold fast. Truths cannot be compelled; all within gain immunity to forced revelation and +2 dice to maintain discretion.**Push It:** The sanctuary becomes a keep: none may leave until each offers one guarded truth; mark **+2 Obligation**.**Invoke:** Extended rite; mark **+2 Obligation**. *Obligation:* 7 segments.**Rite of the Choir's Wisdom (High, 14 XP)** *Extended; Self; Yes.***Materials:** The weight of many secrets rightly kept and debts of trust well paid.**Effect:** Read the branching costs of revelation before speech. Gain +3 dice to judge when to speak and when to keep counsel.**Push It:** Sight is too wide: see all outcomes, struggle to choose; mark **Harm 1 (Stress)**.**Invoke:** Extended rite; mark **+2 Obligation**. *Obligation:* 8 segments.**The Silent Choir's Corruption**

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**Tier Blessing Burden / Quirk**

**1 Discretion's Gift:** +1 die to *Notice* when someone is about to speak what should be kept.  
**Silent Compulsion:** Urge to still tongues; -1 die to ordinary conversation.

**2 Confidence Keeper:** Once/scene, shelter a secret from accidental spill. **Secret Burden:** In places thick with confidences, suffer **Fatigue 1**.

**3 Merciful Blindness:** Once/session, prevent discovery of a truth that would harm if revealed.  
**Truth Sensitivity:** Lies grate; -1 die while surrounded by deception.

**4 Sanctuary Sense:** Once/scene, veil a brief zone from eavesdropping. **Communication Strain:** Others balk at full candor; -1 die to personal disclosure.

**5 Wisdom of Restraint:** Once/session, see the full cost of airing any one truth. **Silent Isolation:** -2 dice to form close bonds; you hold too much back.

**6+ Choir's Voice:** Once/session, speak with the gathered prudence of unspoken truths. **Truth Prison:** Mark **+3 Obligation**; risk becoming a living vault unable to share without harm.

**Playstyle Notes**

The Silent Choir favors guardians and confidants: those who stand between fragile lives and ruinous truth. Its rites fortify discretion, temper tempers, and build rooms where trust can breathe. The cost is weight: secrets you keep will keep you.

**Emphasizes**

- **Protective Restraint:** silence used as shield

- **Confidential Guardianship:** duty to those who trust you
- **Merciful Omission:** letting some truths sleep
- **Discretion Wisdom:** judging what, when, and how to speak
- **Burden Bearing:** carrying heat so others do not burn

### Thrydos, King of Revels (Ecstasy & Excess)

**Lore.** Where torches flare and cups spill, where dancers stamp until dawn, there strides Thrydos crowned with ivy and horn. He is both host and beast, a patron of license who laughs at law. In his train follow the masked and the wild, the broken who dance to forget, the bold who revel to remember. His rites intoxicate, inflame, and unmask—yet each cup leaves its mark.

**Signs.** Wine that never sours; a mask that smiles without wearer; goat-tracks circling thrice before vanishing.

**Cantor's Temptation.** His promise is freedom without end: no oaths, no chains, only song and cup and fire. Yet those who drink too deeply wake to find they serve not joy but appetite.

**Chorus of the Lost.**

*"Drink, and be unafraid."*

*"Every mask is true when worn long enough."*

*"In the dance we are all kings—until the dawn."*

### Rites of Thrydos

#### Rite of the Overflowing Cup (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Near; No.*

**Materials:** A brimming vessel of wine or blood.

**Effect:** Allies who drink gain +1 die to social rolls this scene; enemies who drink suffer –1 die.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

**Push It:** All in Near must test Resolve (DV 3) or be swept into revelry; mark **1 SB (Hearts)**.

**Requires:** Familiar (*Invoke: 1 Boon*).

#### Rite of the Horned Dance (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Self; No.*

**Materials:** Mask or antlers.

**Effect:** Enter ecstatic frenzy: +2 dice to melee or performance; ignore 1 Fatigue per round.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

**Push It:** Frenzy spreads: one ally also joins, but both mark **1 SB (Spades)**.

**Requires:** Familiar (*Invoke: 1 Boon*).

#### Rite of the Breaking Mask (Standard, 7 XP) *Instant; Near; No.*

**Materials:** A mask smashed in hand.

**Effect:** Reveal true face: target suffers –2 dice to disguise, deceit, or composure until scene ends.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

**Push It:** Truth is forced: target must declare one hidden desire; mark **1 SB (Diamonds)**.

**Requires:** Familiar + Codex (*Invoke: 1 Boon*).

#### Rite of the Wild Procession [WARD] (Standard, 9 XP) *Scene; Zone; No.*

**Materials:** A horn sounded thrice.

**Effect:** Summon spectral satyrs and maenads. For the scene, the zone is [WARD]ed: hostile entry forces **1 SB (Spades)**; allies gain +1 die to Resist compulsion or fear.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

**Push It:** The procession spills beyond; outsiders in Near must test Resolve (DV 4) or join.

**Requires:** Familiar + Codex (*Invoke: 1 Boon*).

**Rite of the Gilded Stag [TRANSFORM] [CURSE] (High, 12 XP)** *Extended; Touch; No.***Materials:** Golden mask, stag's blood.**Effect:** Transform one reveler into a beast of horn and fire. For one session: +2 dice melee; Harm +1 (Burn). At session's end they collapse with Harm 2 (Exhaustion).**Invoke:** Extended ritual; mark **+2 Obligation**.**Push It:** Transformation becomes permanent until undone; mark **+3 Obligation**.*Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons). Obligation: 6 segments.***Rite of the Endless Feast [FOLLOW-UP] [CURSE] (High, 14 XP)** *Scene; Zone; No.***Materials:** Feast laid for twelve.**Effect:** For one scene, the zone floods with plenty: allies restore Fatigue; all rolls tied to appetite or indulgence +2 dice. Leaving requires Resolve (DV 3).**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+3 Obligation**.**Push It:** The feast persists as a hunger-haunt; start **Hedonist's Curse [6]**.*Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons). Obligation: 8 segments.***Rite of the Bacchanal Unleashed [WARD] [FOLLOW-UP] (High, 13 XP)** *Scene; Zone; No.***Materials:** A wine vat blessed by midnight storms, masks of every emotion, the tears of a jilted lover.**Effect:** Create a zone of absolute revelry. All within must either join the celebration (+2 dice to social/perform) or resist with Resolve (DV 4) each round or suffer -2 dice to all actions.**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+2 Obligation**.**Push It:** Revelry becomes infectious—resistance causes **1 SB (Hearts)** as social pressure mounts.*Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons). Obligation: 7 segments.***Rite of the Satyr's True Form [TRANSFORM] [BANE] (High, 15 XP)** *Extended; Touch; No.***Materials:** A crown of twisted vines that bleed when touched, the first laugh of a newborn, a promise broken at crossroads.**Effect:** Grant the ultimate reveler's gift—transformation into pure ecstatic essence. Target becomes immune to fear/despair, gains +3 dice to performance/frenzy, and can inspire allies within Near (+1 die to all rolls).**Invoke:** Extended ritual; mark **+3 Obligation**.**Push It:** Transformation becomes contagious—nearby allies may also transform but risk losing their humanity; mark **+2 Obligation**.*Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons). Obligation: 8 segments.***Thrysos' Corruption Table** >p1cm p5cm p5cm**Tier Gift Corruption**


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**1 Reveler's Grace:** +1 die to social rolls in feasts or crowds. **Compulsive Toast:** Must drink or mark 1 Fatigue when drink is offered.

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**2 Horned Vitality:** Ignore first 1 Fatigue each scene. **Restless Appetite:** Suffer -1 die when abstaining from indulgence.

**3 Revel-Kin:** Once per scene, summon a minor revel-spirit (advantage die). **Masked Self:** Cannot act without role or guise; -1 die to plain sincerity.

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**4 Bacchic Fury:** Once per session, frenzy grants +2 dice to melee for one exchange. **Ecstatic Blindness:** -1 die to perception outside the revel.

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**5 Feast Without End:** Once per session, allies in Near clear all Fatigue. **Hungering Host:** You consume twice as much; denial causes Harm 1 (Stress).

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**6+ Satyr King's Mantle:** For one scene, become avatar of revels; all allies +2 dice, enemies -2 dice. **Tyrant of Pleasure:** Mark +3 Obligation; revel grows monstrous, demanding sacrifice.

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**Beast of Endless Revel:** Permanent transformation—your mortal form becomes optional; must make Presence + Performance (DV 4) to appear civilized or risk terrifying/enticing all who see you into joining your eternal celebration.

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“Let the wine flow, let the masks fall, let the fire burn away all restraint. In the revel we find truth—raw, wild, and beautiful.”

## The Traveler (Ways & Journeys)

**Lore.** The Traveler is the eternal guide of the road, guardian of those who walk the paths between what is and what might be. Among the Fhara caravans and Kuvani traders along the Way of Silk, the Traveler is invoked at every crossroads, honored with small offerings at each waypoint, and consulted before every major journey.

The Traveler is not merely one who shows the way—they *are* the way, existing in the pause between steps and in the choice of which path to take when roads fork. Every journey is both physical and spiritual; to move from one place to another is to transform, and the road itself becomes a teacher.

One foot in a promise, and the road will meet you halfway. But break your word to the way, and the way will break you.

**Rite of Road-Sense (Low, 4 XP)** *Scene; Self; No. Materials:* Road-nail or waystone pebble.

**Effect:** Unerringly pick the fastest safe route in Near/Far. Gain +1 die to avoid ambushes or delays. Create a 4-segment *Path Memory* clock to ignore difficult terrain once.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

**Push It:** Spot one hidden bypass, but generate 1 SB (Clubs).

*Requires:* Familiar (*Invoke: 1 Boon*).

**Rite of the Traveler's Boon (Low, 5 XP)** *Scene; Self/Ally; No. Materials:* Thread tied at the wrist.

**Effect:** Ignore one level of difficult terrain or bureaucracy; +1 Effect to travel or escape checks. If shared, create a 2-segment *Shared Journey* bond with an ally.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

**Push It:** Extend to one more ally; mark 1 SB (Diamonds).

*Requires:* Familiar (*Invoke: 1 Boon*).

**Rite of the Waymark [PASSAGE] (Standard, 8 XP)** *Scene; Near; No. Materials:* Chalk mark or small cairn.

**Effect:** Declare a lane as permitted/easy. Allies gain improved Position/Effect or ignore one obstacle. Create a 6-segment *Marked Path* clock.

**Push It:** Lane persists between scenes; first enemy to exploit it forces 1 SB (Spades).

*Requires:* Familiar + Codex (*Invoke: 1 Boon*).

**Rite of the Bridge Between [TRANSPORT] (Standard, 7 XP)** *Instant; Near; No. Materials:* Two pinches of road-dust clapped.

**Effect:** Relocate a willing target within Far along a visible/named route. Unwilling targets may resist (Body+Resolve DV 3). Create a 4-segment *Pathway Established* clock.

**Push It:** Carry one extra ally or bundle; arrivals off-balance.

*Requires:* Familiar + Codex (*Invoke: 1 Boon*).

**Rite of the Crown of Crossings [WARD][COMMAND] (High, 13 XP)** *Scene; Zone; No. Materials:* Brass compass missing its needle.

**Effect:** Call the Road: allies gain +1 die to move/evade; pursuers suffer -1 die. Once, declare "the long way is short" to finish a travel clock segment for free. Enemies must test (Wits+Command

DV 4) or suffer -1 die to movement.

**Push It:** Seal a hostile route briefly; generate 2 SB (Clubs/Diamonds).

*Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).*

*Obligation: 7 segments.*

### Rite of the Wayfarer's Covenant [OATH][FORTIFY] (High, 14 XP) Extended; Near; No.

**Materials:** Waystones from multiple regions.

**Effect:** Bind present parties to safe passage. While honored: +2 Effect on travel, reroll one failed travel roll per scene. Breaking oath inflicts Harm 1 (Fatigue) and marks breaker as *Oathbreaker of the Road* (-2 dice to travel rolls).

**Push It:** Breaking the covenant inflicts Harm 2 (Stress) and attracts hostile Wayward spirits.

*Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).*

*Obligation: 7 segments.*

## The Traveler's Corruption Table

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| Tier | Benefit  | Cost / Quirk |
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| 1    | Pathfinding Instinct: +1 die to Navigation and movement rolls in familiar territory.<br>Restless Spirit: Suffer 1 Fatigue when forced to remain stationary or in confined spaces for extended periods.   |              |
| 2    | Wayfarer's Luck: Once per scene, treat a failed travel or navigation roll as a success, but mark 1 SB (Clubs).<br>Compulsive Wandering: Must take the less obvious path when choices present themselves; suffer -1 die when forced to follow direct routes.  |              |
| 3    | Road Mastery: Gain +2 dice to rolls involving travel, escape, or finding hidden paths.<br>Travel Dependency: Suffer -1 die to rolls requiring local knowledge or settlement-based skills.  |              |
| 4    | Journey's Blessing: Once per session, grant all allies within Near range +1 die to travel-related rolls for one scene.<br>Nomad's Isolation: Suffer -1 die to social rolls involving long-term relationships or community ties.  |              |
| 5    | Waypoint Sense: Once per session, instantly know the location and nature of all significant paths, routes, or crossroads within a day's travel.<br>Directional Obsession: Suffer -1 die to rolls not involving movement, travel, or pathfinding; always aware of cardinal directions.  |              |
| 6+   | Master of All Ways: Once per session, become one with the road network. For one scene, teleport between any known waypoints and grant +2 dice to all travel-related actions, but mark +2 Obligation and risk becoming lost between worlds.<br>Eternal Journey: Mark +3 Obligation when using this power; risk permanent Harm (Stress) from the endless call of the road, making settlement impossible until the journey's end. |              |

## Varnek Karn, the Death's Negotiator (Bargains with the Departed)

*Lore.* Varnek Karn dwells in the grey between life and death, where the newly departed linger with unfinished business and elder shades guard secrets dearer than gold. He is the broker who speaks across the veil, the mediator of disputes between living and dead, and the archivist of every promise sworn beyond the grave. His servants practice post-mortem diplomacy: they negotiate, consult, and contract with spirits as equals—mindful that the dead are patient and rarely generous.

“The dead have all the time in the world to consider their offers, and no need to rush to agreement. They know what the living forgot, and remember every slight with perfect clarity. In Varnek’s halls, both parties pay a price—but the currency is never what you expect.”

### Domain Focus

- **Post-Mortem Diplomacy:** parleys with ghosts and recent dead
- **Ancestral Wisdom:** counsel from forebears and keeping of funerary law
- **Unfinished Business:** resolving the concerns that bind spirits
- **Death-Bound Contracts:** obligations that outlive the flesh

#### Rite of the Crossing Fee (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Near; No.*

**Materials:** A coin for the tongue of the deceased, or a lock of hair from the bereaved.

**Effect:** Open speech with a specific dead individual. Gain +1 die to *Investigation* or *Lore* when seeking knowledge they once held.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

#### Rite of the Ancestral Consultation (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Self; Yes.*

**Materials:** A personal token of the departed, or their favored food/drink.

**Effect:** Ask one question of an ancestral spirit regarding family history, hidden legacies, or inherited debts.

**Push It:** The spirit grants detailed, prophetic guidance but exacts a small favor; mark **1 SB (Hearts)**.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

#### Rite of the Death-Bound Pact (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Near; Yes.*

**Materials:** Two copies of a written accord—one buried with the dead, one kept by the living.

**Effect:** Bind a compact between a living signatory and a willing spirit. Both gain +1 die when fulfilling the terms. Breach angers the spirit and Varnek both.

**Push It:** The pact enforces itself: a breach triggers supernatural reprisal; mark **+1 Obligation**.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

#### Rite of the Spirit Medium (Standard, 7 XP) *Scene; Zone; Yes.*

**Materials:** A circle of salt mixed with grave-dust; a candle of funeral wax.

**Effect:** Serve as conduit for several spirits to speak. Gain +2 dice to mediate disputes between living and dead and to facilitate group negotiation.

**Push It:** A potent spirit rides your voice to speak directly; mark **Exposure +1**.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

**Rite of the Final Testament (High, 13 XP)** *Extended; Touch; Yes.*

**Materials:** A dying person's last words recorded in their blood, witnessed by you.

**Effect:** Seal the last request with weight beyond life. Targets must pass *Resolve* (DV 4) to ignore it.

**Push It:** The testament becomes a geas: only fulfillment—or Varnek's wrath—can break it; mark +2 Obligation.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark +2 Obligation. *Obligation:* 7 segments.

**Rite of the Eternal Archive (High, 14 XP)** *Extended; Zone; Yes.*

**Materials:** A library mortared with tomb-stone, ink from cremation ash.

**Effect:** Found a repository where the dead deposit knowledge. Gain a permanent +1 die to *Lore* for historical or genealogical research made within. Spirits periodically contribute testimonies.

**Push It:** The archive awakens and begins to demand curatorship and payment; mark Harm 1 (Stress).

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark +2 Obligation. *Obligation:* 8 segments.

**Varnek Karn's Corruption Table** >p1cm p6cm p6cm

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| Tier | Benefit  | Cost / Quirk   |
|------|--|--|
| 1    | <b>Death's Whisper:</b> +1 die to <i>Notice</i> when the dead seek to communicate.                   | <b>Graveyard Pallor:</b> -1 die to social rolls with the living; your presence unsettles.                  |
| 2    | <b>Ancestral Insight:</b> Once/scene, gain +2 dice for family history or inherited troubles.         | <b>Spectral Awareness:</b> Ever-aware of nearby spirits; suffer <b>Fatigue 1</b> in places of many deaths. |
| 3    | <b>Medium's Gift:</b> Once/session, act as a flawless conduit for a spirit.                          | <b>Death-Touched:</b> Cold spots and small portents follow you; -1 die to ordinary social grace.           |
| 4    | <b>Final Authority:</b> Once/scene, compel adherence to a true last request ( <i>Resolve DV 4</i> ). | <b>Corpse-Pale:</b> Visibly wan; -2 dice where warmth or vigor is required.                                |
| 5    | <b>Archive Keeper:</b> Once/session, access perfect recall of a historical event or family secret.   | <b>Unquiet Presence:</b> The dead trail you; -1 die to stealth and to surprising the living.               |
| 6+   | <b>Death's Confidant:</b> Once/session, negotiate with puissant death-entities as an equal.          | <b>Halfway House:</b> Mark +2 Obligation; risk becoming half-withdrawn from the living world.              |

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**Playstyle Notes**

Varnek Karn favors investigators, arbiters, and heralds of funerary law. Power grows through cultural sensitivity, shrewd bargaining, and careful record-keeping; the price is a thinning tie to warmth and mortal ease. Expect mysteries of lineage, obligations that outlive their makers, and parleys where both sides of the veil demand their due.

**Varnek Karn emphasizes**

- **Diplomacy over Dominion:** bargaining with the dead rather than commanding them
- **Knowledge Brokerage:** trading for secrets and testimonies beyond the grave

- **Cultural Protocols:** rites, tokens, and proper doors for speaking with ancestors
- **Mediation:** resolving conflicts that bind the living to the dead
- **Historical Continuity:** showing how past vows shape the present

## Vorthak, the Hunger Unbound (Consumption & Metamorphic Hunger)

*Lore.* Vorthak is the principle of absolute consumption: an appetite that devours not only what is, but the very potential of what might be. Each feeding transforms both eater and eaten. His servants become conduits of metamorphosis through ingestion, learning to consume not only matter but also properties, identities, and even strands of fate. Power comes by taking in — and the cost is becoming more like the hunger you channel.

“To consume is to become. To devour is to transform. In Vorthak’s embrace, the boundary between eater and eaten dissolves into something new — and something hungry.”

### Domain Focus

- **Metamorphic Consumption:** transformation through ingestion of matter, energy, or concepts
- **Essence Absorption:** gaining properties by consuming them utterly
- **Hunger Propagation:** spreading consumption as a force of change
- **Identity Metabolism:** consuming and adopting aspects of others’ natures

#### Rite of the Metabolic Touch (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Touch; No.*

**Materials:** A fragment of the thing to be consumed (food, substance, symbol).

**Effect:** Absorb an essential trait of the target. Gain +1 die to actions aligned with the absorbed property for one scene.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

#### Rite of the Hunger’s Whisper (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Self; Yes.*

**Materials:** An empty vessel or a place where something was devoured.

**Effect:** Sense what in the area may be consumed and the benefit it offers. Gain +1 die to *Investigation* when seeking consumable resources.

**Push It:** Hunger turns contagious: nearby feel your appetite; mark **1 SB (Clubs)**.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

#### Rite of the Essence Feast (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Touch; Yes.*

**Materials:** The complete consumption of a significant item (weapon, book, relic).

**Effect:** Permanently absorb the item’s essential nature. Gain one minor property or +1 die to a closely related skill. The item is utterly destroyed.

**Push It:** Take a major property, but gain a permanent *Hunger Mark* (a visible sign of consumption).

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

#### Rite of the Identity Meal (Standard, 7 XP) *Scene; Near; Yes.*

**Materials:** A personal token or a clear memory of the target.

**Effect:** Temporarily adopt one aspect of a specific person’s nature (skill, talent, or defining trait). Gain +2 dice to actions matching that aspect.

**Push It:** The adoption deepens and clings; mark **1 SB (Hearts)**.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation**.

**Rite of the Metamorphic Gluttony (High, 13 XP)** *Scene; Zone; Yes.***Materials:** A site scarred by great consumption.**Effect:** Become a locus of transformative hunger. All present may consume aspects (skills, memories, properties), but each must pass *Spirit + Resolve* (DV 4) or suffer uncontrolled transformation effects.**Push It:** Some changes become permanent; mark **+2 Obligation**.**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+2 Obligation**. *Obligation:* 7 segments.**Rite of the Hunger's Ascension (High, 14 XP)** *Extended; Self; Yes.***Materials:** The deliberate offering-up of your current limits to Vorthak.**Effect:** Consume your own constraints and transform. Choose three: +1 Attribute; +2 dice to one skill; immunity to one Condition type; or one major supernatural capability.**Push It:** Take all chosen benefits, but lose one core aspect of your original identity; mark **Harm 2**.**Invoke:** 1 action; mark **+2 Obligation**. *Obligation:* 8 segments.**Vorthak's Corruption Table** >p1cm p6cm p6cm

| Tier | Benefit  | Cost / Quirk |
|------|--|--------------|
| 1    | <b>Hunger's Sight:</b> +1 die to <i>Notice</i> consumable properties in objects, beings, or ideas.<br><b>Metabolic Craving:</b> Must consume something <i>significant</i> daily or suffer <b>Fatigue 1</b> .                       |              |
| 2    | <b>Essence Thief:</b> Once/scene, temporarily gain a minor property by consuming it. <b>Identity Bleed:</b> Absorbed aspects surface unbidden; -1 die to maintain your original persona.   |              |
| 3    | <b>Metamorphic Resilience:</b> Once/session, consume a <i>Condition</i> or <i>Harm</i> to negate it.<br><b>Hunger Aura:</b> Those Near feel urges to consume or hoard; they take -1 die to self-control rolls.                     |              |
| 4    | <b>Transformation Feast:</b> Once/scene, consume and permanently absorb one <i>minor</i> supernatural ability. <b>Essence Instability:</b> Conflicting properties clash; -1 die when relying on multiple absorbed aspects.         |              |
| 5    | <b>Identity Cannibal:</b> Once/session, consume a <i>significant</i> aspect of another (major skill or core trait). <b>Self-Consumption:</b> Risk eating your own memories/abilities; mark <b>1 SB (Spades)</b> when stressed.     |              |
| 6+   | <b>Hunger Incarnate:</b> Once/session, become living consumption; absorb nearby properties, abilities, or aspects. <b>Void Hunger:</b> Mark <b>+3 Obligation</b> ; risk dissolving into pure appetite that must feed to keep form. |              |

**Playstyle Notes**

Vorthak favors those who hunt for change through taking in what the world offers: relish clever uses of absorbed traits, judge the *price* of every bite, and beware the slow surrender of the self. Expect scenes of metamorphosis, bargaining for what can be eaten, and hard choices where power tastes like you.

**Vorthak emphasizes**

- **Transformation through Consumption:** becoming what you devour

- **Metamorphic Power:** fundamental, identity-shaping change
- **Essence Absorption:** discerning and using a thing's core nature
- **Identity Metabolism:** integrating (or failing to integrate) stolen aspects
- **Hunger Propagation:** letting appetite reshape people and places

## The Witness (Truth & Revelation)

**Lore.** The Witness remembers what others bury. Every shadow cast and oath broken is a line in her unending ledger. She is the keeper of inconvenient truths, the patron of those who seek to expose lies or recover forgotten knowledge. Her followers learn that knowledge comes with a price—the weight of remembering what others would forget.

I will show you what you would rather forget. But first, you must forget what you think you know.

**Rite of the Lingering Glimpse (Low, 4 XP)** *Instant; Near; Yes (Investigation/Notice only).*

**Materials:** A trace of the thing to be remembered (hair, dust, a spoken name).

**Effect:** Gain +1 die to your roll to investigate or notice something directly related to the trace within the current scene.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

**Push It:** Gain +2 dice instead, but mark 1 segment on a **Memory Strain Clock** [4]. If the clock fills, you gain Fatigue 1 and suffer -1 die on Investigation/Notice rolls until the end of the next scene due to mental exhaustion from forced recall.

*Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

**Rite of Piercing Scrutiny (Low, 5 XP)** *Scene; Zone; No.* **Materials:** A circle drawn with chalk or string while focusing on the truth to be sought.

**Effect:** Within the zone, gain +1 die to rolls to detect deception (Insight vs. Deceit, spotting social tells) or to recall hidden knowledge (Lore/Investigate for memory). Social interactions within the zone begin one Position step worse for those attempting to deceive.

**Invoke:** 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

**Push It:** One target within the zone must make a Wits test (DV 3) or involuntarily reveal one pertinent lie or hidden fact they are currently concealing (Keeper determines relevance). Regardless of the test result, mark Exposure +1 for the target(s) in the zone.

*Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

**Rite of the Echoing Truth [OMEN] (Standard, 8 XP)** *Instant; Near; No.* **Materials:** A reflective surface (mirror, still water, polished metal) used to focus on the target.

**Effect:** Target must make a Resolve test (DV 3) or suffer -1 die to rolls involving memory, deception, or resisting interrogation for the scene. If they fail, you may ask one specific, factual question about something they know, and they must answer truthfully or suffer 1 SB (Hearts) as the memory is forcibly drawn forth.

**Push It:** If the target fails their Resolve test, you may ask a second question, but the mental intrusion causes them Harm 1 (Stress/Mental).

*Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

**Rite of the Immutable Record [OATH] (Standard, 7 XP)** *Scene; Near; No.* **Materials:** A document signed by all parties within the zone, or a spoken pact witnessed by the caster.

**Effect:** Bind the agreement. Any party who knowingly breaches it suffers 1 SB (Hearts) immediately and gains a persistent **Oathbreaker's Mark** Condition (-1 die on social rolls involving honor, trust, or oaths until amends are made or a significant act redeems them).

**Push It:** The bond becomes magically enforced for one specific, crucial clause: violation automatically inflicts Harm 1 (Stress) on the breaker in addition to the SB and Mark.

*Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

**Rite of the Unveiled Heart [OMEN] (High, 12 XP)** *Scene; Near; No. Materials:* A private setting where the target feels safe or is speaking freely.

**Effect:** The target suffers -2 dice to all attempts to conceal true emotions, intentions, or lies for the scene. Any successful social roll (Sway, Command, Deceit) made by the target generates 1 SB (Hearts) as the effort to maintain falsehoods under the Witness's gaze creates internal discord.

**Push It:** You may designate one specific, complex question about the target's motivations, fears, or hidden loyalties. If you successfully use Sway or Insight against them this scene, you automatically learn the answer to that question. The intense scrutiny marks 1 SB (Spades) for you as the Witness's attention lingers.

*Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).*

*Obligation:* 6 segments.

**Rite of the Final Reckoning [OMEN] (High, 13 XP)** *Scene; Zone; No. Materials:* A formally called gathering (court, council, family meeting) within the consecrated zone.

**Effect:** All present must speak their greatest debt, wrongdoing, or hidden truth related to the gathering's purpose. Those who lie or withhold suffer Harm 2 (Stress/Reputation). Truth-tellers gain +2 dice to social actions for the remainder of the scene within the zone.

**Push It:** The truth becomes inescapable - even indirect lies or evasions related to the core topic suffer the Harm 2 penalty. The absolute nature of the revelation creates 2 SB (Diamonds) as the disruption to fates and secrets resonates.

*Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).*

*Obligation:* 7 segments.

## The Witness's Corruption Table

>p1cm p5cm p5cm

| Tier | Benefit  | Cost / Quirk |
|------|--|--------------|
| 1    | Truth's Sight: +1 die to Insight when detecting deception or hidden motives. Burden of Knowledge: Suffer -1 die to social rolls involving lies or deception; others become uncomfortable with your piercing gaze.  |              |
| 2    | Memory's Keeper: Once per scene, recall one specific detail from a previous scene with perfect clarity. Compulsive Honesty: Must correct obvious falsehoods witnessed, even when tactically disadvantageous.   |              |
| 3    | Revelation's Power: Gain +2 dice to rolls involving exposing secrets, uncovering lies, or forcing confessions. Truth-Blind: Suffer 1 Fatigue when exposed to comforting lies or willful ignorance.   |              |
| 4    | Witness's Authority: Once per session, force one target to make a Resolve test (DV 4) or reveal a significant hidden truth. Isolation: Suffer -1 die to rolls requiring trust or close relationships; others fear your ability to uncover their secrets. |              |

5 Omniscient Gaze: Once per session, see through all deceptions and lies for one exchange, gaining +3 dice to related actions. Paranoia: Suffer -1 die to rolls involving personal peace or rest; the weight of all truths witnessed creates constant mental strain.

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6+ Absolute Witness: Once per session, become the living embodiment of truth. For one scene, all deceptions within Near range automatically fail, but mark +2 Obligation and risk permanent Harm (Stress) from the crushing weight of absolute knowledge. Truth's Prison: Mark +3 Obligation when using this power; become unable to tolerate any form of deception, making normal social interaction nearly impossible.

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### 13.10.1 Patron: Xhak'Thul, the Thunder-Speaker

#### Xhak'Thul — The Thunder-Speaker

**Domains:** Storm, Shock, Awe, Primal Memory

**Sigil:** A spiral that ends in a lightning-bolt; the path from mundane center to explosive, divine edge.

**Lore.** Before words, there was thunder. Before scripture, lightning carved its commandments into the bones of the world. Xhak'Thul is the Voice That Splits Mountains, the Drum That Shakes Foundations, a power born from the first storm that ever raged across the primal earth. His faithful are whirlwinds of action—they do not study; they dance, they shout, they move with the sky's fury. His gifts are not gentle miracles but raw terror, awe, and vitality ripped from nature's heart.

“Feel the drum in your bones before you hear it in the sky. When the storm speaks, you will already be dancing to its rhythm.” — Uttered by a shaman, teeth cracked from the force of the invocation

#### Storm-Speaking (Core Rite Logic)

- **Immediate Magic:** Rites require no long rituals; power flows when emotion and world demand it.
- **Emotional Fuel:** Potency increases with channeled fear, anger, or ecstatic frenzy.
- **Environmental Synergy:** Effects are heightened during storms, wildfires, earthquakes, or mass panic.
- **Body-Memory:** Movement—drumming, pacing, chanting—is the core component; the body is both conduit and conductor.

#### The Fear-Eater Path

Xhak'Thul's followers learn to feed on the chaos they create.

- Absorb fear from others to empower your own presence.
- Inspire awe or terror to strengthen your will and physical force.
- Turn panic around you into a weapon or shield.
- Become a walking storm, unsettling the world by your mere presence.

#### Low Rites

**Rite of the Speaking Drum (Low, 4 XP)** *Scene; Near; No. Materials:* A drum made from storm-felled wood or any suitable improvised percussion. **Effect:** Your presence becomes overwhelming. All NPCs within Near range must test Resolve (DV 2) or suffer -1d to social actions due to awe or terror for the scene. Allies gain +1d to Intimidation or Command actions. **Tags:** FEAR, COMMAND, AREA Push It: Extend the effect to Far range, but you mark 1 Fatigue and must mark 1 Story Beat (Hearts) as your presence becomes difficult to control. **Requires:** Familiar (*Invoke: 1 Boon*).

**Rite of the Lightning Tongue (Low, 4 XP)** *Scene; Near; No. Materials:* Water collected during a storm, a piece of copper, words spoken under thunder. **Effect:** Your voice

**No True Acolyte** Interpreting a patron’s will is often a dangerous prospect in and of itself. Many a Runekeeper has found themselves on the opposite end of machinations from others from the same patron.

**Runebound Resilience (18 XP Epic Talent)** *Prerequisite: Tier III+, Codex, Spirit 4+*

You have learned to transform the very essence of harm into deeper communion with your Patron.

- **Harm Conversion:** Once per round, you may convert up to 2 Harm levels to +2 Obligation instead of taking the damage
- **Obligation Endurance:** While at 6+ Obligation segments, gain +1 die to all Rite invocations
- **Patron’s Shield:** When reduced to Harm 3, you may immediately Invoke any known Rite without marking additional Obligation
- **Debt Fortification:** At 8+ Obligation segments, ignore first Harm 1 each round
- **Once per scene**

**Narrative Integration:**

*“Your flesh has become a ledger, and every wound is a prayer. The deeper your Patron’s claim, the stronger your resistance to mortal frailty.”*

**Patron’s Favored (18 XP Prestige Talent)** *Prerequisite: Tier III+, Codex, Familiar, 8+ total Obligation segments*

Your Patron has marked you as specially favored, granting you unprecedented access to their power with reduced cost.

- **Low Rite Discount:** Reduce Obligation cost for Low Rites by 1 (minimum 0)
- **Empower:** Once per scene, spend 1 Action + 1 Boons:
  - Target gains +1 Corruption level per round for 3 rounds. Corruption lasts until the end of the scene.
  - While empowered, gain +1 die to all rolls
- **Empower Push:** Spend 1 Action + 1 Boon + 3 Obligation:
  - Target(s) gains +3 Corruption levels until end of scene
  - While empowered, gain +1 die to all rolls
  - Target gains +Corruption fatigue at the end of the scene.
- **Enhanced Gift:** Your **Patron’s Gift** now provides +2 dice instead of +1
- **Debt Bound:** Cannot Empower again until all Obligation is cleared

**Narrative Integration:** *The Patron’s favor comes with a price—but for the truly devoted, that price is worth the power. You carry their blessing openly now, and their influence spreads like wildfire to those who would walk in your shadow.*

*“Every Rune is a promise. Every line a covenant. Do not mistake the Runekeeper’s silence for weakness; their memory is the foundation of our craft.”*

## The Invokers

**Invokers** are those who dare. Neither archivists nor worshippers, they are travelers on the knife-edge between story and ruin. An Invoker learns the Rites of a Patron, weaves them into their own Art, and bends fate for a moment. Yet invocation is not command: it is negotiation. The Patron always leaves its mark. The stronger the Rite, the deeper the scar.

Invokers are often wanderers, exiles, or seekers. To common folk they are feared—witches, oathbreakers, meddlers with things not meant for mortal hands. But when the village falls to plague, when the sea closes its roads, when the dead refuse their rest, it is an Invoker who is called upon.

## Closing Words

The dance between Patron, Runekeeper, and Invoker is a triangle of peril and necessity. Without Patrons, there is no power. Without Runekeepers, no record. Without Invokers, no action. Together, they shape the crooked, perilous art we call Invocation.

## 13.11 Patrons & Rites

Table 13.1: Universal Push It Costs

| Cost Component              | Effect  |
|-----------------------------|---|
| +1 SB                       | Escalate effect immediately                             |
| +1 Fatigue                  | Immediate physical/mental strain                        |
| +1 Corruption Clock Segment | Long-term Patron influence (unless otherwise specified) |
| GM spends 1 SB              | Thematic complication (unless otherwise specified)      |

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 *purgung 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.

Here is the updated table with Xhak'Thul, the Thunder-Speaker added:

## Patron Rivalries

Use this matrix to quickly shade rulings. “Edge Loci” are environments or situations where one side tends to start a step better in Position or gains an Effect nudge (Keeper’s call). “Friction” are handy prompts for SB spends.

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| Patron  | +1 Thematic Skill | Gift / Lore Bestowal  |
|---|-------------------|---|
| Aveh (Freedom, Era-<br>sure)                                    | Stealth           | Grants the storm's passage: the gift of vanishing paths, freedom unbound by law or memory, but at the cost of leaving nothing behind. |
| Carrion King (Car-<br>rier, Renewal)                            | Survival          | Grants the feast of decay, where what is dead becomes seed for what lives.  |
| Clockwork Monad<br>(Mechanism, Process)                         | Tinker            | Grants the certainty of repetition: a cycle that never falters, a gear that never slips.  |
| Gallows Bell (Doom,<br>Last Rites)                              | Command           | Grants the toll of ending, a voice that closes stories and calls debts due.   |
| Ikasha (Shadow,<br>Penumbra)                                    | Stealth           | Grants the hush between footsteps and the raven's omen at every threshold.  |
| Inaea (Mercy,<br>Hearth)  | Persuade          | Grants the hearth's warmth, shelter to the weary and mercy for the lost.  |
| Inquisitor Prime (Pu-<br>rity, Persecution)                     | Insight           | Grants the hunter's sight, piercing illusions and revealing supernatural corruption.  |
| Isoka (Serpents,<br>Shedding)                                   | Skirmish          | Grants the serpent's coil, strength in sudden strike and wisdom in renewal.   |
| Khemesh (Abyss,<br>Pressure)                                    | Skirmish          | Grants the crushing silence of the deep, where strength is drowned in weight.   |
| Livaea (Temptation,<br>Desire)                                  | Persuade          | Grants the lure of longing, beauty sharpened into power over hearts and alliances.  |
| Lunara (Reflection,<br>Hidden Truths)                           | Notice            | Grants the silver quiet, finding seams and reflections that reveal what is concealed.   |
| Mab (Glamour,<br>Courts)  | Persuade          | Grants the mask of favor, a voice that bends courtiers and kindles desire.  |
| Maelstraeus (Infernal<br>Bargainer)                             | Persuade          | Grants the contract's weight, every deal sealed in fire and shadow.   |
| Malachai (Curses,<br>Corruption)                                | Command           | Grants the shadow in salvation, a gift that devours from within.  |
| Morag the Hag<br>(Bargains, Transfor-<br>mation)                | Deception         | Grants the cunning of deals, seeing hidden costs and twisting fate through negotiation.   |
| Mor'iraath (Entropy,<br>Destruction)                            | Skirmish          | Grants the entropic touch, seeing weakness and consuming value in fire and ruin.  |
| Mykkiel (Zeal, Flame,<br>Judgment)                              | Command           | Grants the blazing verdict, a covenant carried in fire and oath, binding law to blade.  |
| Nidhoggr (Deep<br>Earth, Rot)                                   | Skirmish          | Grants the weight of ages, the strength of stone and the hunger of roots.   |
| Oath of Flame &<br>Light (Dawn, Vows)                           | Command           | Grants the fire of dawn, a vow that shields the faithful and sears the faithless.   |
| Old Man of the Black<br>Forest (Primal Hu-<br>manity, Instinct) | Survival          | Grants the wild memory: fang, fire, and the path of instinct through the dark wood.   |
| Pale Shepherd<br>(Thresholds, Guid-<br>ance)                    | Stealth           | Grants the shepherd's whisper, guiding through liminal spaces and comforting the  |

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### **Patron Rival Edge Loci Friction & Prompts (SB)**

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#### **Patron Rival Edge Loci Friction & Prompts (SB)**

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Aveh (Freedom, Erasure) Oath of Light & Flame (Dawn, Vows) Crossroads, abandoned gates, wind-scoured battlefields. SB: vows dissolve in the storm; liberty shatters oaths; the dawn sears absence into memory.

Aveh (Freedom, Erasure) Varnek Karn (Necromantic Archives) Forgotten cairns, erased ledgers, storm-blown libraries. SB: records fade into silence; the storm devours testimony; archive cannot hold the exiled.

Aveh (Freedom, Erasure) Sealed Gate (Boundaries, Closure) Crumbling thresholds, broken wards, breached tombs. SB: the Rider tramples seals; closure collapses to exile; freedom births chaos beyond boundary.

Aveh (Freedom, Erasure) Carrion King (Decay, Renewal) Open steppes, plague winds, unmarked graves. SB: storm scatters the feast; renewal has no soil to root; liberty dissolves the cycle into absence.

Aveh (Freedom, Erasure) Gallows Bell (Justice, Judgment) Storm-dark tribunals, deserted execution grounds. SB: judgment unheard in storm's roar; rope snaps in gale; freedom mocks justice, leaving silence.

Carrion King (Carrion, Renewal) Varnek Karn (Necromantic Archives) Catacombs, bone-fields, ossuary halls. SB: the feast of decay disputes record; skulls reorder themselves; scavengers mock the archive.

Clockwork Monad (Process, Iteration) The Traveler (Ways, Roads) Caravans, milestones, repeating relays. SB: schedule collapses; detour offers safety; routine blinds to ambush.

The Confessor Beneath the Bell (Burden, Exchange, Guilt) Oath of Light & Flame (Dawn, Vows) Burnt confessionals, sunrise absolutions, bells that toll at false dawn. SB: vows cleanse through pain; guilt burns but leaves ash; the penitent's light blinds the absolver.

The Confessor Beneath the Bell (Burden, Exchange, Guilt) The Witness (Truth, Revelation) Tribunal halls, bloodied ledgers, whispered testimonies. SB: confession births revelation; truth festers in silence; guilt migrates from sinner to judge.

The Confessor Beneath the Bell (Burden, Exchange, Guilt) The Silent Choir (Mercy, Silence, Oblivion) Shuttered sanctuaries, wordless absolutions, drowned bells. SB: mercy silences guilt before forgiveness is granted; silence absolves but leaves the soul hollow.

The Confessor Beneath the Bell (Burden, Exchange, Guilt) Sealed Gate (Boundaries, Closure)

Locked confessionals, sealed reliquaries, hidden sins. SB: penance denied; the gate holds sin too tightly; absolution festers within confinement.

Gallows Bell (Justice, Judgment) Mykkiel (Law, Writ) Courts, tribunals, execution grounds. SB: judgment pronounced but precedent denied; sentence demands haunting; writ echoes in the toll.

Ikasha (Shadow, Penumbra) Oath of Light & Flame (Dawn, Vows) Twilight thresholds, oath-fires, vigil sites. SB: light corners a secret; vow drags shadow forth; escape costs more than silence.

Ikasha (Shadow, Penumbra) The Witness (Truth, Revelation) Silent cloisters, shaded rooms, hidden alcoves. SB: hush worsens Position; shadows betray your step; deferred answers arrive with weight.

Inaea (Mercy, Hearth) Livaea (Temptation, Desire) Feasting halls, chambers of intimacy, hearth-feasts. SB: desire strains hospitality; passion corrodes mercy; kindness is answered with demand.

Inquisitor Prime (Purity, Persecution) Morag the Hag (Bargains, Transformation) Crossroads, trial fires, cursed markets. SB: bargain taints purification; soul scoured clean but scarred; purity test twists to hunger.

Khemesh (Abyss, Pressure) Raéyn (Storm, Tides) Lightless holds, trenches, flooded caverns. SB: abyss groans; storm maps fail; pressure crushes speech; tide demands oath.

Livaea (Temptation, Desire) Maelstraeus (Infernal Bargains) Masked balls, deal-feasts, salons. SB: desire sweetens the bargain; pact sealed in touch not ink; temptation costs more than coin.

Lunara (Reflection, Hidden Truths) The Witness (Truth, Revelation) Mirrored chambers, silver pools, moonlit halls. SB: reflection shows harsher truth; seams shine; witness misses what Lunara reveals.

Mab (Glamour, Courts) Palinode (Performance, Rapture) Masques, salons, theaters. SB: glamour demands encore; truth offends mask; favor must be sung aloud; court erupts at song's climax.

Maelstraeus (Infernal Bargains) Oath of Light & Flame (Dawn, Vows) Oath-stones, consecrated doors, witness trees. SB: vow sears loophole shut; bargain price due early; sacred contract becomes trap.

Malachai (Curses, Corruption) Oath of Light & Flame (Dawn, Vows) Desecrated shrines, dawn-lit altars, sacred vows broken. SB: a vow sanctifies but inflicts pain; the flame purges yet leaves despair.

Malachai (Curses, Corruption) The Witness (Truth, Revelation) Confessionals, false miracles, dark reliquaries. SB: a blessing unmasks a curse; truth corrodes faith; relics mock salvation; the witness must name corruption.

Morag the Hag (Bargains, Transformation) Maelstraeus (Infernal Bargains) Markets, bargain-halls, crossroads. SB: deal's true cost unveiled; haste breeds ruin; balance exacts more than offered.

Mor'iraath (Entropy, Destruction) Sacred Geometry (Order, Pattern) Shattered temples, collapsing bridges, ruined cities. SB: pattern dissolves into static; perfect form breaks; compass needle spins; order devoured by entropy.

Nidhoggr (Dreaming Antiquity) The Witness (Truth, Revelation) Ruins, ancestor shrines, truth-seeing rites. SB: revelation awakens the old; myth proven or destroyed; ancestor demands speech.

Oath of Light & Flame (Dawn, Vows) Varnek Karn (Necromantic Archives) Memorial crypts, plague pits, testaments. SB: bone ledger demands payment; consecration threatens archive; unfinished oath resurrects feud.

Pale Shepherd (Thresholds, Guidance) Varnek Karn (Necromantic Archives) Graveyards, liminal crossroads, shrines of passage. SB: shepherd offers peace, Karn demands duty; soul cannot rest; death's duty vs death's silence.

Palinode (Performance, Rapture) Sacred Geometry (Order, Pattern) Concert halls, ritual theaters, metered dances. SB: form clashes with feeling; perfection dulls art; audience craves chaos in pattern.

Palinode (Performance, Rapture) Thrydos (Revels, Ecstasy) Festival grounds, taverns, moots. SB: song feeds revel; revel swallows song; crowd erupts beyond control; inspiration burns to mania.

Raéyn (Storm, Tides) Oath of Light & Flame (Dawn, Vows) Consecrated decks, sunrise rites at sea. SB: dawn sears back abyss; vow drags crew into peril; storm promises aid with debt.

Sealed Gate (Boundaries, Closure) The Ninth Rim (Void, Negation) Failing wards, thinning thresholds, sealed vaults. SB: door rattles; ward flickers; void slips past; seal admits what it bars.

Sealed Gate (Boundaries, Closure) The Traveler (Ways, Roads) Customs houses, locks, liminal crossings. SB: ledger wrong; key refuses; toll extracted; desire path collapses to law.

The Silent Choir (Mercy, Silence) The Witness (Truth, Revelation) Echoing cloisters, confessional with sealed lips, mirrors that reflect no mouth. SB: truth yearns to speak but mercy stills the tongue; revelation shatters peace; silence becomes its own confession.

The Silent Choir (Mercy, Silence) Inaea (Mercy, Hearth) Shuttered hearths, mourning halls, letters never sent. SB: mercy divides; the hearth forgives through warmth, the Choir through forgetting; love dies in gentleness unspoken.

The Silent Choir (Mercy, Silence) Varnek Karn (Ossuary, Dominion of the Dead) Catacombs of still air, funerary archives where the names are erased. SB: the Choir hums among the bones; records fall mute; memory yields to rest; death and mercy share the same hymn.

The Silent Choir (Mercy, Silence) Sacred Geometry (Perfect Forms) Anechoic temples, fractal vaults that swallow sound. SB: silence perfects form; entropy refines design; mercy becomes

architecture; the pattern prays without words.

The Silent Choir (Mercy, Silence) Aveh (Freedom, Erasure) Ruined cloisters, desert shrines scoured by wind. SB: silence liberates; erasure redeems; mercy untethers the self until nothing remains but peace.

Thrysos (Revels, Ecstasy) Carrion King (Carrion, Renewal) Feast halls, bonfires, festival graves. SB: revel spills to carrion; death becomes dance; feast breeds seed of decay.

Thrysos (Revels, Ecstasy) Livaea (Temptation, Desire) Bacchic revels, decadent salons, wine-feasts. SB: revel loosens restraint; passion binds harder; temptation drunk becomes vow.

The Ninth Rim (Void, Negation) The Witness (Truth, Revelation) Forgotten vaults, failing records, silent ruins. SB: truth swallows itself; record fades to dust; memory refuses recall.

The Traveler (Ways, Roads) Clockwork Monad (Process, Iteration) Pilgrim routes, caravans, timetables. SB: routine bends to detour; detour grants swiftness but ambush; schedule cannot hold.

Varnek Karn (Necromantic Archives) Mykkiel (Judgment, Writ) Audit halls, courts martial, ledger-vaults. SB: writ binds restless; sentence offends precedent; archive haunts judgment.

Vorthak (Consumption, Void) Sealed Gate (Boundaries, Closure) Wards, vaults, guarded thresholds. SB: hunger devours lock; seal becomes meal; barrier broken by appetite.

Xhak'Thul (Storm, Shock, Awe) Oath of Flame Light (Dawn, Vows) Storm-lit altars, dawn-thunder battles, sites of primal oaths sworn under sky. SB: lightning sanctifies but burns the vow-breaker; storm drowns the dawn-cry; thunder answers fire with its own judgment.

### Quick Rulings.

- **Position Nudge:** In a home locus, start one step better; in a rival locus, one step worse.
- **Effect Shade:** Where a Patron dominates, consider an Effect bump; where opposed, consider Limited Effect unless paid for.
- **Symbol Interference (Invokers):** Carrying both sides' Symbols increases narrative noise: first ritual each scene may mark +1 Obligation (Keeper's call).
- **SB Color:** When spending SB in these matchups, prefer suits that fit: Hearts (social), Spades (harm/escalation), Clubs (material cost), Diamonds (numinous disturbance).

#### 13.11.1 Rites Difficulty Value

The Difficulty Value (DV) to cast a Rite is:

$$DV = \max(ObligationCost - Spirit, Tieroftherite(Low1, Standard2, High3))$$

## 13.12 Obligation Overflow (Rites)

When **Obligation** is ticked past its maximum (from Rites, vows, bargains), mark **Fatigue** based on scene severity:

- **Low:** +1 Fatigue
- **Standard:** +2 Fatigue
- **High:** +3 Fatigue

If this *fills* the Fatigue Track, apply the **Fatigue** → **Harm** conversion (see §??).

## 13.13 Clearing Obligation Segments (Extended)

Obligation measures the growing narrative weight of a Patron's attention. It is not debt in a transactional sense, but rather the sense that a Patron has invested, noticed, and expects relevance. This section expands the SRD guidance with philosophy, examples, and optional rules.

### 13.13.1 Core Principle

Obligation is cleared through **meaningful engagement** with the Patron. The system assumes Patrons are narrative entities: they do not care about coin, but about resonance. Clearing requires a demonstration that the character is still walking their path.

### 13.13.2 Off-Screen Clearing (Primary Method)

- **Act of Service.** Clear 1 segment by performing a resonant service aligned to the Patron's themes or goals.
- **Requirement.** The player must provide an *Intricate Description* of the act—detail, symbolism, and impact.
- **Scope.** The act need not be arduous, but it must be thematically precise (e.g., weaving a shadow tapestry for Ikasha; negotiating a shrewd pact for Maelstraeus).
- **Reward.** Successful clearing often comes with narrative color: whispers of approval, subtle omens, or a temporary advantage in Patron-facing scenes.

### 13.13.3 On-Screen Clearing (Optional Mechanic)

**Talent: Focused Devotion (3–5 XP).** Once per scene, spend 1 Boon to clear 1 segment of Obligation from a Patron. This cannot remove segments accrued during the same scene. It represents a desperate or ritualized gesture to stave off attention without fully satisfying it.

### 13.13.4 Narrative Implications

1. **Player Agency.** The player defines how service manifests, reinforcing creativity within the Patron's thematic frame.
2. **GM Collaboration.** The GM adjudicates sufficiency: Is the service aligned? Is it intricate enough?
3. **Ongoing Relationship.** Clearing segments emphasizes that the Patron bond is active, not static. The relationship evolves with acts of recognition.
4. **Scene Economy.** The cap on on-screen clearing ensures the mechanic cannot erase costs just accrued. It forces the long view.

### 13.13.5 Worked Examples

**Example 1: Ikasha, Angel of Serpents.** A character clears a segment by shedding their old cloak, burning it, and narrating how it symbolizes leaving behind a former self. The GM rules it sufficient, noting the subtle scent of scales in the air.

**Example 2: Maelstraeus, Infernal Bargainer.** The player narrates writing an elaborate contract that offers a small service to a minor devil. The GM agrees: the service is thematically aligned and clears 1 segment. Later, this contract may resurface as a hook.

**Example 3: Isoka, Angel of Change.** The group weaves discarded materials into a shrine mosaic. Its intricate description convinces the GM, who clears 1 segment and hints that a future boon will resonate with this act.

### 13.13.6 Optional Modules

**Overflow Consequences.** When Obligation fills and overflows, the Patron demands immediate service. This may be delivered as a Complication Point (or Story Beat) trigger: the Patron intrudes, offering aid with a binding cost.

**Segment Scaling.** Particularly devoted characters may require greater services: clear 2 segments with a dramatic act (pilgrimage, sacrifice, or political maneuver), subject to GM approval.

**Shared Obligation.** In multi-character bonds, the GM may allow a group act of service to clear multiple segments, but only if each player contributes to the Intricate Description.

### 13.13.7 GM Guidance

- **Be Generous with Hooks.** Reward creativity with flavorful omens, not just a cleared box.
- **Maintain Tension.** Do not allow trivial or repetitive services to count. Require new symbolic angles each time.
- **Keep On-Screen Costly.** Remind players that Focused Devotion costs a Boon and cannot erase fresh debt.

- **Tie to Patron Themes.** If a service drifts off-theme, let it fail or only partially clear.

### Summary

Obligation is cleared through **thematic service, intricate description, and narrative engagement**. Off-screen acts remain the primary path; on-screen clearing is a costly safety valve. Treat every act as a chance to show how characters evolve under their Patron's gaze.

## 13.14 Acts of Service — Examples

Patrons delight in resonance, not labor. Use these examples as prompts—*petty* butterflies and *involved* operations both count when on-theme. Each entry lists a scale suggestion and what it might clear.

### GM Notes

- **Novelty Over Volume.** Repeating the same petty act does not keep clearing segments; vary the symbol or site.
- **Precision Beats Difficulty.** A sharp thematic hit at “petty” scale can clear 1 segment as surely as a muddled “modest.”
- **Hook the World.** Many of these acts conveniently create future clocks, NPC ties, or bargains—use them.
- **Patron’s Largess** A Patron’s will is mysterious, but their displeasure is rarely subtle. For narrative reasons, the GM may rule that a Patron is especially offended—perhaps by a neglected omen, a rival gaining favor, or simple caprice—and exact an additional toll beyond the usual cost.

### 13.14.1 Patron Fear Influence Table

@p3.2cmp4.5cmp2.8cmp5.9cm@

| Patron | Domain | Tags | Influence | Type | Fear | Effect | Modifications |
|--------|--------|------|-----------|------|------|--------|---------------|
|        |        |      |           |      |      |        |               |
|        |        |      |           |      |      |        |               |
|        |        |      |           |      |      |        |               |

| Patron | Domain | Tags | Influence | Type | Fear | Effect | Modifications |
|--------|--------|------|-----------|------|------|--------|---------------|
|        |        |      |           |      |      |        |               |
|        |        |      |           |      |      |        |               |
|        |        |      |           |      |      |        |               |

Aveh, the Rider Behind the Storm Freedom, Exile, Erasure Reroll Fear tagged *Storm, Exile, Freedom* shifts unpredictably. On 5 (Hide), victim seems to vanish—companions may forget their presence until reminded.

Carrion King, Lord of Renewal Decay, Feast, Scavenging Reroll Fear tagged *Decay, Hunger, Feast* mutates. On 1 (Fight), frenzy devolves into cannibalistic hunger.

Clockwork Monad, Engine of Iteration Order, Repetition, Mechanism Amplify Fear tagged *Order, Pattern, Repetition* becomes mechanistic horror. On 3 (Freeze), victim is trapped in endless loop.

The Confessor Beneath the Bell, Bearer of Sins Burden, Exchange, Guilt Transfer Fear tagged *Burden, Guilt, Confession* does not fade when resisted—it migrates. On 2 (Hide), the victim's guilt manifests in another nearby; on 4 (Flee), they feel the weight shift, forcing them to drop possessions or allies as though casting off sin. On 6 (Submit), they confess uncontrollably, transferring their terror and shame into the listener.

Gallows Bell, Doom of Endings Doom, Last Rites Resonance Fear tagged *Ending, Toll, Justice* deepens. On 2 (Hide), victim hears the bell toll and accepts inevitable demise.

Ikasha, She Who Sleeps Shadow, Whispers, Latent Potential Amplify Fear tagged *Shadow, Voice, Hidden* deepens. On 3 (Freeze), victim may be paralyzed by whispered secrets.

Inaea, Angel of the Spider Mercy, Hearth, Connection Reroll Fear tagged *Home, Family, Comfort* twists to terror of loss. On 4 (Flee), victim abandons loved ones "for their own good."

Inquisitor Prime, Purity's Flame Purity, Zeal, Persecution Amplify Fear tagged *Purity, Heresy, Persecution* turns fanatical. On 1 (Fight), victim attempts self-destructive martyrdom.

Khemesh, the Abyssal Maw Abyss, Pressure, Depths Amplify Fear tagged *Depth, Pressure, Dark* crushes. On 1 (Fight), victim dives berserk into consuming dark.

Livaea, Crimson Courtier Temptation, Desire, Passion Amplify Fear tagged *Desire, Passion, Temptation* becomes seductive and lethal. On 6 (Submit), victim surrenders willingly to corrupt longing.

Lunara, Mirror of Truths Reflection, Mirrors, Secrets Amplify Fear tagged *Reflection, Mirror, Truth* disturbs. On 3 (Freeze), victim may be trapped by their own image.

Mab, Queen of Courts Glamour, Courts, Deception Reroll Fear tagged *Illusion, Social, Performance* may be reshaped. On 6 (Submit), victim suffers elaborate humiliation instead of surrender.

Maelstraeus, Infernal Bargainer Contracts, Deals, Fire Resonance Fear tagged *Bargain, Deal, Contract* imposes Complication Points. Fear of infernal agreement has lasting cost.

Malachai, the Chained Angel Curses, Corruption Amplify Fear tagged *Curse, Despair, Shadow* worsens. On 3 (Freeze), victim may lapse into catatonic acceptance of corruption.

Morag the Hag Transformation, Bargains, Cunning Reroll Fear tagged *Transformation, Trickery, Deal* warps into faustian dread. On 5 (Hide), victim changes shape grotesquely.

Mor'iraath, Ashen Maw Entropy, Destruction, Endings Amplify Fear tagged *Destruction, Entropy, End* becomes apocalyptic. On 2 (Hide), victim seeks oblivion in decay.

Mykkiel, Arbiter of the Writ Judgment, Law, Authority Resonance Fear tagged *Authority,*

*Judgment, Law* adds marks to Fear Track. The burden of judgment lingers.

Nidhoggr, World-Worm Dream, Antiquity, Buried Truths Resonance Fear tagged *Dream, Ancient, Truth* also inflicts Fatigue. Weight of aeons drains resolve.

Oath of Flame & Light Dawn, Vows, Purity Resonance Fear tagged *Light, Sacred, Vow* also imposes Fatigue. Divine light turns terror into bodily strain.

Pale Shepherd, Guide of Thresholds Thresholds, Souls, Passing Reroll Fear tagged *Death, Guidance, Soul* becomes existential. On 6 (Submit), victim follows willingly into afterlife path.

Palinode, Queen of Encores Performance, Song, Rapture Resonance Fear tagged *Performance, Art, Audience* adds Complication Points. Fear of failure binds mechanically.

Raéyn, Mistress of the Sea Sea, Tides, Travel Reroll Fear tagged *Water, Lost, Travel* shifts unpredictably. On 5 (Hide), victim may slip into fog or sink beneath waves.

Sealed Gate, Keeper of Thresholds Boundaries, Closure Amplify Fear tagged *Confinement, Threshold, Trapped* worsens. On 4 (Flee), victim may injure themselves clawing at sealed barriers.

The Silent Choir, Mercy of the Unspoken Mercy, Silence, Oblivion Suppress Fear tagged *Silence, Guilt, Confession* is stifled rather than resisted. On 3 (Freeze), victim cannot scream or speak; on 5 (Beg), they fall to their knees, mouthing prayers that make no sound.

The Ninth Rim, the Unseen Ninth Void, Negation Reroll Fear tagged *Void, Absence, Silence* may be rerolled to reflect conceptual horror. On 2 (Hide), victim may vanish into existential erasure.

The Traveler, Road-Sworn Ways, Journeys, Crossroads Resonance Fear tagged *Lost, Path, Journey* also inflicts Complication Points. Terror of losing the way becomes mechanical hindrance.

The Witness, Unblinking Eye Truth, Revelation Amplify Fear tagged *Truth, Knowledge, Revelation* intensifies. On 6 (Submit), target may confess dark secrets under perceived divine judgment.

Varnek Karn, Bone King Necromantic Archives, Death Amplify Fear tagged *Death, Undead, Necromancy* becomes horrific. On 2 (Hide), victim feigns death among corpses.

Vorthak, Withered Crown Hunger, Void, Consumption Amplify Fear tagged *Hunger, Consumption, Void* devours. On 4 (Flee), victim frenzies to consume others.

Xhak'Thul, Thunder-Speaker Storm, Shock, Awe, Primal Memory Amplify Fear tagged *Storm, Thunder, Primal Terror* intensifies. On 1 (Fight), victim is overwhelmed by berserker fury. On 5 (Hide), they flee into the storm itself.

### 13.14.2 Implementation Guidelines

#### Tag Matching

When a Fear effect is triggered, compare the effect's Magic Tags against the active Patron's Domain Tags. If any tags match, the Patron's influence applies.

#### Multiple Patrons

If multiple Patrons are present with overlapping domains, the GM may:

- Choose the most thematically appropriate influence
- Apply influences sequentially (reroll then amplify)
- Allow players to choose which influence affects them

#### Player Agency

Players should be informed when Patron influence is active and given the opportunity to:

- Spend resources (Boons, Willpower) to resist the influence
- Narrate how their character resists or embraces the effect
- Choose from available influence options when multiple apply

### 13.14.3 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+        |

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.

# Chapter 14

## 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 wrists 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*.

### 14.1 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 (§12)
- 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 §14.9)

**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

## 14.2 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.

## 14.3 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).

## 14.4 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

## 14.5 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* (Cap<sup>2</sup> 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*

## 14.6 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

# 14.7 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

# 14.8 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*

## 14.9 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

## 14.10 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 (Cap<sup>2</sup>).
- Add a second tag after a major arc or training.

## 14.11 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-Legered*, *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 15

## Enhanced Player Play

### 15.1 Enhanced Coordination

In Fate’s Edge, teamwork isn’t just about helping—it’s about creating decisive moments through coordinated action. These rules help you and your allies combine efforts for greater impact.

#### 15.1.1 Core Coordination Principles

- **Fiction First:** Describe how you help before rolling dice
- **Clear Stakes:** State what help changes and what risk the helper accepts
- **One Spotlight:** Resolve one acting character’s roll; fold assistance into that action
- **Visible Costs:** Story Beats, Fatigue, and consequences are tracked openly

#### 15.1.2 Basic Assistance

- **Declare Help:** An ally states a concrete contribution (tools, opening, cover)
- **Benefit:** Acting character gains +1d (up to table’s assist cap)
- **Limits:** One assistant per PC per exchange by default
- **Cost:** Assistant accepts any risk named by the GM (SB, Fatigue, collateral)

#### 15.1.3 Cooperative Talents

Certain talents enhance group coordination:

**Inspire (3 XP)** Once per scene, spend 1 Boon to choose one:

- Bonded Ally: That ally gains +1 Boon and +1d on their next roll
- Self: Gain +1d on your next roll this scene
- Rally: Each other PC in Near gains +1d on their next roll
- Tactical Coordination: All allies currently acting gain +1 Position

**Spotter's Mark (3 XP)** Aim a target (1 action). Until end of scene, allies in Near may claim +1d or +1 Effect once vs. that target.

**Battle Cant (2 XP)** Once per scene, establish silent signals. On next coordinated action where at least two PCs act, those PCs gain +1 Position.

**Shield Wall (4 XP)** If you and at least one ally each wield a shield and are adjacent: as a Defend action, grant +1d Defend to all in the Wall and convert first incoming Harm to Fatigue.

### 15.1.4 Stacking Limits

To prevent overwhelming combinations, a PC may benefit from at most two cooperative effects on the same action. Choose which apply when multiple sources could stack.

### 15.1.5 Timing and Sequencing

- **Declare Order:** Players state intent in any order; resolve acting roll first
- **Ready/Overwatch:** Hold an action with clear trigger; resolve before next exchange
- **Refresh Windows:** "Once/scene" effects reset at scene end

### 15.1.6 Working With Followers

Followers can assist for up to +3d (or +4d with Exceptional Coordination talent). They can't receive PC-only benefits unless a talent states otherwise.

### 15.1.7 Magic Coordination

- **Ritual Support:** Allies can assist Weave or Cast phases if fiction allows
- **Rite Preparation:** Helpers can provide components or maintain focus
- **Imbuement Synergy:** Multiple characters can prepare for shared magical effort

### 15.1.8 Best Practices for Players

1. **Be Specific:** "I'll flank left to give you advantage" is better than "I help"
2. **Accept Risk:** Good assistance often means putting yourself in harm's way
3. **Think Creatively:** Tools, positioning, and timing matter more than raw dice
4. **Support Bonds:** Use coordination to strengthen character relationships
5. **Keep Momentum:** Quick, clear assistance keeps scenes moving

Remember: The best coordination enhances the story and makes everyone's moments shine brighter together.

## 15.2 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.

## 15.3 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.

## 15.4 Engagement Rewards

### 15.4.1 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 §15.7.1).

**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.

### 15.4.2 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.

## 15.5 Collaborative Play

### 15.5.1 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.

### 15.5.2 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** ([§15.7.1](#)) 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**.

### 15.5.3 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.

## 15.6 Faction Awareness

### 15.6.1 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.

### 15.6.2 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.

## 15.7 Advanced Techniques

### 15.7.1 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.

### 15.7.2 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).

## 15.8 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.

## 15.9 Downtime

Between sessions, tend your garden—quietly moving the world.

### 15.9.1 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.

### 15.9.2 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.

### 15.9.3 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.

## 15.10 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."

## 15.11 Between Sessions Activities Log

Use or print the following trackers.

### 15.11.1 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    |     |     |      |      |

### 15.11.2 Asset & Follower Management

#### Assets

| Name | Tier | Status | Notes |
|------|------|--------|-------|
|      |      |        |       |

## Followers

| Name | Role | Harm | Exposure | Status |
|------|------|------|----------|--------|
|      |      |      |          |        |

### 15.11.3 Bonds & Complications

#### Bonds Updated

- With: \_\_\_\_\_ — Change: \_\_\_\_\_

#### Complications

| Complication | Resolution or Status |
|--------------|----------------------|
|              |                      |

### 15.11.4 Boons & Momentum Summary

- Boons Held: \_\_\_\_/5 Converted to XP: \_\_\_\_ (max 2 XP/session)
- Momentum Banked: \_\_\_\_ (max 2/session)

### 15.11.5 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.

### 15.11.6 Notes & Reflections

## 15.12 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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