

The Ninth Bell

A Theona Adventure for Low-Fantasy and Creepy Elements

A Fate's Edge Adventure for Seasoned (Tier II) Characters

ADVENTURE OVERVIEW

Setting: Theona
Theme: The weight of broken oaths, cultural taboos, the land remembers
Focus: Low-fantasy horror, social tension, cultural consequence
Combat: Minimal (the true threat cannot be fought directly)
Length: 2-3 Sessions

PREMISE & TONE

In Theona, where the land remembers what you forget, a cultural taboo has been broken. The Ninth Law states: "The ninth word is never spoken, the ninth path is hidden, and the ninth name is erased from history." A bell has begun ringing where no bell should ring, marking the countdown to the Green Host's arrival.

This is not a story about monsters but about consequences. The horror is in the inevitability of the ninth chime, the weight of the land's memory, and the knowledge that no one can outrun what the land has witnessed. The bell rings for the dead who were not given their due, and the ninth chime will come at dawn.

THE NINTH LAW

Theona's most sacred cultural principle is the Ninth Law. It governs everything from how many words should be spoken in a vow to how many names should be listed on a memorial stone. The Ninth Law is not just a tradition—it is woven into the fabric of the land itself.

The Ninth Law Manifestations

- **The Ninth Word:** Never spoken in a vow; if spoken, the vow is void and consequences follow
- **The Ninth Path:** Never taken; leads to places the land does not remember
- **The Ninth Name:** Erased from history; spoken only in the darkest moments
- **The Ninth Bell:** Never rung; its ringing means someone broke the Ninth Law

THE HOOK

The adventure begins with one of these scenarios:

- **The Ringing Bell:** Traveling through Theona's hills, you hear a bell ringing where no bell should be. The handprints in the snow lead to the bell but stop where no human could stand.
- **The Silent Village:** Arriving at a village that should be welcoming, you find the people huddled in their homes, refusing to speak of the bell that rings in the mist.
- **The Dying Scholar:** A dying traveler clutches your arm: "The ninth name... I spoke the ninth name... the bell is ringing for me..."

KEY NPCs

Kaelen

Role: Keeper of the Silent Bell
Demeanor: Haunted, exhausted, but resolute
Knowledge: The history of the Ninth Law, the Green Host's nature
Complication: His son spoke the ninth name of a dead man
Secret: He has been hearing the bell for seven days, counting down to the ninth chime
Quote: "The land remembers what we forget. The bell rings for what should have been."

Elyra

Role: Village elder and law-keeper
Demeanor: Stern, unyielding, but not unkind
Knowledge: Cultural traditions, how to properly mourn the dead
Complication: She knows who broke the Ninth Law but cannot speak their name
Secret: Her silence is a punishment for not preventing the taboo
Quote: "The ninth name is not spoken. Not by the living, not by the dead."

The Green Host

Type: Manifestation of Cultural Law
Description: Not a physical entity but a force of consequence
Appearance: Only perceived as a cold in the air, a distortion in vision, a sound like wind through dead trees
Nature: The land's enforcement mechanism for broken oaths
Weakness: Cannot be fought; only appeased through proper cultural ritual
Effect: The ninth chime will mark the moment when the land claims what was denied

LOCATIONS

The Silent Bell

Description: A bell hanging from a single iron post on a windswept hill. No rope, no striker—yet it rings.

Supernatural Features:

- Handprints in the snow lead to the bell but end where no human could stand
- Each chime echoes one more time than it should
- The ground is unnaturally cold around the bell

Cultural Significance: This bell only rings when the Ninth Law is broken; each chime represents a life that was not properly mourned

The Village of Stone-Silent

Description: A village where no doors are locked but no voices are heard

Supernatural Features:

- Villagers communicate only through gestures and written notes
- Children are kept indoors; they point toward the hills and weep
- Every household has a ninth stone placed in a hidden corner

Cultural Significance: The village is observing the ritual silence that follows a broken Ninth Law

The Unmarked Grave

Description: A fresh grave in a field, with no marker, no name

Supernatural Features:

- The earth has been turned but no footprints surround it
- A ninth flower grows in the center of the grave
- The soil is unnaturally cold to the touch

Cultural Significance: This is the grave of the person whose ninth name was spoken; it was dug by the land itself

THE CLOCKS

The Bell's Countdown [9]

The bell rings once every hour, counting down to dawn.

- **1-3 Chimes:** First signs of disturbance; villagers become anxious
- **4-6 Chimes:** The land reacts; cold spots, distorted sounds
- **7-8 Chimes:** The Green Host is near; people feel watched, haunted
- **9 Chimes:** Dawn arrives; the Green Host claims its due

The Ninth Law Broken

- **1:** Someone spoke the ninth name of a dead person
- **2:** The person who spoke it is known but unnamed
- **3:** The dead person's death was not properly mourned
- **4:** The dead person was denied a proper name

The Land's Memory

The land remembers what you forget. As the Ninth Law is broken, the land's memory becomes more active.

- **1:** Small disturbances (cold spots, distorted sounds)
- **2:** Visual distortions (seeing things that aren't there)
- **3:** The land actively hinders the living (paths disappear, landmarks shift)
- **4:** The Green Host is manifesting

CORE MECHANICS

The Ninth Name

The ninth name is the true name of the dead, never to be spoken by the living.

- Speaking the ninth name breaks the Ninth Law
- The name is only known by those who properly mourned the dead
- The land remembers the ninth name even if no living person does
- The bell rings for every ninth name that is spoken

The Green Host

The Green Host is not a monster but the cultural consequence of breaking the Ninth Law.

- **It cannot be fought:** It is the land's enforcement of cultural law
- **It cannot be hidden from:** The land knows where you are
- **It can only be appeased:** Through proper cultural ritual
- **It claims what was denied:** The ninth chime marks when the land takes what should have been given

Cultural Rituals

Proper cultural ritual can prevent or mitigate the Green Host's arrival.

- **Naming the Dead:** Speaking all nine names properly (including the ninth)
- **The Silent Vigil:** A period of silence and mourning
- **The Stone Offering:** Placing nine stones in a specific pattern
- **The Ninth Path:** Taking the path that is never taken to make things right

SESSION STRUCTURE

Session 1: The Bell Rings

- **The Hook:** Players encounter the ringing bell or its consequences

- **Investigation:** Learn about the Ninth Law, discover someone spoke the ninth name
- **Cultural Tension:** Experience the village's ritual silence and fear
- **First Clues:** Find the unmarked grave, learn about the person whose ninth name was spoken
- **First Chime:** Experience the bell's first unnatural echo

Session 2: The Land Remembers

- **Rising Tension:** The land's memory becomes more active (cold spots, visual distortions)
- **Cultural Barrier:** Villagers communicate only through gestures and written notes
- **The Seventh Chime:** The Green Host is near; people feel watched
- **Discovery:** Learn the truth about who spoke the ninth name and why
- **The Eighth Chime:** The moment of decision—what ritual will you perform?

Session 3: The Ninth Chime

- **Dawn Approaches:** The final hours before the ninth chime
- **The Ritual:** Perform the proper cultural ritual to appease the land
- **The Green Host:** The land's consequence manifests
- **The Ninth Chime:** The moment when the land claims what was denied
- **Resolution:** The land returns to balance, or the consequences continue

THE RITUAL OF APPEASEMENT

The Proper Ritual

To prevent the Green Host from claiming its due, the following ritual must be performed:

- **Step 1:** Speak all nine names of the dead person (including the ninth)
- **Step 2:** Perform the Silent Vigil from dusk to dawn
- **Step 3:** Place nine stones in the pattern of the Ninth Path
- **Step 4:** Take the Ninth Path (a specific, hidden path known only to the elders)

Ritual Failure Consequences

- **1-2 failed steps:** The Green Host will claim one person instead of many
- **3-4 failed steps:** The Green Host claims multiple people; the bell continues to ring
- **Complete failure:** The Green Host claims the entire village; the bell rings eternally

POSSIBLE RESOLUTIONS

Resolution Paths

- **The Proper Ritual:** The land is appeased; the bell stops ringing. The village returns to normal, but the memory remains. PCs gain a cultural boon but also a responsibility to remember.
- **Partial Ritual:** The Green Host claims only the person who broke the law. The bell stops, but the land is less forgiving. The village will remember the PC's role, for better or worse.
- **Failed Ritual:** The Green Host claims multiple people. The bell stops, but the land's memory is wounded. The Ninth Law becomes stricter in this region; future PCs will face harsher consequences for breaking it.
- **The Ninth Path:** The PCs take the Ninth Path themselves, becoming guardians of the Ninth Law. They gain deep understanding of Theona's cultural traditions but are forever marked by the land.

GM GUIDANCE

Creating Creepy Atmosphere

- Describe the cold in the air that has no source
- Have the bell ring at unexpected moments, even when no one is near it
- Use the villagers' silence to create tension (no doors, but no voices)
- Describe visual distortions: "The path seems to stretch unnaturally long"
- Emphasize the inevitability of the ninth chime: "Dawn is coming"

Low-Fantasy Approach

- The horror comes from cultural consequence, not from magic
- Avoid explaining how the bell rings; the "how" is less important than the "why"
- The Green Host is not a monster to fight but a cultural truth made manifest
- The land itself is the active force, not any supernatural entity
- The true terror is in knowing that no one can outrun what the land remembers

Pacing the Countdown

- The first three chimes should feel like curiosity
- The next three should create growing unease
- The seventh and eighth should be moments of dread
- The ninth chime must feel inevitable

The Land as a Character

- The land has memory and consequence
- It enforces cultural traditions through natural phenomena
- It is neither good nor evil, but it is absolute
- The land remembers what you forget

QUICK START FOR PCs

- **Scholar:** Research the history of the Ninth Law, find the proper ritual
- **Cantor:** Use song to communicate with the land, or to break the ritual silence
- **Runekeeper:** Understand the weight of oaths and cultural agreements
- **Healer:** Tend to those affected by the land's memory, though the true cure is ritual
- **Wanderer:** Know the hidden paths, including possibly the Ninth Path

"The ninth word is never spoken, the ninth path is hidden, and the ninth name is erased from history."

*"The land remembers what you forget."
— The Ninth Law of Theona*