

Chapter 1

Travel Reference

1.1 Core Travel Procedure

For each leg of a journey, draw 3–4 cards using the decks for your destination and controlling authority.

- Spade from the destination deck: sets the scene (place).
- Heart from the destination deck: introduces the local actor or faction.
- Club from the Wilds (general hazards) or destination (if strongly policed): brings pressure.
- Diamond from the authority that gates the route: papers, escorts, rights, or exceptions.

Set a travel clock by the highest rank:

- 2–5 \Rightarrow 4 segments
- 6–10 \Rightarrow 6 segments
- J/Q/K \Rightarrow 8 segments
- A \Rightarrow 10 segments

On success, advance to the next leg; on failure, mark delay, debt, or diversion and resolve a consequence in the fiction.

1.2 Mode Rules

1.2.1 Sea Legs

(Amaranthine/Dolmis/Aberderrin). If Theona or Valewood 9s show up anywhere in the seed, add an omission or taboo to the leg (a missing step, an unsaid name).

1.2.2 Passes Underways

(Aeler). Any A may convert a surface route to an under-route. Diamond from Aeler always codifies outcomes—no roll—for sealed doors, breath time, and escorted segments.

1.2.3 Rivers

Bridges, booms, and law in Ecktoria/Viterra; reed-mazes and bell-lines in Mistlands/Linn waters.

1.2.4 Frontier Blends

When origin and destination disagree on law, draw two Diamonds (one from each law) and choose which you will be judged by at the end of the leg.

1.3 Regional Routes

1.3.1 Amaranthine Coastway

Kahfagia → Ecktoria → Acasia → Marcott (Vhasia) → Fairport (Viterra).

- Draw Spade+Heart from the port you are entering.
- Draw Club from the Wilds (gales, quarantine, harbor booms).
- Draw Diamond from the port's deck (permits, berths), or Kahfagia if convoy/lantern law applies.

Note: Silkstrand is Acasia's sole metropolis and a major trading hub; even land caravans risk the marches to reach it.

1.3.2 Astroegro Straits

Thepyrgos controls the hinge between seas.

- Draw Spade+Heart and Club from Thepyrgos (stairs, boom, synod).
- Draw Diamond from Thepyrgos (harbor pass, crane allotment).
- Switch to Dolmis/Amaranthine modules once the boom is lowered.

1.3.3 Dolmis Circuits

Fairport (Viterra) → Theona (Three Greens) → Ubral fjords → Aelinnel west shore → Zakov (north coast).

- Spade+Heart from destination; Club from Linn or the Wilds; Diamond from Theona when island custom matters.
- Zakov: Draw Spade+Heart from Zakov deck; Club from Zakov or Linn; Diamond from Zakov (harbor-green, corsair charter).

1.3.4 Aelerian Passes Underways

Vhasia/Viterra/Ubral south slopes → Aeler gates → Mistlands.

- Spade+Heart and Club from Aeler; Diamond from Aeler (Underway pass, Key-Writ, Breath time).

1.3.5 Shadow Corridors

Thin Shore (Valewood east coast): risky misted corridor north-south toward Zakov.

- Spade from Valewood, Heart from Mistlands (or Valewood), Club from Mistlands (wraiths, bell-line failures), Diamond from either Mistlands (Ward-salt, Lantern Writ) or Valewood (Way-cord, Truce-bough) depending on which law you invoke.
- Rule of 9s: any 9 in the seed adds an omission.

Green Gate hops (Aelinnel): tide-timed arches.

- Spade+Club from Aelinnel (tides, geasa), Diamond from Aelinnel (Tide-path Key, Host-rights).

1.3.6 River Roads

Belworth: forms the boundary between Vhasia and Viterra. Twin ports at the mouth (Marcott and Fairport); at mid-reach Tarlington Falls requires lift/portage up to the plateau town. The Lence joins here from Vhasia. Use Viterra for east-bank audits/bridges, Vhasia for west-bank politics.

Yloka: raids run down from the north into the Aberderrin and Dolmis—overlay Linn Clubs and draw destination for Spade+Heart.

Acasian rivers: hazardous but profitable approaches to Silkstrand; use Acasia Clubs (feuds/levies/curse) and Diamonds (condotta, bridge rights).

1.3.7 Steppe Frontiers

Ykrul ↔ Vilikari ↔ Ecktoria/Acasia borders ↔ Black Banner territories.

- Spade from the road you ride (Wolf Road or Foedus Stone), Heart from the counterpart (envoys, comitatus), Club from Wilds or frontier decks (rasputitsa, hostage protocol, foedus recall), Diamond from either Ykrul (paiza, remounts) or Vilikari (foedus seal, bench-right).
- Black Banner: Draw Spade from Ykrul/Vilikari decks (shared territory), Heart from Black Banner, Club from Wilds or frontier decks, Diamond from Ykrul/Vilikari/Black Banner.

1.4 Gateways Control Points

Gate	Deck	Diamond Source	Typical Leverage
Kassamira (Kahfagia)	Kahfagia	Kahfagia	Convoy letter; lantern-law warra
Ecktoria Capital Port	Ecktoria	Ecktoria	Berth priority; coin-house credit
Silkstrand	Acasia	Acasia	Exchange floor; condotta; waterg
Marcott	Vhasia	Vhasia	Letters patent; safeconduct; fairg
Fairport	Viterra	Viterra	Customs seal; ferry priority; Dav
Tarlington (plateau lift) Falls	Viterra	Viterra	Lift priority; bridge/portage pas
Thepyrgos (boom)	Thepyrgos	Thepyrgos	Harbor pass; crane allotment; Sy
High-Mist Pass	Aeler	Aeler	Underway pass; Key-Writ; Breat
Payden's Port	Mistlands	Mistlands	Lantern writ; ward-salt; wraith i
Thin Shore (Valewood)	Valewood	Valewood/Mistlands	Way-cord; dew-mirror; lantern w
Green Gate (Aelinnel)	Aelinnel	Aelinnel	Tide-path key; host-right bough;
Ubral Passes	Ubral	Aeler/Ubral	Vurim pass-ring; hill-fort shelter
Thing-holm (Linn)	Linn	Linn	Thing ruling; harbor-green; esco
Foedus Stone (March)	Vilikari	Vilikari/Ykrul	Foedus renewal; remount allotm
Zakov Roadstead	Zakov	Zakov	Harbor-green chit; corsair charte
Black Banner Camps	Black Banner	Black Banner/Ykrul/Vilikari	Safe-conduct; remount chit; clan

Table 1.1: Gateway Control Points

1.5 Overlay: Gatekeepers (Zakov Roadstead & Harbour Quarters)

Draw **one** micro-card each time you *enter*, *shift wharfs*, or *depart* Zakov. Combine with the normal seed.

Zakov Gatekeepers Micro-Cards (draw 1)

1. **Bureaucrat Quirk** — stamps only at *eighth bell*; night filings need a *Night Magistrate* countersign.
2. **Required Stamp** — *Harbor-Green* chit for boom passage this tide; without it, DV +1 on all port checks.
3. **Preferred Gratuity** — figs or lamp oil; wrong gift offends, marking 1 *Exposure* on your port reputation.
4. **Audit Trap** — “contraband tallies”; if carrying *bell-metal* or *dyestuffs*, start a 4-seg *Inspection* clock.
5. **Local Courtesy** — speak the *Dock Oath* (short pledge not to knife on planks) or suffer *Risky* position in brawls.
6. **Shortcut Rumor** — *Smuggler’s Ladder* on the sea wall; spend a (*Ladder Map*) to skip one queue.
7. **Pilot’s Privilege** — a *Pilot Token* bumps you ahead on boom lift; otherwise pay tow or lose 1 segment.
8. **Silent Court** — the *Black Bishop* is sitting tonight; legal Clubs escalate by +1 SB if you contest a ruling.

1.6 Special Rules & Taboos

1.6.1 Theona Valewood 9s

Whenever a 9 appears in a seed involving Theona or Valewood, add an omission: a missing step, an unsaid name, an unseen guest. If the 9 is a Diamond, you may break the taboo once—someone will come to collect.

1.6.2 Aeler Aces

An A can rewire routes beneath the mountains. You may swap your Spade to Aeler (keeping the other seed cards) and continue under-vault procedures.

1.6.3 Echoing Omens

Any A adds a motif you can echo later (ash on the wind, a bell heard underground, a landmark that returns elsewhere). Make the world feel like it remembers.

1.7 Worked Itineraries

1.7.1 West-to-East Coastal Haul (Kahfagia → Viterra)

Leg 1: Kassamira → Ecktoria

Seed: Ecktoria Spade (Aqueduct arcades), Ecktoria Heart (Coin-house factor), Wilds Club (gale), Kahfagia Diamond (convoy letter).

Clock: 6. Read: cross under coin-house eyes with convoy priority; bad weather strains schedules.

Leg 2: Ecktoria → Silkstrand

Seed: Acasia Spade (Three-Queens Bridge), Acasia Heart (Dyers' Guildmistress), Acasia Club (loom strike), Acasia Diamond (Exchange pass).

Clock: 6–8 depending on unrest.

Leg 3: Silkstrand → Marcott

Seed: Vhasia Spade (Pont-du-Tithe), Vhasia Heart (Parlement clerk), Vhasia Club (coin rumor), Vhasia Diamond (letters patent).

Leg 4: Marcott → Fairport

Seed: Viterra Spade (Fairport tideworks), Viterra Heart (shipwright), Linn Club (boom lifts), Viterra Diamond (customs seal).

Clock: 6.

1.7.2 Acasia → Mistlands (Forgotten Pass + Under-Gate)

Leg 1: Silkstrand → Aeler Gate

Seed: Aeler Spade (Avalanche gallery), Aeler Heart (Geometer), Aeler Club (Engineer requisition), Aeler Diamond (Underway Pass).

Leg 2: Gate → Mistlands

Seed: Mistlands Spade (Bell-Line levee), Mistlands Heart (Bell-warden), Mistlands Club (wraith crossing), Mistlands Diamond (Ward-salt).

1.7.3 Thin Shore → Zakov Corridor

Leg 1: Payden's Port → Thin Shore

Seed: Valewood Spade (Green lane), Mistlands Heart (Protectorate clerk), Mistlands Club (bell failure), Mistlands Diamond (Lantern writ).

Leg 2: Thin Shore transit

Seed: Valewood Spade (Unfound stile), Valewood Heart (Path-warden), Valewood Club (Sweet wind), Valewood Diamond (Way-cord).

Rule of 9s applies.

1.7.4 Frontier Mediation (Ykrul ↔ Vilikari)

Leg: Foedus Stone parley

Seed: Vilikari Spade (Foedus Stone), Ykrul Heart (Noyan envoy), Wilds Club (rasputitsa), Vilikari Diamond (Foedus Renewal).

Blend: also draw a Ykrul Diamond (Paiza). Choose which law saves your schedule.

1.7.5 Worked Itinerary: Thin Shore → Zakov → Theona (Corsair Jobs)

A fast arc for crews running the misted coast into pirate politics and back into isle taboos.

Leg 1: Payden's Port → Thin Shore (Shadow Corridor) Seed Valewood (Green lane / Unfound stile); Mistlands (Protectorate clerk); Mistlands (bell-line failure); Mistlands (Lantern Writ). **Clock:** 6. **Rule of 9s:** any 9 adds an omission (missing step/name).

Leg 2: Thin Shore Transit (Skirting toward Zakov) Seed Valewood (Sea-mist arcade); Valewood (Path-warden); Valewood (Sweet wind); Valewood (Way-cord). **Clock:** 6. **Note:** spending *Way-cord* negates one *Sweet wind* lie.

Leg 3: Approach to Zakov (Roadstead & Booms) Seed Zakov (Boomhouse or Red Wharf); Zakov (Pilot-Matron *or* Night Magistrate); Zakov (Boom Drop *or* Customs Sweep); Zakov (Harbor-Green Chit *or* Pilot Token). **Clock:** 6–8 (apply the Gatekeepers overlay draw on arrival). **If a 9 shows:** *Missing Ninth*—remove one critical step/name until paid in favors.

Leg 4: Corsair Job Inside Zakov (Pick 1) A) Lift a Hull from Drydock Four Zakov (Drydock Four); Zakov (Corsair Quartermaster); Zakov (Admiralty Audit); Zakov (Shipwright's Lien Release). **Goal:** tow a seized hull at night; *Lien Release* avoids bond but flips a debt later.

B) Court the Black Bishop for Indulgence Zakov (Black Bell Tower); Zakov (Black Bishop); Zakov (Bounty Proclamation); Zakov (Magistrate's Hush). **Goal:** seal a case/docket so a rival can't use it. **Hook:** rumor must be paid (coin or gossip).

C) Smuggler's Ladder Run Zakov (Lantern Ladder); Zakov (Lampman); Zakov (Informant Flip); Zakov (Smuggler's Ladder Map). **Goal:** bypass boom eyes with a wall-stair. **Complication:** your tip was sold twice.

Leg 5: Zakov → Theona (Isles & Moot) Seed Theona (Uncounted Bridge); Theona (Matron of Wells *or* Moot Envoy); Linn (fogfall raids); Theona (Moot Token). **Clock:** 6–8. **Taboo:** do *not* count the steps aloud; breaking it imposes *Risky* on all isle bargains this scene.

Leg 6: Theona Contract (Pick 1) A) Raid-Truce at the Skerries Theona (Tide caves); Theona (Isle Moot Envoy); Theona (Muster drum); Theona (Raid-truce Ribbon). **Goal:** secure safe passage window; failure triggers a Linn muster clock.

B) Deliver the Ledger Shard Theona (Well-yard); Theona (Matron of Wells); Zakov (Debt Call follows you); Theona (Sanctuary Night). **Goal:** hide a Zakov debt long enough to copy data; sanctuary buys time.

1.7.6 Steppe Passage: Black Banner Territory

A dangerous journey through contested lands where three powers vie for control.

Leg: Foedus Stone → Black Banner Camp Seed Ykrul/Vilikari (Wolf Road milepost or Foedus Stone); Black Banner (Clan Elder or War Captain); Wilds (Rasputitsa or Remount Sickness); Black Banner (Safe-conduct or Remount Chit). **Clock:** 6–8. **Complication:** Foedus recall may invalidate your papers.

Leg: Black Banner Camp → Ykrul Territory Seed Ykrul (Winter camp ring or Khagan's way-station); Ykrul (Khatun of the Ring or Noyan envoy); Frontier (Hostage protocol or Feud spark); Ykrul (Paiza tablet or Foedus seal). **Clock:** 6–8. **Note:** Choose which law applies—Black Banner customs or Ykrul traditions.

1.8 Pace, Clocks, and Consequences

- Road/river leg: 6-segment clock; +2 segments if crossing a law boundary (new passports, new prayers).
- Sea strait/mountain pass: 8-segment clock; −2 segments if you spend a Diamond that codifies priority (pilotage, pass, convoy).
- Shadow corridor: 6-segment clock; on any A, add a free omen to echo later.
- Failure defaults: delay (lose time; an enemy advances), diversion (alternate route; new Club), or debt (promise, fine, or favor owed to the authority that controls the gate).

SB Note. Re-rolling 1s does *not* erase their SB; any new 1s on the re-roll add more SB.

1.9 Story Beat (SB) Menus

1.9.1 Universal SB Spend Menu

- **1 SB** — Shave time/position: add +1 segment to the current clock *or* drop Position one step *or* impose a small fee/toll *or* mark 1 step of *Asset Exposure*.
- **2 SB** — Escalate the pressure: upgrade the active (e.g., “inspection” → “seizure attempt”) *or* force a *choice of Diamonds* (pick which law you’ll be judged by) *or* tick a relevant *Front* by 1.
- **3 SB** — Lock a gate/taboo: close a route (boom drops; pass closes) until a named is spent *or* invoke a regional taboo (Theona/Valewood 9s; oath backlash) with teeth *or* auto-trigger a *Debt Flip* on a Diamond already in play.
- **4+ SB** — Reshape the leg: rewrite the route (Aeler under-way reroute; sea lane reversal), start a *new* 4–6 segment complication clock *and* tick a *Front* by +1; demand immediate payment on a Patron/Asset Exposure (lose it if refused).

End-of-leg conversion (optional): Unspent SB convert to *world motion* at a rate of **3 SB → tick 1 Front** (GM choice).

1.9.2 Sea (Amaranthine/Dolmis/Aberderrin)

- **1 SB:** Fogfall nips visibility; DV +1 for the next pilotage check.
- **2 SB:** Boom shifts; pilot required (spend a *pilotage* *or* delay +2 segments).
- **3 SB:** Lantern-law change mid-leg; choose: pay fine *or* reroute clock +2 *or* spend *Convoy Letter*.
- **4 SB:** Squall wall: split the convoy; lose an escort unless *Moot token* *or* *Escort* Diamond is spent.

1.9.3 Passes & Underways (Aeler)

- **1 SB:** White wind; breath-time check (mark Fatigue *or* slow +1 segment).
- **2 SB:** Engineer requisition; surrender cargo slot *or* coin *or* DV +1 until the gate.
- **3 SB:** Under-audit; must go below (swap Spade to Aeler) unless you spend *Key-Writ*.
- **4 SB:** Cave-in detour adds a fresh 4-segment clock unless *Underway Pass* is spent.

1.9.4 Rivers (Belworth & friends)

- **1 SB:** Sandbar drift; portage a beat *or* pay for a tow.
- **2 SB:** Lift strike at Tarlington; need *Bridge/Portage Pass* *or* delay +2 segments.
- **3 SB:** Cross-mouth embargo (Marcott/Fairport); choose which harbor’s law applies (draw/commit its).
- **4 SB:** Ice-break *or* flood surge; split cargo (random item at risk) unless an *Escort* Diamond is spent.

1.9.5 Shadow Corridors (Valewood/Mistlands)

- **1 SB:** Bell-line stutter; next guidance roll at Disadvantage (or DV +1).
- **2 SB:** Omission manifests; something necessary is “missing” until *Ward-salt* or *Way-cord* is spent.
- **3 SB:** Host-law claims you as *host/guest*; accept a service clock or pay with a memory (lose a minor Contact until end of leg).
- **4 SB:** Wraith procession crosses your path; create a 6-segment *Don’t Look Back* clock; spending *Lantern Writ* downgrades it to 4.

1.9.6 Steppe Frontiers (Ykrul/Vilikari/Black Banner)

- **1 SB:** Remount fatigue; lose 1 “fresh mount” use or slow +1 segment.
- **2 SB:** Hostage protocol; must place/accept a token-kin until the next gate (or spend *Safe-hostage*).
- **3 SB:** Foedus recall; your papers conflict—pick Ykrul *Paiza* or Vilikari *Foedus Seal* and offend the other.
- **4 SB:** Muster checkpoint; disarm unless traveling under *Standard Protection* or *Khagan’s Writ*.
- **Black Banner Specific:** Clan feud erupts; choose sides or pay double tolls.

1.9.7 Ports & Forums (Marcott, Fairport, Silkstrand, Thepyrgos, Zakov)

- **1 SB:** Clerk error; pay a “stamp” fee or answer questions (DV +1).
- **2 SB:** Rival petition; they jump the queue unless you spend a Warrant/Letters .
- **3 SB:** Audit cascade; open a new 4-segment *Inspection* clock tied to cargo/ledger.
- **4 SB:** Edict flare; convert today’s into a temporary “law” everyone must obey or take on a *Debt Flip*.
- **Zakov Specific:** Silent Court ruling; legal complications escalate by +1 SB.

1.9.8 Diamond & Exposure Interactions

- **2 SB:** Flip any spent this leg: its *Debt Flip* is collected now (not later).
- **2 SB:** Mark 1 step on a named Asset/Patron’s *Exposure* track.
- **3 SB:** Downgrade an *Intricate* success to *Detailed* (remove the flourish or DV 1 benefit).
- **4 SB:** Seize or suspend a visible Diamond’s benefit until another is played (e.g., convoy letter overridden by emergency edict).

1.10 Location Decks for Navigation

1.11 Acasia — “Broken Marches”

Elite (Margravine of the Broken March)

“The tithe must be paid, not merely offered. A promise written in ash and sealed with iron will be worth more than a thousand gold coins scattered on the wind.”

Commoner (Hedge-witch who knows which bridges eat travelers)

“Don’t cross the Pale Causeway at dusk, especially not if you’ve got a silver tooth. The bridge’ll remember it, and next time you pass, it’ll want more than just your footfall.”

Famine & Ambition

Acasia rots in the space between famine and ambition. Every hill wears a crown, every bridge bears a toll, and every road curves back to the same cursed crossroads. Where once the Empire’s coin and grain flowed, now tithe-collectors gnaw the marrow of starving villages, and warlords dress themselves as kings.

Spades — Places (passes, ruins, blackwoods, toll-towns)

2. (Desolation/Confusion) Broken milestone on the old Imperial Road; borders “moved” overnight.
3. (Neglect/Overgrowth) Vine-terrace hillside with an abandoned press; strangler ivy owns it now.
4. (Extortion/Gatekeeping) Toll-bridge town over a cold river—two tolls, no receipts.
5. (Danger/Exposure) Wolfstairs Pass switchbacks beneath a stonefall cliff.
6. (Sacred/Danger) Sootfall Abbey ruins; bell tower intact, crypts breathing.
7. (Military/Threat) Hill-motte with fresh palisade; ditch scattered with caltrops.
8. (Confusion/Betrayal) Border-stone ring carved with seven crowns; each points wrong.
9. (Witchcraft/Danger) Blackwood charcoalers’ hollow; witch-posts at every path.
10. (Death/Discovery) Salt-road ford; rains expose old bones in the chalk banks.
- J (Communal/Whispers) Iron mine adits held by a miners’ commune; air full of whispers.
- Q (Pretension/Lies) Margravine’s hunting lodge; tapestries of victories that never were.
- K (War/Chaos) War-camp city—tents around a burned keep; every banner claims the throne.
- A (Hope/Curse) The Pale Causeway: the last high road that survives spring thaws.

Hearts — People & Factions (petty crowns, priests, companies)

2. (Poverty/Desperation) Tithe-collector’s runner with tally-rod and empty stomach.
3. (Sacred/Duty) Roadside prior and three lay brothers guarding a relic.
4. (Witchcraft/Knowledge) Hedge-witch who knows which bridges eat travelers.
5. (Mercenary/Opportunity) Free Company captain (pike and shot) between contracts.
6. (Corruption/Greed) River reeve who rents every boat twice.
7. (Power/Greed) Salt-Baron with hired blades—owns the ford and your timetable.

8. (Feud/Vengeance) Blackwood matriarch who tends the feud like a garden.
9. (Knowledge/Nostalgia) Ex-imperial surveyor with the last accurate map.
10. (Tyranny/Control) “King” of three villages; iron-nail crown, iron-will taxes.
 - J (Betrayal/Ambush) Bride with no dowry but a claim; daggers in the wedding chest.
 - Q (Authority/Calculation) Margravine of the Broken March—half-saint, half tax-roll.
 - K (Arbitrary Power/Whimsy) The Lame King on a traveling throne; makes law by pointing.
 - A (Mystery/Fear) The Cursed Child of Silkstrand (a rumor more than a person) whose laughter ends sieges.

Clubs — Complications/Threats (feud, levy, weather, curse)

2. (Confusion/Hallucination) Peat-fog; all horns sound like someone calling your name.
3. (Forced Service/Inconvenience) Sudden levy—every traveler pressed for a day’s service.
4. (Feud/Blockade) Bridge feud; rival banners drop the chain on your cart.
5. (Starvation/Extortion) Grain blight doubles the tithe; refusal means torches at night.
6. (Trap/Delay) Scree slide seals the pass; the “safe” detour is owned by your enemy.
7. (Betrayal/Ambush) Wedding turns ambush; you’re between two bloodlines.
8. (Witchcraft/Dread) Witch’s tithe night; lights move in the woods—owe nothing or else.
9. (Disease/Abandonment) Pox sign on a village gate; your escorts desert you.
10. (Betrayal/Chaos) Condotta breaks; the Free Company flips colors mid-march.
 - J (Revolt/Chaos) Heretic preacher sparks a march; toll-gates come down in splinters.
 - Q (Political Upheaval/Confusion) Imperial pretender arrives; every petty lord changes tabards.
 - K (Disaster/Delay) River overruns the levee; the pontoon goes—your rivals don’t.
 - A (Curse/Futility) The Curse stirs: no matter the road, you return to the same crossroads.

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (papers, claims, safe-conduct)

2. (Bureaucracy/Utility) Toll-exemption plaque for one bridge (once).
3. (Sacred/Hospitality) Monastery letter for bed-and-bread on a named road.
4. (Negotiation/Resource) Wine-right on an abandoned terrace; locals will work for shares.
5. (Military/Contract) Condotta—a signed pike contract (one battle on your terms).
6. (Authority/Labor) Tithe-remission writ for a village; they owe you a season’s labor.
7. (Bureaucracy/Control) Border-stone adjustment—move a line two fields over.
8. (Security/Access) Pass-key charm recognized by Pale Causeway watchmen.
9. (Inheritance/Opportunity) Sealed dowry chest of claims, not coin; certain doors open.
10. (Communal/Alliance) Mine-share in the commune; they fight like they mean it.
 - J (Diplomacy/Peace) Blood-peace charter; suspend a feud long enough to move your wagons.
 - Q (Politics/Alliance) Marriage proxy from the Margravine—bind a hill-king to your cause.
 - K (Authority/Passage) The Lame King’s traveling writ—troops must make way (for now).
 - A (Curse-breaking/Temporary Relief) Curse-redemption rite (temporary): for one night no crossroads can hold you.

Quick use notes

- Draw until you have all four suits: Spade = place, Heart = actor, Club = pressure, Diamond = leverage. Highest rank sets the main Clock (2–5 → 4, 6–10 → 6, J/Q/K → 8, A → 10).
- Diamonds are codified outcomes (papers/claims/safe-conducts) that change position rather than call for a roll.
- If any A appears, echo plague & curse motifs—crossroads that turn back on themselves, bells tolling for no funeral, banners blackened by mildew.

Additional Features

- **Feud as Currency:** Any insult, accident, or rumor can birth a feud; GMs may replace a SB result with a feud-token tied to a petty lord or house.
- **Rot & Tithe:** Each market or harvest scene carries a risk of rot—add a pressure if food or coin are exchanged without blessing or seal.
- **The Curse Remembers:** When roads or negotiations stall, the GM may quietly repeat imagery—crossroads, whispers, mildew—to remind players that Acasia itself resists resolution.

Decline & Patronage

Patronage here is as brittle as candle wax. The Rothari Clan holds their marches by fear and iron law—patronage from them is real, but cruel, demanding service in blood or levy. Elsewhere, noble names are little more than titles printed on parchment and sold like debts. The Margravine keeps a ledger like scripture, binding feuds to her feast days, while mercenary captains trade loyalty for coin, switching colors with each bell.

To seek a patron in Acasia is to choose which hunger you will feed: the Rothari’s iron teeth, a Free Company’s purse, or the hollow blessing of a saint who may never have lived. Yet even false crowns cast shadows long enough to shelter those desperate enough to kneel.

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

- **Exposure:** Your actions draw unwanted attention from [local authority/creature/faction]
- **Noise:** Sounds of your actions alert nearby [enemies/critters/locals]
- **Trace:** Evidence of your passage marks your route for trackers/followers
- **Delay:** A brief but meaningful setback costs you [time/resources/opportunity]
- **Supply Strain:** Mark +1 segment on a relevant resource clock

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

- **Alarm Raised:** [Local authority/faction] becomes aware and begins responding
- **Position Lost:** You lose advantageous ground/cover/stealth
- **Foe Appears:** A [minor threat/rival/enemy] arrives on scene
- **Gear Trouble:** A piece of equipment becomes [Compromised/Neglected]
- **Lock/Barrier:** A simple obstacle now requires a test to overcome

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

- **Reinforcements:** Additional [enemies/allies of enemies] arrive
- **Key Gear Breaks:** A crucial tool/weapon becomes temporarily unusable
- **Major Twist:** The situation fundamentally changes - [trap springs/route blocked/ally turns]
- **Rail Tick:** Advance a relevant campaign/front clock by 1 segment
- **Condition Applied:** Mark [Fatigue 1/Harm 1/Condition] appropriate to fiction

Major Turns (4+ SB)

- **Trap Springs:** A prepared danger activates with full effect
- **Authority Arrival:** [Major local power/leader/faction] intervenes
- **Scene Shift:** The environment changes dramatically - [fire spreads/floor collapses/storm hits]
- **Patron Omen:** Divine/arcane forces take notice - [omen appears/blessing lost/curse manifests]
- **Narrative Pivot:** The story takes an unexpected turn that reframes objectives

Region-Specific SB Options

Each region generator should include 2-3 custom SB spends that reflect its unique themes:

- **Acasia (Rot & Curse):** Crossroads that loop back, mildew-blackened banners, bells tolling for no funeral
- **Acasia (Feud):** A bloodline takes offense; you're named in a toast to vengeance
- **Acasia (Tithes):** A collector arrives early; your passage now costs twice the grain

Acasia — The Olde Tavern

Starting Location: The Pale Causeway's last inn, walls soot-blackened by coal and gossip, where a bounty poster flutters beside a half-empty hearth.

"In Acasia, every bargain is an echo of a promise once broken, and every drink tastes faintly of debt."

In... The Pale Causeway's last inn, a Margravine's bounty poster flutters in the soot-stained hearth. A stranger at the bar offers the party a sealed contract: retrieve a dowry chest from a Blackwood matriarch... or die trying.

Regional Motifs Oath-script, soot and vellum, ledger-sorcery, ink that dries to sigils.

Whispers to Offer "Sign without reading," "Hide the original," "Burn the witness list."

External Clocks Threat: "The Dowry Wakes"; Community: "Guild Panic"; Anchor: "The Inn's Safe Conduct."

Complications Contract has a second signer; the hearth remembers names; the Blackwood writes back.

Anchors at Risk Innkeeper's child archivist; a PC's oath-scrip.

Escalation Beat The poster adds a PC’s portrait.

Relief Confess the contract’s hidden clause to those harmed; spend 2 to render the writ inert for a scene; or return the chest unopened.

Faction Entanglements

- **Free Companies:** Marching through Acasia with existing contracts or debts to mercenaries automatically increases SB by +1 per leg of travel.
- **Church of the Flame:** Priests press claims of tithe and sanctuary; favor with them grants food and shelter, enmity ensures blocked roads.
- **Rothari Clan:** Known for iron-law levies. Any insult or refusal of tax risks feud-tokens lasting the whole arc.

Cross-Regional Ties

- **Silkstrand:** Dowry disputes in Acasia often echo into Silkstrand’s guild halls; any result involving marriage or feuds may ripple south.
- **Kahfagia:** Control of ford-roads determines who reaches western ports; Kahfagian traders quietly fund toll-lords here.
- **Aeler:** Underpass and grain routes tie Acasia’s survival to Aeler markets. Any famine result may also trigger shortages in Aeler.

Trade Goods & Consequences

- **Salt:** Salt-rights in Acasia fuel both cuisine and preservation across Vhasia and Mistlands. Monopolies here can shift entire caravans.
- **Iron:** Acasian iron feeds both Aeler smiths and Vilikari steppe cavalry. Control of mines changes military balances.
- **Wine:** Abandoned terraces yield forgotten vintages prized in Theona; recovery can turn famine into fortune.

Patron Networks

- **The Sealed Gate:** Wards abbeys, ruined keeps, and iron-bound bridges — their symbols are recognized by abjurists across borders.
- **Maelstraeus:** His bargains ripple through Acasia’s mercenary contracts. A deal here can suddenly shift allegiance in faraway wars.
- **The Traveler:** Hidden shrines mark crossroads; those who tithe gain safe passage rumors, those who spurn them meet false milestones.

Diplomatic Favor & Reputation Echoes

- Earning **Diplomatic Favor** from resolving a feud or famine peacefully grants a reusable token: spend to reduce DV on travel through Acasia or its neighbors.
- **Reputation Echoes:** Reputation in Acasia carries into Silkstrand and Kahfagia. A PC who breaks feuds here may be greeted in Kahfagia as a “feud-binder” — or as “coward who yielded” depending on faction.

Decline & Patronage

Patronage here is brittle as candle wax. The Rothari Clan rules by fear and levy. Elsewhere, noble names are debts for sale, and mercenary captains trade colors with the bells. To kneel in Acasia is to choose which hunger to feed: iron law, mercenary purse, or hollow saint. Even false crowns cast shadows long enough to shelter the desperate.

Boss Archetypes in Acasia

- **The False King (Feud/Authority):** A petty lord or pretender who crowns themselves on the ruins of empire. Often defended by mercenaries or cursed oaths.
- **The Witch of the Blackwoods (Witchcraft/Curse):** A hedge-witch, matriarch, or revenant who manipulates feuds and curses; battlefield is her hollow or a haunted toll-bridge.
- **The Tithe Collector (Greed/Extortion):** Not a warrior but a bureaucrat-priest with writs, escorts, and the ability to summon feuds or famine with a single decree.
- **The Rotting Child (Mystery/Curse):** A folkloric horror tied to Acasia's plague of false crossroads. Their laughter can end sieges but at terrible cost.

Boss Mechanics Notes

- *Feud Tokens* act as lair actions — once per round, the Boss escalates a feud between NPC factions, pulling reinforcements or sabotaging PCs.
- *Crossroads Curse* may loop failed escapes back into the same scene until the curse is broken.
- Boss arenas often include *Tithe-Ledgers*, *Burned Abbeys*, or *Bridge-Feasts* that the GM can trigger as SB complications.

1.12 Aelaerem (Halflings) — “Hearth & Hollow”

Elite (Apple-Matron)

“A proper harvest feast requires three things: the finest cider aged in the right barrel, a guest-loaf baked with intention, and the wisdom to know when to invite the quiet ones to sit by the fire.”

Commoner (Miller and his watch-geese)

“My geese know a stranger’s step from a mile off, and they’ve never been wrong. If they start honking at noon, you best check your larder – someone’s coming who wasn’t invited.”

Hearth & Hollow

The Aelaerem keep their bargains with bread, bells, and careful counting. Lanes run under ash and hawthorn; doors reddened with thread promise a seat and a story to any who step right. Their magic is housekeeping writ large—tidings tended, names jarred like jam, thresholds groomed so the *Neighbors* pass by without offense. When the Hollow stirs beneath the barrows and burrows, the folk answer with kettle songs and lantern law, and the fields behave themselves because someone asked them to.

Spades — Places (lanes, orchards, mills, downs, barrows)

2. (Memory/Nostalgia) Willow ford with flat stones and a bowed pollard that remembers faces.
 3. (Work/Tradition) Cider-press barn; sweet reek, flies, old songs, doors that stick after dusk.
 4. (Pastoral/Order) Chalk sheep-downs with a turf maze cut like a wheel.
 5. (Mystery/Watchfulness) Millpond under alders; the wheel turns some nights without water.
 6. (Hunting/Preparation) Bluebell wood path; rabbit-gates and snares set by careful hands.
 7. (Transition/Safety) Hedge-tunnel lane between fields; nine stiles locals count “eight-and-one.”
 8. (Offering/Exchange) Cup-mark stone on the verge; butter left in niches goes missing kindly.
 9. (Sacred/Quiet) Barrow-by-the-beech where bees go quiet at noon.
 10. (Community/Gathering) Market green with maypole and stocks; carved village stones turned inward.
- J (Vigilance/Observation) Dovecote hill; the scarecrow faces the road, not the rows.
- Q (Magic/Deception) Mother’s Orchard; rows straighten if you don’t look—curve if you do.
- K (Justice/Tradition) Moot Oak with lantern nails hammered deep and benches at the roots.
- A (Otherworld/Futility) Hollow Field, a ring where no plow will hold a line, not for any coin.

Hearts — People & Factions (keepers, elders, mummers, quiet powers)

2. (Healing/Wisdom) Hedge-witch midwife who ties red thread and unties feuds.
3. (Protection/Watchfulness) Miller and his watch-geese—better sentries than men.
4. (Authority/Organization) Orchard reeve with a tally-stick and a cider-stained smile.
5. (Sacred/Secret) Beekeeper; keeps odd honey aside for “winter churches.”
6. (Magic/Connection) Shepherd with a bone whistle that calls dogs—and other things.

7. (Vigilance/Knowledge) Lantern-warden who trims lamps and knows which shadow is wrong.
 8. (Performance/Tradition) Mummers' captain with a chest of masks and stricter rules than church.
 9. (Travel/Binding) Traveling tinker with bright kettles and a dull knife for cutting oaths.
 10. (Authority/Severity) Bailiff of the Moot Oak, as polite as a noose.
- J (Tradition/Wisdom) Wold-Wardens, elders who swear by hedges, not crowns.
- Q (Hospitality/Power) Apple-Matron, hostess of harvest feasts; power sits where she pours.
- K (Seasonal Authority/Ritual) Thresher-King in harvest robes: a title that moves but never leaves.
- A (Mystery/Protection) The Pale Shepherd—comes when lambs are born and when people go missing.

Clubs — Complications/Threats (folk omens, rites, beasts, night)

2. (Confusion/Disorientation) Unseasonal fog; the road walks you back to your own gate.
 3. (Omen/Warning) Scarecrow turns; it watches the lane, not the field.
 4. (Curse/Revelation) Soured wassail; the bowl gives back names you did not speak.
 5. (Threat/Disruption) Black sow through the orchard; hooves scuff every charm.
 6. (Chaos/Nature) Hive-swarm at dusk; smoke curls the wrong way.
 7. (Memory/Tradition) Old song taken up by children; adults remember the verse none should sing.
 8. (Supernatural/Cost) Lanterns burn blue at the ford; crossing costs more than coin.
 9. (Disguise/Transformation) Out-of-season mumming; masks stick—faces won't.
 10. (Mystery/Loss) Chalk maze fills with mist; you step out somewhere older.
- J (Sacred/Intervention) Church bell rings thirteen; something attends the sermon.
- Q (Demand/Seasonal) Harvest tithe demanded by hands gloved in leaves.
- K (Violence/Corruption) Moot Oak bleeds sap the color of wine; talk turns to knives.
- A (Otherworld/Invasion) The Hollow opens; burrows and barrows connect, and footfalls answer underground.

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (blessings, tokens, host-rights, exceptions)

2. (Hospitality/Protection) Guest-loaf & salt—one night's safe board anywhere with a red door.
3. (Community/Social) Cider-mark—a free cup on the green buys gossip and patience.
4. (Magic/Movement) Hedge-pass ribbon—step through any thicket unsnagged, once.
5. (Nature/Warning) Bee-queen share—honey and warning from the hives when danger nears.
6. (Protection/Control) Shepherd's whistle—dogs and door-bolts heed you for one scene.
7. (Magic/Safety) Lantern-writ—the lamps stay lit along your path despite wind.
8. (Social License/Freedom) Mummers' license—lawful mask and after-dark crossing for a feast day.
9. (Magic/Truth) Orchard right—pick at Mother's Orchard without offense; fruit hides a truth.
10. (Magic/Information) Mill token—the wheel turns at any hour, grain or rumor ground.

- J (Blessing/Help) Apple-Matron’s blessing—hands help unseen when you ask no coin.
- Q (Justice/Privacy) Private moot under the Oak; elders hear you alone, precedent sticks.
- K (Protection/Authority) Thresher-King’s guard—six red-hooded harvesters escort you; doors open.
- A (Otherworld/Invisibility) Pale Shepherd’s clause—once, the Hollow will not notice you; pass uncounted.

Quick use notes

- Draw until you have all four suits: Spade = place, Heart = actor, Club = pressure, Diamond = leverage. Highest rank sets the main Clock (2–5 → 4, 6–10 → 6, J/Q/K → 8, A → 10).
- Diamonds are codified outcomes (blessings/tokens/host-rights) that change position rather than call for a roll.
- If any A appears, echo Hearth & Hollow motifs—quiet bells, red thread, watch-geese, footsteps under the soil—so the dread feels woven through the hedges.

Additional Features

- **Bread & Lantern:** Presenting guest-loaf and a lit lantern at a threshold shifts your next social action one step safer while you remain a guest of that hearth.
- **Neighborly Courtesies:** When you keep local taboos (count “eight-and-one,” turn village stones inward, leave butter at cup-marks), cancel the first SB generated by rites or negotiations in that scene.
- **Listen at the Stile:** A quiet pause at a stile, barrow, or hedge-tunnel yields a true omen—ask one short question about what the Hollow wants *here and now*; the answer arrives as a sign, sound, or small animal.

Hearth Magic

The Aelaerem weave their power through careful observance and small courtesies. Their magic lies not in grand gestures but in the precise attention to thresholds, seasons, and the proper ordering of things. Red thread binds more than wounds—it ties names to places, promises to people, and the living to the Hollow that walks beneath their feet. To offend a hedge-witch is to invite the Neighbors’ attention; to earn an elder’s blessing is to walk with the earth’s favor.

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

- **Exposure:** Your actions draw unwanted attention from [local authority/creature/faction]
- **Noise:** Sounds of your actions alert nearby [enemies/critters/locals]
- **Trace:** Evidence of your passage marks your route for trackers/followers
- **Delay:** A brief but meaningful setback costs you [time/resources/opportunity]
- **Supply Strain:** Mark +1 segment on a relevant resource clock

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

- **Alarm Raised:** [Local authority/faction] becomes aware and begins responding
- **Position Lost:** You lose advantageous ground/cover/stealth
- **Foe Appears:** A [minor threat/rival/enemy] arrives on scene
- **Gear Trouble:** A piece of equipment becomes [Compromised/Neglected]
- **Lock/Barrier:** A simple obstacle now requires a test to overcome

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

- **Reinforcements:** Additional [enemies/allies of enemies] arrive
- **Key Gear Breaks:** A crucial tool/weapon becomes temporarily unusable
- **Major Twist:** The situation fundamentally changes - [trap springs/route blocked/ally turns]
- **Rail Tick:** Advance a relevant campaign/front clock by 1 segment
- **Condition Applied:** Mark [Fatigue 1/Harm 1/Condition] appropriate to fiction

Major Turns (4+ SB)

- **Trap Springs:** A prepared danger activates with full effect
- **Authority Arrival:** [Major local power/leader/faction] intervenes
- **Scene Shift:** The environment changes dramatically - [fire spreads/floor collapses/storm hits]
- **Patron Omen:** Divine/arcane forces take notice - [omen appears/blessing lost/curse manifests]
- **Narrative Pivot:** The story takes an unexpected turn that reframes objectives

Region-Specific SB Options

Each region generator should include 2-3 custom SB spends that reflect its unique themes:

- **Aelaerem (Hearth & Hollow):** Quiet bells toll for no reason, red thread appears tied to your belongings, watch-geese honk warnings in the night
- **Aelaerem (Threshold Magic):** A door you passed through earlier now leads somewhere else, your shadow walks behind you instead of beside you
- **Aelaerem (Folk Customs):** You forget a crucial local taboo and offend the Neighbors; small things begin to go wrong

Aelaerem — Strangers Hired for a Job

Starting Location: A cider-press barn perfumed with crushed apples and rain, where masks hang from beams awaiting the next festival.

"Among the Aelaerem, the orchards speak in riddles, and the harvest always demands its tithe in secrets."

In... A cider-press barn, the Apple-Matron watches as the party is ushered in by a mummer-captain. "The Moot Oak bleeds wine," she says. "Will you speak for the field, or let the Neighbors claim it?"

Regional Motifs Harvest rites, masks and mummers, orchard wards, hospitality law.

Whispers to Offer “Eat before asking,” “Dance the wrong step,” “Take the mask off the child.”

External Clocks Threat: “Neighbors Cross the Hedge”; Fracture: “The Oak Drinks”; Community: “Shunning Begins.”

Complications Masks swap faces; a ward demands a secret; cider turns to blood when questioned.

Anchors at Risk A PC’s host-family; the Matron’s heirloom press.

Escalation Beat The Oak speaks with a PC’s voice.

Relief Restore hospitality with a gift and truth; bury the mask at crossroads; share a feast to reduce Community by one.

Faction Entanglements

- **Wold-Wardens:** Honor hedge-law (count stiles, turn stones inward) or suffer +1 SB on each night march; bringing steel disputes to the Moot Oak reduces the next travel DV by 1.
- **Mummers’ Companies:** Travel under mask grants advantage crossing parochial borders; anger them (perform out of season) and village gates close at dusk (Position –).
- **Lantern-Wardens:** Donate oil or mend lamps to earn an escort marker; ignore a lit-lane and pay a “darkness toll” (first Stealth/Scout roll each night suffers –1 die).
- **Apple-Matron Circles:** Feast-days open barns and purses; snub an invitation and local prices double until amends are made.
- **Neighbors (quiet powers):** Leave butter at cup-marks to cancel the first supernatural SB this leg; break taboo and the Hollow stirs (add a *Hollow Attention* tick).

Cross-Regional Ties

- **Aeler Soft-Power:** Red-thread guest-right and ledger courtesies are fashionable among Aeler houses; reputation for keeping hearth-law grants +1 die to parley with Aeler stewards and toll-clerks.
- **Kahfagian Sea-Lanes:** Beeswax, cider-brandy, and wool ride river-to-coast. Storm seasons push Kahfagian factors inland—good silver, stricter contracts. Privateer scares add an extra checkpoint on river crossings.
- **Way of Silk Spurs:** Caravans detour across the downs for night-safe lanes under lantern law; counterfeit guest-loaf tokens discovered here echo as distrust along Silk waystations (Social DV +1 until cleared).
- **Vhasia & Viterra Complications:** Vhasian mills prize Aelaerem wax; Viterra tithes wool harshly. Fungal blights or tariff edicts upstream can spike prices and tempers on the greens (+1 SB on market scenes that week).
- **Valewood Fallout (North):** Moon-sap and dream pollen drift on certain winds: chalk mazes misalign, barrow-whispers grow bold. When *Valewood Weather* is in effect, the first night omen is always true (good or ill).

Trade Goods & Consequences

- **Cider, Perry, Brandy:** Moving pressed drink without feast-blessing risks spoilage—on a Miss, convert 1 load to “soured stock” (still tradable for favors, not coin).
- **Beeswax & Honey:** Wax buys shrine-light in three realms; honey bribes nearly any rural official. Stealing hive-share offends winter churches (mark a *Quiet Anathema* tick).
- **Wool & Felts:** Warmth currency for caravans; Viterra gaugers may “adjust” measures unless shown a Moot Oak tally (treat as papers).
- **Red Thread & Lantern Oil:** Thread binds minor promises; oil fuels lantern-law. Shortages raise night-travel DV by +1 across adjacent tiles.
- **Orchard Grafts:** Mother’s Orchard clippings count as *living writs*: present one to reduce a rural audience’s Social DV by 1 once.

Patron Networks

- **The Pale Shepherd:** Midwives and wardens trade signs at stiles; a shepherd’s whistle doubles as a quiet pass among funerary processions.
- **The Traveler:** Waystones scratched with eight-and-one marks reveal dusk-bypasses; leave a token and reroll one failed travel test per leg (once each route).
- **The Sealed Gate:** Lantern-law is abjuration in miniature; blessed door-nails act as single-use *stay* against trespass (negate one forced entry this scene).
- **Lunara:** Winter churches keep silvered mirrors; under a waxing moon, ask one veiled question about the Hollow’s mood (Keeper answers with a sign).

Diplomatic Favor & Reputation Echoes

- **Guest-Right Favor (minor resource):** Earned by hosting or upholding hearth-law in a pinch. Spend to reduce one Social DV on rural roads or to cancel the first feud-token gained in Aelaerem or Aelinnel.
- **Reputation Echoes:**
 - *Hearth-Keeper:* Villages along Aeler underpasses offer bread-and-bench unasked; toll-clerks wave you through once per arc.
 - *Mask-Breaker:* If you shamed a mummers’ company, festival lanes close early; night checks suffer –1 die until you make formal apology.
 - *Feud-Binder:* Settling an orchard feud grants +1 die to negotiations with Kahfagian river factors (word travels by cask and crew).

Boss Archetypes in Aelaerem

- **The Scarecrow Regent (Omen/Threshold):** A hedge-raised guardian wearing twelve charms and one wrong knot. Commands fields, crows, and panicked livestock; grows stronger when taboos are broken.
- **The Hollow Bride (Otherworld/Hospitality):** A Neighbor wearing a borrowed name and wedding veil. Feeds on invitations; cannot act across a threshold unless welcomed or guest-law is breached.
- **Lantern Bailiff of the Moot (Justice/Order):** Enforcer of hedge-law with warrant-nails and bell-keys. Turns lamps against intruders, calls a midnight moot that can bind PCs to

geased tasks.

- **Beekeeper of Winter Church (Sacred/Whisper):** Keeper of cold honey and sleeping hymns. Sends swarm-as-omens, seals mouths with waxed vows, and trades memories for safety.

Boss Mechanics Notes

- *Threshold Play:* Boss lair includes doors, stiles, and lintels; offering guest-loaf or turning village stones inward can shift Position (+*Dominant*) for one exchange. Violating a taboo immediately grants the Boss 1 SB.
- *Lantern Law Lair Actions:* Once per round, the Boss may snuff or flare a lane—forcing PCs to *Reposition* or suffer *Disorient* (—1 die) until a lamp is rekindled (simple action, oil cost).
- *Mask Cycle (Festival Clock [4]):* Each tick changes who counts as “host” vs “guest” in the scene. While a Boss is host, social challenges vs. them are +1 DV and their reactions create +1 SB on a miss.
- *Hollow Openings:* On face cards, burrows connect rooms; failed retreats loop to the same entry unless a PC spends a *Lantern-writ* or places red thread at the junction.

1.13 Aeler (Dwarves) — “Crowns & Under-Vaults”

Elite (Vault-Queen of a crownland)

“The mountain remembers every word carved in its stone, every seal pressed into its walls. To govern here is not to command, but to harmonize with the ancient songs that still echo in the deep places.”

Commoner (Under-Mason who can hear stone shift a room away)

“When the stone starts singing a different tune, you best listen. Three knocks in the morning means all’s well, but three knocks at night means something’s coming through the walls that wasn’t meant to walk.”

Crowns & Under-Vaults

The Aeler hold the mountains by breath, bell, and bargain. Their halls run like arteries, their cities open in thunderous caverns where bridges leap between ribs of stone and cisterns shine like night skies turned inward. *Survival* is the first law: air is counted, water is barned, light is rationed by wick and prayer. *Tradition* is the second: seals are kept, measures remain true, and the dead keep their offices as carefully as the living. Between the two, a people learn to argue quietly and build loudly.

Collectives (clans, guild-kin, lamp-companies) own what the mountain allows; individuals are custodians by oath. Trade runs under and over the range through under-ways and pass-forts, stitching protectorates and lowland markets to vaultmouth gates. When tunnels whisper or the air tastes wrong, the Aeler move as one animal; when the Kingsmoot calls, crowns and abbesses argue in bell-code and sealed writs until the stone itself seems to lean in.

Spades — Places (vaultmouths, descents, underways, crown seats)

2. (Security/Gatekeeping) Vaultmouth Gate in a hillslope: bronze lungs for breath-tests, tally-niches for lamps.
 3. (Tradition/Oaths) Crown-Crypt Porch where oaths are sworn to sleeping kings.
 4. (Commerce/Underground) Under-Market: lantern alleys between cistern pillars; damp coin, dry wit.
 5. (Labor/Danger) Smoke-Shaft Stair spiraling up to a soot hatch; handprints black as seals.
 6. (Mystery/Whispers) Gloam Cistern—black water, lead scales, whispers carry too far.
 7. (Maintenance/Travel) Lamplighter’s Mile on the Under-Road; niches sting with spent wicks.
 8. (Precision/Authority) Measure Vault: standard rods and weights chained under glass and oath.
 9. (Sacred/Knowledge) Reliquary Arcade: bell-chimes answer drafts; saints keep their own tallies.
 10. (Military/Strategic) Twin-Throne Gate—surface fortress straddling a chasm bridge.
- J (Knowledge/Secrecy) Deep Archive Stacks behind grillwork; scriptoria cells breathe ink and dust.
- Q (Royalty/Privilege) Queen’s Descent: private stair from palace to royal vault-house.
- K (Politics/Power) Kingsmoot Cavern—crownstones in a ring around a bottomless dark.
- A (Infrastructure/Majesty) The Spine Underway, a great tunnel linking crownlands beneath the peaks.

Hearts — People & Factions (crowns, keepers, guilds, legates)

2. (Apprenticeship/Dedication) Lamplighter apprentice with a jingling key-ring and soot in the lungs.
 3. (Craft/Knowledge) Under-Mason who can hear stone shift a room away.
 4. (Authority/Duty) Vault Warden with breath-ledger and seal-rods; patient as granite.
 5. (Protection/Faith) Censer-Knight of the Dawn—fights miasma and men with equal zeal.
 6. (Sacred/Craft) Key-Sister (monastic locksmith) who names wards like prayers.
 7. (Commerce/Authority) Under-Market assessor whose stamp can starve or save a stall.
 8. (Engineering/Expertise) Engineer of Underways (geometer) with rod, hammer, and the right maps.
 9. (Tradition/Law) Oath-Keeper of the Crown Crypt—memory like iron, smile like law.
 10. (Diplomacy/Authority) Legate of the Under-Seal, royal commissioner between kingdoms.
- J (Communication/Loyalty) White-Ribbon tunnel courier; runs blind, rings true.
- Q (Royalty/Authority) Vault-Queen of a crownland, sovereign above and below.
- K (Supreme Authority/Tradition) High King Beneath the Peaks, first among crowns by ancient concord.
- A (Spiritual Power/Resolution) Lumenor of the Under-Altars, one sentence opens doors and closes debates.

Clubs — Complications/Threats (air, water, stone, rite, jurisdiction)

2. (Danger/Disorientation) Bad air pocket—candles gutter blue; lungs complain, schedules fail.
 3. (Disruption/Flood) Drip-flood from a burst cistern reroutes corridors without asking.
 4. (Accident/Destruction) Gas flare kisses a lamp; eyebrows and evidence vanish.
 5. (Error/Security) Seal misread—the wrong door opens, the right one will not.
 6. (Quarantine/Delay) Under-mold quarantine shuts the market just as your crate arrives.
 7. (Danger/Warning) Settling crack—dust snow warns the roof wants down.
 8. (Accusation/Suspicion) Stolen key turns up in your kit; accusations ring like bells.
 9. (Conflict/Jurisdiction) Bell-code conflict—two authorities claim the same chime.
 10. (Political Conflict/Violence) Vault-right feud: crown guards face basilica wardens on a stair.
- J (Disaster/Trapped) Cave-in behind—proof, friends, and retreat on the far side.
- Q (Religious Conflict/Inquisition) Heresy inquest in the under-chapel; arrests in whispers.
- K (Authority/Restriction) General Under-Seal—all vault traffic halted by royal decree.
- A (Natural Disaster/Destruction) White Flood—mountain thaw becomes a river through your route.

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (keys, passes, breath, priority, precedent)

2. (Utility/Time) Lamp-priority tally—skip one lamplighter queue.
3. (Safety/Access) Breath-measure allotment—lawful time in a sealed chamber (once).
4. (Security/Authority) Key-Writ—operate a named lock one time, witnessed.

5. (Travel/Security) Underway Pass—escorted travel between two vaultmouths.
 6. (Commerce/Rights) Stall-Right in the under-market for a season.
 7. (Engineering/Safety) Engineer Shoring—a crew stabilizes your chosen corridor on your timetable.
 8. (Commerce/Trust) Assay Mark—your coin/metal accepted sight unseen below.
 9. (Protection/Law) Crypt Asylum—temporary sanctuary under crown law.
 10. (Authority/Access) Vault Inventory License—remove a named cache under witness.
- J (Military/Authority) Under-Guard Commission—command a vault detachment for a day.
- Q (Royalty/Privilege) Private Descent with the Vault-Queen or High King’s chancellor.
- K (Supreme Authority/Access) High King’s Sealed Writ—doors open, mouths close across crownlands.
- A (Exception/Power) The Under-Seal Clause—temporary exception to any lock, levy, or rite below.

Quick use notes

- Draw until you have all four suits: **Spade** = place, **Heart** = actor, **Club** = pressure, **Diamond** = leverage. Highest rank sets the main Clock (2–5→4, 6–10→6, J/Q/K→8, A→10).
- Treat **Diamonds** as codified outcomes (keys/passes/rights) that change position rather than call for a roll.
- If any **A** appears, echo stone & breath motifs—keys click, bells answer, and the mountain listens (and remembers).

Additional Features

- **Count the Air:** When a scene establishes scarce air, a character who actively paces their breathing (counted steps, measured rests) may shift *Position* one step safer on their next physical action in a confined space.
- **Bell-Code Courtesy:** If the party adopts local bell etiquette (asking a warden which chime applies and heeding it), gain +1 assist die on negotiations or passage requests within a vault or under-market.
- **Measure is Mercy:** Presenting a certified measure (rod, weight, sealed tally) calms a dispute: cancel the first SB generated by commerce or jurisdictional friction in the scene.

Stone & Sovereignty

In the deep places, survival depends on precision and tradition. The Aeler understand that stone does not forgive error—a misread seal can mean death, a miscalculated air measure can doom an expedition, and a broken bell-code can spark jurisdictional war. Their society is built on layers of authority, each with its own rites, rights, and responsibilities. To navigate their realm is to learn a complex dance of deference and demand, where even the humblest lamplighter holds power over the darkness, and the smallest key can unlock the greatest vault.

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

- **Exposure:** Your actions draw unwanted attention from [local authority/creature/faction]
- **Noise:** Sounds of your actions alert nearby [enemies/critters/locals]
- **Trace:** Evidence of your passage marks your route for trackers/followers
- **Delay:** A brief but meaningful setback costs you [time/resources/opportunity]
- **Supply Strain:** Mark +1 segment on a relevant resource clock

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

- **Alarm Raised:** [Local authority/faction] becomes aware and begins responding
- **Position Lost:** You lose advantageous ground/cover/stealth
- **Foe Appears:** A [minor threat/rival/enemy] arrives on scene
- **Gear Trouble:** A piece of equipment becomes [Compromised/Neglected]
- **Lock/Barrier:** A simple obstacle now requires a test to overcome

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

- **Reinforcements:** Additional [enemies/allies of enemies] arrive
- **Key Gear Breaks:** A crucial tool/weapon becomes temporarily unusable
- **Major Twist:** The situation fundamentally changes - [trap springs/route blocked/ally turns]
- **Rail Tick:** Advance a relevant campaign/front clock by 1 segment
- **Condition Applied:** Mark [Fatigue 1/Harm 1/Condition] appropriate to fiction

Major Turns (4+ SB)

- **Trap Springs:** A prepared danger activates with full effect
- **Authority Arrival:** [Major local power/leader/faction] intervenes
- **Scene Shift:** The environment changes dramatically - [fire spreads/floor collapses/storm hits]
- **Patron Omen:** Divine/arcane forces take notice - [omen appears/blessing lost/curse manifests]
- **Narrative Pivot:** The story takes an unexpected turn that reframes objectives

Region-Specific SB Options

Each region generator should include 2-3 custom SB spends that reflect its unique themes:

- **Aeler (Stone & Breath):** Keys click in the wrong locks, bells answer without being rung, mountain air grows thin without warning
- **Aeler (Authority & Tradition):** A seal is misread, bell-codes conflict between jurisdictions, a vault warden demands proper credentials
- **Aeler (Underground Hazards):** Bad air pockets form, settling cracks warn of collapse, gas flares ignite unexpectedly

Aeler — Under-Vault Tensions

Starting Location: An Underway junction lit by guttering brass lanterns, its stone walls scored with tally-marks from a dozen forgotten crowns.

“Among the Aeler, stone remembers the weight of oaths, and every echo calls a reckoning.”

In... An Underway junction, a Geometer halts the party with a tally-rod. “The Spine shifts,” he says, stone-dust in his beard. “Choose a crown—or be buried by one.”

Regional Motifs Load-bearing oaths, fault-prayers, crown-rights, catacomb guilds.

Whispers to Offer “Cut a supporting tie,” “Sign for another’s debt,” “Take a shortcut through the sealed tunnel.”

External Clocks Threat: “The Spine Slips”; Fracture: “Maps Reorder”; Community: “Surface Panic.”

Complications Load-lights dim; echoes reply in politics; crown agents arrive early.

Anchors at Risk A PC’s workshop; a shared refuge tunnel.

Escalation Beat The tally-rod points to the most guilty PC.

Relief Shore a vault with sacrifice (1 anchor), or complete a truce between crowns; Spirit + Resolve (5) to hold a cave-in long enough to evacuate.

Faction Entanglements

- **Edgewalkers (Prospectors):** If you accept their escort or intel, start a 4-segment *Opportunity* clock you can cash for +1 Effect on one venture. If you refuse a posted hazard, they post *your* route as “open” (first stealth or smuggling roll this leg suffers –1 die).
- **True Masons (Infrastructure Orders):** Pledge tools or labor to earn a *Mason’s Stamp* (treat as papers to traverse construction zones). Cross a marked barrier without their leave and gain the *Tampered Work* tag—first structural mishap SB against you is free.
- **Lamplighter Companies:** Donate wick, oil, or time on the Mile to bank a *Lamp Credit*; spend to ignore darkness penalties once on the Under-Road. Skip a service bell and all under-market buys that scene cost +1 clock tick (queues & suspicion).
- **Under-Market Assessors:** Submit to measure/weigh and reduce Commerce DV by 1 this scene. Try to pass unassayed goods—on a Miss, lose the load *or* accept a *Caveat Stamp* that poisons your price two markets downstream.
- **Breath Wardens:** Register bodies & flames before sealed work; compliance cancels the first air-hazard SB. Skipping registry adds a *Thin Air* tick to the leg (applies –1 die to the first exertion test in confinement).

Cross-Regional Ties & Soft Power

- **Agrarian Reliance (Human Breadbelts):** Grain, timber, tallow, and fleece convoys from Acasia/Vhasia/Viterra sustain vault populations. Famine or levy spikes uprange impose night rationing: Under-Road checks +1 DV and food trades add +1 SB pressure until relief.
- **Standards Diplomacy:** Aeler *Measure Vault* rods adopted abroad grant +1 die to settle disputes in foreign markets; rejecting Aeler standards increases toll and inspection frequency (first border scene gains a free “Lock/Barrier” SB).
- **True Mason Missions Abroad:** Accept a Mason cadre to “stabilize” bridges, ports, or sluices: reduce Travel DV by 1 on that route for the arc, but the route now respects Aeler closure bells (authorities can halt traffic with one writ).
- **Edgewalker Concessions:** Prospect notes traded to frontier lords exchange for wayleaves and salvage rights; cash once for an *Under-Seal Clause (local)* or accept a rival claimant clock that will mature if you delay.
- **Kahfagian Interface (Sea Monopoly):** Aeler export hard-goods via Kahfagian factors; storm seasons or privateer scares add a *Harbor Quarantine* tick to any surface leg feeding those ports (customs DV +1).
- **Aelerem/Aelinnel Fallout:** When *Valewood Weather* is signaled, Aeler works creak; all bell-codes in mixed settlements (Aelerem/Aelinnel) are one step easier to misread (first bell-etiquette scene: add a free “Error/Security” SB unless you consult a local).

Trade Goods & Consequences

- **Airworks & Wick (Oil, Char, Filters):** Donate to a vault—bank a *Breath Favor* to cancel the next bad-air complication. Hoard in a shortage and your lot is flagged; all purchases beneath that crown suffer −1 die until you settle a fine or tithe.
- **Stonework & Ironwork (Beams, Keys, Rods):** Selling to foreign keeps spreads Aeler codes: once per arc, treat a foreign gate as if it used Aeler warding (gain +1 die with Key-Sisters/warders there). Counterfeit measure rods trigger a cross-border inquest clock.
- **Foodflows (Grain, Fleece, Tallow):** Move relief trains to clear one *Rationing* tag for a settlement (DV −1 for social checks there). Divert a relief train and gain an *Audit* clock that follows you three markets hence.
- **Cistern-Right & Water Engineering:** Fund a sluice or cistern abroad to gain *Water Priority* (skip one queue during drought). Neglect maintenance and the keeper may invoke *Aeler Liability*—pay or lose access to the route for a season.

Patron Networks (Below and Beyond)

- **The Sealed Gate:** Consecrated door-nails from True Mason kits act as single-use *stay* writs (negate one forced entry this scene).
- **The Traveler:** Spine milestones double as wayshrines; leave a brass chit to reroll one failed travel test on that segment this arc.
- **Inquisitor Prime:** Breath-pure censers sanction “clean rooms”; once per delve, dispel one ambient miasma or ward-rot effect at cost of +1 Obligation to local abbey-knights.
- **Maelstraesus:** Under-Market stalls tithe to the Great Ledger; cash a *Market Dominance* tick to flip one price band in your favor for a scene, then mark a 4-segment *Karmic Debt* with assessors.

Survival-Horror Procedures (Use Often)

- **Headcount & Flamecount:** At scene start in confinement, ask “Who breathes, what burns?” If headcount+flamecount exceeds posted limit, add a free “Thin Air” SB and start a 4-segment *Stale Air* clock.
- **Two Bells to Safety:** Any time the fiction stalls underground, ring two nearby bells (authority vs. sanctum). PCs must pick one to heed; ignoring both increases the next hazard’s Cap by +1 (stone holds grudges).
- **Measure or Mistrust:** Producing a certified rod/weight cancels the first commerce/jurisdiction SB this scene; failing to present one imposes –1 die on haggling or passage until appeased.

Diplomatic Favor & Reputation Echoes

- **Breath Favor (minor resource):** Earned by donating wick/oil or assisting air wardens. Spend to downgrade one underground hazard outcome or to bypass a lamplighter queue.
- **Stamps & Seals:**
 - *Mason-Marked:* Doors to worksites open; smugglers avoid you (harder to buy contraband, easier to cross safely).
 - *Edge-Trusted:* Prospectors share fresh maps—first detour per leg is free; officials eye you as opportunists (first civic audience DV +1).
 - *Assessor-Clean:* Under-markets honor your assay; rivals spread rumors—add a trailing *Audit* clock if you score a windfall.

Boss Archetypes in Aeler

Systemic / Economic / Conspiracy

- **Under-Market Syndic (Cartel/Measure Fraud):** Price-fixes breath, wick, and water; wields corrupt assay marks to starve rivals. *Win by exposing forged measures or seizing the Assay Chain.*
- **True Mason Provost (Infrastructure Coup):** Locks cities behind “safety closures,” weaponizes detours and permits. *Win by forcing a public bell-code audit or breaking the Permit Clock.*
- **Edgewalker Concessionaire (Route Monopolist):** Controls salvage and short-cuts, posts hazards to strangle traffic. *Win by proving route tampering or opening a sanctioned bypass.*
- **Bell-Code Inquisitor (Silent Coup):** Rewrites chimes to shift jurisdiction; arrests arrive as echoes. *Win by restoring canonical bell charts or capturing the Chime Key.*

Survival Horror (Environment as Boss)

- **White Flood (Water/Pressure):** Thaw-swollen river through the halls; phases at *trickle* → *surge* → *roar*. *Win by sluicework, sacrificial breach, or riding the flood.*
- **Bad Air (Miasma/Invisible):** Candles gutter blue; thoughts slow; corridors choose the slowest. *Win by air discipline, filter rites, or opening a lung-shaft.*
- **Hungry Stone (Creep/Collapse):** Settling cracks hunt noise and heat; shudders on every miss. *Win by shoring, silence, and rerouting stress through old ribs.*
- **Lamp Famine (Darkness/Isolation):** Wicks fail in sequence; last lights lure you deeper. *Win by restoring the Lamplighter’s Mile or kindling a saint-wick.*

Undead / Fallen Kingdom / Eldritch / Demonic

- **Crown-Lich of the Crypt (Undead Sovereign):** Keeps ancient offices; binds petitioners with oaths to the dead. *Win by repealing a mortmain writ or severing the Oath-Chain.*
- **Echo-King in the Deep (Eldritch Memory):** A throne of voices; answers every argument you will ever make. *Win by changing the Measure (new precedent) or striking the Silent Note.*
- **Seal-Devil (Demonic Contract):** Lives in locks and signatures; eats exceptions. *Win by offering a flawless counter-seal or starving it of loopholes.*
- **The Hollow Architect (Fallen Works):** A ghost-guilder rebuilding the empire wrong on purpose. *Win by unkeying the master plan or collapsing the false load paths.*

Boss Mechanics Notes

- **Air & Light Tracks:** In confined scenes, track *Headcount*, *Flamecount*. If *Headcount* + *Flamecount* exceeds posted limit, add a free “Thin Air” SB and start **Stale Air** [4]. Each tick imposes −1 die to exertion until vented.
- **Jurisdiction Clocks:** Many bosses run a **Bell-Code Conflict** [4] or **Seal Dispute** [6]. On fill, the boss gains *Authority Surge*: increase their social DV by +1 and seize initiative once.
- **Lair Actions (choose 2–3):**
 - *Collapse Probe:* Mark “Settling Crack”; nearest noisy PC tests PROWESS or risk *Pin/Separate*.
 - *Breath Tax:* Reduce *Flamecount* by 1; next exertion in zone costs Fatigue 1 on a miss.
 - *Blackout/Glare:* Snuff or flare lamps; impose Disorient (−1 die) until a *Lamplighter Action* restores balance.
 - *Bell Overrule:* Swap which faction’s law applies; social actions vs. boss gain +1 DV this round.
 - *White Flood Surge:* Advance environment clock; force MOVE/WRECK or be *Separated*.
- **Phase Triggers:** Environment bosses phase when *Air* hits 2/4, *Water* hits 3/6, or *Light* hits 0; Conspiracy bosses phase when *Audit* or *Permit* clocks fill.
- **Truth & Measure:** Producing a certified rod/weight cancels the first commerce/jurisdiction SB each phase; forging one gives the boss 1 SB and a free *Expose Fraud* reaction.
- **Crowd Pressure:** In under-markets, add **Panic Crowd** [4]; each tick adds +1 DV to precise actions (shoot, pick, ritual) unless calmed with bell-code or coin.
- **Fear Hooks (optional):** *Bad Air* inflicts FEAR vs. suffocation; *Echo-King* inflicts FEAR vs. isolation; *Seal-Devil* inflicts FEAR vs. helplessness. On Fail: mark *Shaken*; on Critical Fail: drop a resource (*lamp*, *key*, *breath*).

1.14 Aelinnel (Gnomes) — “Stone, Bough, and Bright Things”

Elite (Stone Prince of Aelinnel)

“The law here flows like water over stone – it finds its own path, and woe to those who try to dam it with paper and pretense. The earth itself will testify against the unjust.”

Commoner (Charcoal-burner clan who read draught and omen by smoke)

“Our kilns tell us more than your books ever could. When the smoke curls left, the tide’s with you. When it splits in three, best stay by your own hearth till it burns straight again.”

Stone, Bough, and Bright Things

Aelinnel clings to the Dolmis coast beneath the shadow of the Valewood, its halls threaded through granite and hawthorn, its roads counted by antler-posts and moonlit math. Here, promises have weight and numbers have manners. *Even* steps are safe, *odd* words are careful, and truths are traded like copper nails—bright, useful, slightly dangerous in the wrong pocket. The gnomish courts hold two ledgers for every bargain: one for what was said, one for what was meant. Both are binding.

Craft and courtesy govern traffic between fae courts and mortal keeps. Gnomish stone-singers tune bridges with a hum; forester-wardens hammer copper where iron would offend. In markets under living roofs, a sentence can be cut to fit a purse, and a memory can be wrapped for travel. Paths sometimes shorten themselves for those who keep good count, and lengthen for those who sneer at patterns.

Spades — Places (stone spires, sea-rock, deep woods)

2. (Tide/Mystery) Tide-rift steps cut into black rock; limpets and old votive nails keep count for those who forget.
3. (Magic/Transformation) Moonwell basin in a granite bowl; coins turn green in a week, names in a season.
4. (Music/Stone) Dolmen stair up a ridge; each capstone rings a different interval if you tap it true.
5. (Magic/Secrecy) Charcoal coppice under witch-hazel; a neat ash-heap hides a door that opens on even knocks only.
6. (Nature/Music) Basalt organ cliffs: sea-caves breathe like slow bellows; the wind prefers prime numbers.
7. (Nature/Tradition) Stag Road—game-trail marked by antler-posts; hooves know it best, maps accept it grudgingly.
8. (Magic/Purity) Quartz spring where the sand shines like ground stars; drinkers tell the same story with better structure.
9. (Fae/Visibility) Elf-causey of pale flags through a marsh; visible at dawn and dusk and whenever someone is counting aloud.
10. (Underground/Living) Root gallery under an oak hill; lanterns hang from living bark—two lit, one listening.

- J (Death/Music) Barrow gallery with stone chimes; a cold draft from below plays scales no throat can sing.
- Q (Fae/Danger) Thorn Court ring—hawthorns trained into arches; petals fall like knife-points and settle into proofs.
- K (Civilization/Magic) Hall of Aelinnel: a timber keep threaded between standing stones; floors level themselves for guests.
- A (Otherworld/Gate) The Green Gate in a sea-arch; at certain tides it opens to a forest not on any map, and expects exact change.

Hearts — People & Factions (keepers, courts, craftsmen, hunters)

- 2. (Practical/Knowledge) Goat-herd of the stone edges—measures danger in hoof-widths; never wrong twice.
- 3. (Craft/Divination) Charcoal-burner clan who read draught and omen by smoke; their kilns hum in thirds.
- 4. (Magic/Commerce) Hedge-witch with a pocket of thorns and prices stated in *unlesses*.
- 5. (Craft/Magic) Stone-singer (quarryman) whose hum finds a seam and a secret; walls relax when they pass.
- 6. (Nature/Courtesy) Forester-warden with copper nails and a polite dislike of iron; paths obey their hammer.
- 7. (Nature/Tradition) Reed-net fisher who knows when the selkies listen; mends nets to lullabies in 5s and 8s.
- 8. (Law/Magic) Oath-carver who sets promises in quartz so they can be seen; breaks none, bends many.
- 9. (Navigation/Guidance) Way-keeper of the Stag Road; never lost, often followed, sometimes found ahead.
- 10. (Commerce/Magic) Green-market broker trading truths for trinkets and back again; receipts in leaf-vein script.
- J (Fae/Authority) Green Knight—antler helm, mirror-bright blade, courtesy old as frost; keeps a tally of saved insults.
- Q (Fae/Power) Lady of Thorns, sovereign of a hawthorn court; smiles like a snare and forgives in exact measures.
- K (Authority/Magic) Stone Prince of Aelinnel, mortal crown with fae debts properly indexed and current.
- A (Hunt/Destiny) Huntsman of the Moonlit Ride; his horn turns shortcuts into roads, and debts into destinations.

Clubs — Complications/Threats (glamour, geasa, weather, neighbors)

- 2. (Illusion/Disorientation) Glamour fog; time drifts, footfalls don't match, conversations arrive neatly folded.
- 3. (Offense/Magic) Iron offense—someone brought the wrong nails to the right grove; paths take it personally.

4. (Magic/Displacement) Root-slide pulls a trail two ridges away while you blink; your footprints stay where they were.
 5. (Magic/Physics) Wrong tide at the sea-arch; boats rise where arithmetic says no and physics excuses itself.
 6. (Magic/Binding) Spoken geas catches on an unlucky word; the task names itself and refuses synonyms.
 7. (Commerce/Magic) Green Market price: payment demanded in names and memories; change returned in riddles.
 8. (Death/Complaint) Stone-wight stirs in a barrow; echoes hate company and file complaints as drafts.
 9. (Time/Magic) Lost day—the sun miscounts; your dawn arrives at supper and demands bread.
 10. (Nature/Curse) Thorn blight crawls across orchards; pruners bleed stories that grow where they drip.
- J (Hunt/Duty) Stag horn sounds; everyone owes the chase—especially you, especially now.
- Q (Fae/Law) Thorn Court tithe levied on the Hall; arrests wear flowers and quote etiquette.
- K (Nature/Conflict) Muster of the Bough—forest banners rise; travel becomes trespass by default.
- A (Otherworld/Logic) Green Gate yawns at the wrong hour; roads rewire across your path with excellent logic.

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (charms, passes, host-rights, exceptions)

2. (Magic/Protection) Hazel token—step through a hedge uncut, once; the scratch you did not get will *remember* you kindly.
 3. (Utility/Rebellion) Salt license—carry and use ward-salt where it's discouraged; doors frown and open anyway.
 4. (Magic/Authority) Dolmen carving-right—inscribe a name or claim on a speaking stone; arguments quiet while you carve.
 5. (Hospitality/Fae) Guest-bough from the Thorn Court—one night's safe table among thorns; knives behave.
 6. (Magic/Access) Quarry allotment of clear quartz; subtle doors open to its bearer if asked in the right tense.
 7. (Commerce/Magic) Green Market voucher—buy a truth at face value (today only); tomorrow costs interest.
 8. (Magic/Binding) Oath-bead; a spoken promise warms the bead when kept, chills when not, glows if misunderstood.
 9. (Travel/Magic) Tide-path key—lawful crossing of a named sea-cave at neap; the cave will wait.
 10. (Nature/Permission) Forest truce—hunt, cut, or travel through a warded copse without offense; the birds file no reports.
- J (Protection/Fae) Green Knight escort from ridge to gate; watchers bow, paths part, insults lodge elsewhere.
- Q (Fae/Authority) Private audience with the Lady of Thorns; a whisper exits as policy with petals attached.
- K (Authority/Magic) Stone Prince's seal—levies defer, foresters guide, scribes stop arguing and

fetch tea.

A (Hunt/Protection) Wild Hunt clemency—ride under the horn for one night; no hound will take you, no debt will sleep.

Quick use notes

- Draw until all four suits appear: **Spade** = place, **Heart** = actor, **Club** = pressure, **Diamond** = leverage. Highest rank sets the main Clock (2–5→4, 6–10→6, J/Q/K→8, A→10).
- Treat **Diamonds** as codified outcomes (charms/passes/host-rights) that *change position* rather than call for a roll.
- If any **A** appears, echo moonlight-on-stone and tidy-logic motifs—antlers in shadow, petals that cut, a tide that breathes, and a shortcut that insists on proper counting.

Additional Features

- **Counting Etiquette:** Once per scene, any character who carefully counts (steps, breaths, beads, stitches) may shift *Position* one step safer for the next action that exploits pattern or timing.
- **Copper over Iron:** When the party visibly favors copper/brass tools over iron in fae-facing scenes, gain +1 assist die from locals (or avoid a -1 penalty) for acts of courtesy, passage, or petition.
- **Spoken Maths:** Reciting a simple sequence (2-3-5-8...) in tense moments steadies the scene: cancel the first SB generated by a navigation or negotiation misstep this encounter.

Courtesies of the Green Gate

- **Never bring iron** past a hawthorn arch unless it is gilded or named. Copper is polite, silver is opinionated.
- **Always return what points the way.** Way-cords, antler-posts, chalk. Borrow the path; do not keep it.
- **Speak debts in the daylight.** Promises made under lantern-boughs are heard by leaves as well as by law.

Numbers & Nature

In Aelinnel, the boundary between mathematics and magic blurs like morning mist. The gnomes understand that numbers are not merely tools for calculation but the underlying rhythm of reality itself. Their courtesy is mathematical—a precise exchange of value, a careful balance of obligation and favor. To offend their sense of order is to invite the world’s correction; to honor it is to find that paths open, doors speak, and even the stones themselves become allies. The fae courts they traffic with recognize this respect for pattern and respond in kind, creating a delicate dance of mutual benefit and barely-contained chaos.

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

- **Exposure:** Your actions draw unwanted attention from [local authority/creature/faction]
- **Noise:** Sounds of your actions alert nearby [enemies/critters/locals]
- **Trace:** Evidence of your passage marks your route for trackers/followers
- **Delay:** A brief but meaningful setback costs you [time/resources/opportunity]
- **Supply Strain:** Mark +1 segment on a relevant resource clock

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

- **Alarm Raised:** [Local authority/faction] becomes aware and begins responding
- **Position Lost:** You lose advantageous ground/cover/stealth
- **Foe Appears:** A [minor threat/rival/enemy] arrives on scene
- **Gear Trouble:** A piece of equipment becomes [Compromised/Neglected]
- **Lock/Barrier:** A simple obstacle now requires a test to overcome

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

- **Reinforcements:** Additional [enemies/allies of enemies] arrive
- **Key Gear Breaks:** A crucial tool/weapon becomes temporarily unusable
- **Major Twist:** The situation fundamentally changes - [trap springs/route blocked/ally turns]
- **Rail Tick:** Advance a relevant campaign/front clock by 1 segment
- **Condition Applied:** Mark [Fatigue 1/Harm 1/Condition] appropriate to fiction

Major Turns (4+ SB)

- **Trap Springs:** A prepared danger activates with full effect
- **Authority Arrival:** [Major local power/leader/faction] intervenes
- **Scene Shift:** The environment changes dramatically - [fire spreads/floor collapses/storm hits]
- **Patron Omen:** Divine/arcane forces take notice - [omen appears/blessing lost/curse manifests]
- **Narrative Pivot:** The story takes an unexpected turn that reframes objectives

Region-Specific SB Options

Each region generator should include 2-3 custom SB spends that reflect its unique themes:

- **Aelinnel (Numbers & Magic):** Antler-posts rearrange themselves, petals cut like blades, moonlight reveals hidden paths
- **Aelinnel (Fae Courtesy):** A hawthorn arch closes behind you, copper tools glow with fae attention, polite phrases become binding contracts
- **Aelinnel (Glamour):** Conversations arrive folded and misaddressed, time drifts unexpectedly, footfalls don't match your steps

Aelinnel — Tidal Bargains

Starting Location: A tide-shed at dawn, fog curling over anchored barges, while gulls cry omens over the river’s black glass.

“In Aelinnel lands, the river speaks with many tongues, and each tide demands a name in return.”

In... A tide-shed at dawn, a gnomish reeve offers passage on a sealed barge. “The Green Gate opens at neap tide. What we trade there, the Dolmis will not name.”

Regional Motifs Tide-ledgers, river gods, sealed cargo, name-taboo.

Whispers to Offer “Peek in the crate,” “Speak the hidden name,” “Break quarantine.”

External Clocks Threat: “Green Gate Thirst”; Community: “Dockside Fear”; Anchor: “Barge Oath.”

Complications Freshwater turns brackish; the cargo sings; a rival reeve boards with knives.

Anchors at Risk A PC’s river-kin; the barge’s blessing.

Escalation Beat The Gate opens early; the tide runs backwards.

Relief Offer a river-gift; carry a name written in river-mud across the threshold; spend 2 to seal the leak for a scene.

Faction Entanglements

- **Stone-Singer Conclave:** Sponsor a bridge-chant or way-tuning and bank a *Harmonic Favor*—spend to shift *Position* one step safer on any passage across worked stone or living root. Skip their rites and the first crossing this leg gains a free “Lock/Barrier” SB as paths sulk.
- **Forester-Wardens:** Accept copper-nail protocols to cancel the first *Fae Offense* SB in a wood scene. Drive iron stakes or break taboo and mark a 4-segment *Polite Apology* clock you must clear before locals assist you again.
- **Green-Market Brokers:** Submit an itemized truth (what was said / what was meant) to reduce barter DV by 1 for the scene. Try to haggle on single-ledger terms, and the market tags you with *Exact Change Only*—all bargains hereafter demand a tithe of memory or name until appeased.
- **Oath-Carvers’ Guild:** Have a promise set in quartz to gain a *Visible Oath* token; spend to treat one social test as if aided by a reputable witness. Breaking a quartz-oath spawns a 4-segment *Shattered Nuance* clock that complicates future negotiations.
- **Tide-Reeves:** File a tide-plan before neap to earn a *Tide Window*—ignore one tidal timing penalty this leg. Skipping the ledger adds a free “Wrong Tide” SB the first time you touch the Dolmis.

Cross-Regional Ties & Soft Power

- **Way of Silk Interface:** Kon'reh-counted caravans that adopt Aelinnel step-metrics (even steps, counted halts) gain +1 die to avoid ambushes on the Way this arc. Breaking count invites a free “Glamour Fog” SB at the next way-shrine.
- **Aeler Standards (Rods & Wards):** Recognize Aeler measures publicly to reduce dispute DV by 1 with dwarven legates; insist on gnomish dual-ledger and foreign merchants grumble—first mixed-market scene gains an “Assay Doubt” SB.
- **Vhasia/Viterra Complications:** Vhasian hedge-duties (wood rites) and Viterra tithe-scripts (grain flows) cross your ledgers. When either region is “Stressed,” add +1 DV to Green-Market exports that travel their roads unless you carry a *Forest Truce* or *Tithe Waiver*.
- **Valewood Fallout:** On a *Valewood Weather* signal, fae proofs spill downslope; counting etiquette cancels the first navigation SB each scene, but any iron shown gains a free “Fae Complaint” SB (even among humans). Aelaerem hospitality rites mitigate this: presenting guest-loaf removes one such complaint per hall.

Trade Goods & Consequences

- **Quartz & Proof-Stone:** Donate clear quartz to a shrine to bank a *Seen Promise*—once, treat a murky contract as if properly witnessed. Peddle clouded quartz as “ritual grade” and spawn a roaming *Counterfeit Proof* inquiry clock.
- **Copper Etiquette Kits:** Issuing copper over iron in mixed courts grants +1 assist die on petitions; flooding markets with cheap copper pins offends foresters—add a “Copper Resentment” tag that raises DV in wood jurisdictions until you make amends.
- **Name-Script & Memory Wraps:** Legal export of name-script lowers espionage DV by 1 for allies who carry it. Smuggling wraps risks a *Name-Tax*—first customs scene converts 1 SB into a compelled disclosure.
- **Tide Rights & Barge Seals:** Funding barge-seals creates a *Waiting Cave*—once per arc the cave “waits” an extra beat for your crew. Ignoring seal-maintenance flips it: first Dolmis crossing suffers “Wrong Hour” SB.

Patron Networks (Patterns & Thresholds)

- **Sacred Geometry:** Chalk a golden-mean spiral at a ford to reroll one failed prediction/trajectory check this leg; doing so in view of fae courts adds a 2-segment *Proof Envied* clock.
- **The Sealed Gate:** Hawthorn-gilded door-nails act as single-use stay writs: negate one forced entry or pursuit at a hedge-gate.
- **Lunara:** Counting under moonlight lets you ask one terse yes/no about a hidden path; on a Miss, secrets spread—mark Exposure +1 in the nearest Green Market.
- **The Traveler:** Antler-posts double as wayshrines; leave a copper and recite a sequence to finish one travel clock tick for free on forest legs.

Field Procedures (Use At the Table)

- **Two-Ledger Talk:** When parley stalls, the GM asks: “What was said? What was meant?” If players state both, cancel the first social SB this scene; if they refuse, the next bargain demands collateral (memory/name).

- **Count or Be Counted:** At any fae-touched crossing, a player who audibly counts in a fitting sequence shifts *Position* one step safer for that crossing. Boasting or mocking numbers adds a free “Geas Catches” SB.
- **Copper Courtesy Check:** Producing copper/brass tools in a ritual space removes the first *Fae Offense* tag this scene; drawing iron instead escalates the next Complication by +1 Cap.

Diplomatic Favor & Reputation Echoes

- **Hazel Favors (minor resource):** Earned by returning way-cords, restoring antler posts, or paying tide-dues. Spend to downgrade a *Glamour* or *Geas* complication once per leg.
- **Marks & Masks:**
 - *Thorn-Courteous:* Doors of the hawthorn courts open a step easier; human clerks distrust your clauses (first city office DV +1).
 - *Market-Square:* Brokers vouch your weights; rival stalls circulate riddled slander—add a trailing *Folded Rumor* clock.
 - *Forester-Trusted:* Paths shorten for you once per journey; port inspectors assume concealed copper—first harbor search gains a free “Alarm Raised” SB unless declared up front.

Boss Archetypes in Aelinnel

Court & Courtesy (Fae Sovereigns)

- **Lady of Thorns (Etiquette Engine):** Punishes breaches with precise harms, rewards perfect courtesy with literal boons. *Win by satisfying three courtesies in sequence (no iron, two-ledger speech, return the waymark).*
- **Green Knight (Trial by Pattern):** Duel of paths and proofs, not blades. *Win by presenting a higher-count route (Fibonacci, even-steps) or yielding a deserved apology at the right number.*

Threshold & Hunt (Environment that Judges)

- **Moonlit Ride (Wild Hunt):** Three phases—*Sounding* (horns), *Coursing* (paths shorten for the bold), *Closing the Ring*. *Win by naming safe-clemency, joining the chase without taking a prey, or blowing the right counter-call (2–3–5).*
- **Green Gate (Living Crossing):** Demands exact change in truths. *Win by paying a memory that fits the posted proof; forcing passage triggers “Roads Rewired.”*

Numbers & Glamour (Logical Anomalies)

- **Glamour Fog (Layered Illusion):** Each layer dispelled by a correct count, courtesy, or copper rite. *Win by completing the Three Proofs: count aloud, return a borrowed path token, trade a said/meant receipt.*
- **Lost Day (Time Miscount):** The sun misnumbers hours. *Win by reconciling two ledgers (what happened / what should have), then ringing a prime-number chime.*

Market & Oath (Contract Tricksters)

- **Green-Market Broker (Truth Arbitrage):** Buys your meanings, sells your words. *Win by catching them in a one-ledger statement or producing an Oath-Bead that chills (misunderstood clause).*

- **Oath-Carver Gone Wrong (Quartz Tyrant):** Binds towns with over-precise promises. *Win by carving a Release Unless into communal quartz at cost of a public truth.*

Stone & Memory (Ancestral Hazards)

- **Stone-Wight Chorus (Echo Jurors):** Resent footsteps, adore proofs. *Win by tapping the dolmen scale that matches the grievance and returning a taken token to the barrow.*

Boss Mechanics (Use 2–3 levers)

- **Courtesy Track [4]:** Each breach (iron bared, skipping greetings, single-ledger lie) ticks it. On fill, boss gains *Polite Punishment*: escalate DV +1 and impose a Geas.
- **Counting Proofs (three steps):** Name a pattern, perform it, return a waymark. Completing all three lowers boss tier for one exchange or ends a phase.
- **Said/Meant Ledgers:** Any bargain scene runs two mini-clocks; if *Said* fills first, glamour favors the boss; if *Meant* fills first, PCs gain a *Visible Oath* token.
- **Iron Offense Meter [0–3]:** Showing iron, striking hawthorn, or salting impolitely raises it. At 3, fae gain a free “Thorn Blight” SB; reduce by copper rites or gifts.
- **Hunt Phases:** *Sounding* (fear checks; pass to gain +1 die to pace), *Coursing* (paths shorten for counted strides), *Closing* (only truth-payment or clemency halts the circle).
- **Lair Actions (pick two):** *Fold the Conversation* (re-target a statement); *Shift the Count* (odd ↔ even penalties); *Petal Cut* (apply 1 Harm unless copper shown); *Wrong Tide* (swap entry/exit costs at a gate).

1.15 Black Banners — “Condotta & Crowns”

Elite (Banner-captain with griffon standard and a ledger of noble grudges)

“A contract is only as good as the next payday, and a grudge is only as sharp as the sword backing it. In this game, we sell steel by the season and vendettas by the year.”

Commoner (Veteran sergeant who counts scars like coins)

“I’ve seen three captains rise and fall in the time it takes to grow a beard, but the mud stays the same and the pay comes when it pleases. Best keep your own counsel and your blade sharp.”

Condotta & Crowns

Ecktorian treasuries bankroll a perpetual border-war they claim to be *containing*. In truth, the gold keeps the fire burning. The Black Banners are mercenary leagues—ex-Utaran legionaries, second-sons, debt-dodgers, and exiles—who sell steel to the highest bidder, today’s ally becoming tomorrow’s quarry. Between them move the Ykrul steppe-clans (swift, pragmatic, oath-canny) and the Vilikari hill tribes (crafty, patient, and proud). Ecktorian ministers call it “pressure management.” The companies call it a season.

Spades — Places (camps, battlefields, fortresses, war-roads)

2. (Suffering/Medical) Burned village turned field-hospital; flies, tinctures, and fever-prayers.
 3. (Death/Winter) Frozen ford; last month’s dead held under glass, standards trapped in the ice.
 4. (Disgrace/Rebellion) Latrine row at dusk; mud, shame, whispered mutiny, and a sergeant who hears too well.
 5. (Destruction/Regret) Crater pasture from an alchemical barrage; in spring, glass flowers sprout like guilt.
 6. (Logistics/Desperation) Supply road with twelve broken wagons; oxen nose the wreckage for salt.
 7. (Tension/Grudges) Half-raised siege tower in an abandoned camp; every rung creaks with grudges.
 8. (Death/Corruption) Salt-cured cache behind the surgeon’s tent; the wrong kind of maggots move.
 9. (Politics/Confusion) Command tent where maps show borders that diplomacy has already erased.
 10. (Death/Intimidation) Watch-tower stacked from skulls and slate; the crows know the counter-sign.
- J (Nostalgia/Honor) Ancient march-keep held by a skeleton garrison of veterans; they remember when the banners were gold.
- Q (Diplomacy/Death) The Bone Fields—where Ykrul elders parley among cairns and reckon oaths with the dead.
- K (Military/Defense) Marcher’s Fortress—three walls, two sieges’ scars, one gate that opens inward only.
- A (Supernatural/War) The Singing Wastes—fallen weapons hum with the voices of their last wielders on a wind that tastes of iron.

Hearts — People & Factions (captains, cadets, clans, tribes)

2. (Youth/Duty) Young cadet with a father's sword and a mother's debt.
 3. (Experience/Mercy) Veteran sergeant who counts scars like coins—and spends them on whiskey and mercy.
 4. (Authority/Revenge) Ecktorian banner-captain with griffon standard and a ledger of noble grudges.
 5. (Opportunism/Betrayal) Condotta broker who changes colors when the wind turns—but always lands on his feet.
 6. (Diplomacy/Riddles) Ykrul clan emissary who speaks in riddled proverbs and pays in copper and promises.
 7. (Honor/Pride) Vilikari war-chief's second son; honor burns brighter than his father's patience.
 8. (Neutrality/Death) Surgeon who treats friend and foe alike; her ledger balances only in blood.
 9. (Logistics/Knowledge) Quartermaster who knows where every coin went and every man will fall.
 10. (Politics/Secrets) Tribune's aide-de-camp with sealed orders that contradict the general's intent.
- J (Legend/Mystery) The Black Colonel—legendary commander not seen in the line for months, yet his banner still rides.
- Q (Authority/Justice) Ykrul Clan-Mother who weaves war-braids from the hair of oath-breakers.
- K (Strategy/Manipulation) Vilikari High Chief who trades mercenaries like game pieces and never tips the board.
- A (Charisma/Loyalty) The Bannerless One—commands loyalty without rank or flag; men follow because they *want* to.

Clubs — Complications/Threats (betrayals, weather, politics, war)

2. (Financial Crisis/Delay) Payday delayed; supplies die before coin arrives.
 3. (Betrayal/Confusion) False orders: your target is now your ally—on paper.
 4. (Weather/Confinement) Blizzard pins two rival companies in the same cloister; vows and knives both come out.
 5. (Betrayal/Temptation) Ykrul offer better terms than Ecktoria; your contract becomes a liability.
 6. (Betrayal/Surprise) Condotta unit flips mid-battle; your “relief” hits your flank.
 7. (Disease/Death) Camp-fever blooms; the surgeon's tent turns into a counting-house for the dead.
 8. (Military Threat/Delay) Vilikari raiders cut your supply road; winter moves the schedule.
 9. (Ideological Conflict/Division) Ecktorian honor code collides with mercenary pragmatism; the camp splits by doctrine.
 10. (Crisis/Choice) Tribune captured; the aide must choose: the rescue or the war.
- J (Confusion/Weapon) The Black Colonel's banner appears on the wrong field; confusion is a weapon.
- Q (Diplomacy/Delay) Clan-Mother calls a blood-feast; all contracts suspended until dawn's judgment.

- K (Manipulation/Competition) High Chief plays companies against each other; “winner” takes obligations, not spoils.
- A (Supernatural/Threat) The Singing Wastes awaken; every fallen blade rises to seek its last hand.

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (contracts, claims, dispensations)

2. (Resource/Desperation) Emergency requisition—strip a fallen company for what you need (and their ghosts for what they’re owed).
 3. (Contract/Betrayal) Dual contract—serve two masters with goals that cannot both be met.
 4. (Authority/Exception) Honor dispensation—your acts are justified regardless of Ecktorian code (for now).
 5. (Military Pass/Mobility) Condotta rider’s pass—cross any camp perimeter once, unchallenged.
 6. (Diplomacy/Time-Limited) Ykrul safe-conduct token—pass a named clan’s lands unmolested (until the moon changes).
 7. (Military Support/Debt) Vilikari war-mark—their scouts guide you through hostile hills, and remember the favor.
 8. (Medical/Debt) Surgeon’s debt-note—medical care when no coin remains; the interest is names.
 9. (Intelligence/Secret) Tribune’s cipher ring—decode orders that do not exist yet.
 10. (Authority/Resentment) Banner-captain’s seal—commandeer resources from junior companies (and their resentment).
- J (Promotion/Responsibility) Field promotion warrant—assume command of a shattered unit, inherit its clocks.
- Q (Military Alliance/Judgment) Clan-Mother’s war-braids—her chosen will fight beside you this battle, then judge you after.
- K (Commerce/Power) High Chief’s trading charter—buy or sell *anything* in any camp, no questions asked aloud.
- A (Loyalty/Charisma) The Bannerless Word—loyalty that outruns rank, law, and coin.

Quick use notes

- Draw until you have all four suits: Spade = place, Heart = actor, Club = pressure, Diamond = leverage. Highest rank sets the main Clock (2–5 → 4, 6–10 → 6, J/Q/K → 8, A → 10).
- Diamonds are codified outcomes (contracts/claims/dispensations) that shift position rather than call for a roll.
- If any Ace appears, echo war & winter motifs—ice that keeps the dead, weapons that remember, loyalty that needs no banner.

Additional Features

- **Payday & Supply Clocks:** Track two pressures common to the Black Banners: **Payday** (4-segment) and **Supply** (4-segment). When Payday fills, morale falters and the Keeper may peel away a squad or impose a desertion SB. When Supply fills, all risky maneuvers begin one step worse Position until the players secure fresh provisions or bargain a Diamond.

- **Allegiances in Flux:** At the start of a scene, roll 1d6 to see if loyalties shift:
 1. Condotta broker flips colors mid-parley.
 2. Ykrul emissary offers better terms; accept and mark Obligation, or refuse and tick Payday.
 3. Vilikari scouts reveal a shortcut; gain +1 Effect but risk SB from hostile terrain.
 4. Ecktorian clerk “corrects” your orders; obey for +1 Position, defy and gain a Diamond but earn a Black Mark.
 5. Rival captain spreads falsified orders; unless revealed, counters are harder this scene.
 6. The Bannerless One’s messengers arrive; accept their word to clear 1 Payday, but the Keeper gains 1 SB.
- **Honor vs. Pragmatism:** Place a two-step dial between *Honor* and *Pragmatism*.
 - **Honor:** +1 Position in parley or oathbound actions; logistics costs rise faster.
 - **Pragmatism:** +1 Effect in ambushes or sabotage; parley begins one step worse Position.
 Center the dial by a symbolic act—repaying arrears, returning prisoners, or honoring a broken writ.

Mercenary Realpolitik

In the world of the Black Banners, loyalty is a currency that fluctuates with the market. A man’s worth is measured not in noble blood or ancestral holdings, but in the sharpness of his blade and the reliability of his word. The condotta system creates a web of shifting allegiances where today’s enemy may become tomorrow’s employer, and a captain’s true skill lies not in strategy alone but in reading the political winds that blow across contested borders. Between the rigid honor codes of Ecktorian nobility and the fluid pragmatism of steppe clans and hill tribes, mercenaries navigate a dangerous middle ground where survival depends on knowing when to keep an oath and when to break one.

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

- **Exposure:** Your actions draw unwanted attention from [local authority/creature/faction]
- **Noise:** Sounds of your actions alert nearby [enemies/critters/locals]
- **Trace:** Evidence of your passage marks your route for trackers/followers
- **Delay:** A brief but meaningful setback costs you [time/resources/opportunity]
- **Supply Strain:** Mark +1 segment on a relevant resource clock

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

- **Alarm Raised:** [Local authority/faction] becomes aware and begins responding
- **Position Lost:** You lose advantageous ground/cover/stealth
- **Foe Appears:** A [minor threat/rival/enemy] arrives on scene
- **Gear Trouble:** A piece of equipment becomes [Compromised/Neglected]
- **Lock/Barrier:** A simple obstacle now requires a test to overcome

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

- **Reinforcements:** Additional [enemies/allies of enemies] arrive
- **Key Gear Breaks:** A crucial tool/weapon becomes temporarily unusable
- **Major Twist:** The situation fundamentally changes - [trap springs/route blocked/ally turns]
- **Rail Tick:** Advance a relevant campaign/front clock by 1 segment
- **Condition Applied:** Mark [Fatigue 1/Harm 1/Condition] appropriate to fiction

Major Turns (4+ SB)

- **Trap Springs:** A prepared danger activates with full effect
- **Authority Arrival:** [Major local power/leader/faction] intervenes
- **Scene Shift:** The environment changes dramatically - [fire spreads/floor collapses/storm hits]
- **Patron Omen:** Divine/arcane forces take notice - [omen appears/blessing lost/curse manifests]
- **Narrative Pivot:** The story takes an unexpected turn that reframes objectives

Region-Specific SB Options

Each region generator should include 2-3 custom SB spends that reflect its unique themes:

- **Black Banners (War & Betrayal):** False orders arrive, allies turn enemy, supply lines are cut without warning
- **Black Banners (Mercenary Life):** Payday delayed again, equipment fails in combat, honor conflicts with survival
- **Black Banners (Supernatural War):** Fallen weapons rise singing, ice preserves the dead too well, loyalty manifests as ghostly aid

Black Banners — Condotta Crossroads

Starting Location: A war-camp crossroads where two banners snap in the same wind, their sigils bleeding into one another.

“In the lands of the Black Banners, loyalty is coin, and every signature stains red.”

In... A war-camp crossroads, a Condotta broker with ink-stained fingers lays two contracts—one from Ecktoria, one from Ykrul. “Pick a war. Pick a grave.”

Regional Motifs Mercenary charters, patron saints of loss, camp-plagues, blood-ink.

Whispers to Offer “Take payment twice,” “Name a deserter,” “Torch the plague tent.”

External Clocks Threat: “Skirmish Spiral”; Community: “Camp Despair”; Anchor: “Unit Cohesion.”

Complications Scouts go missing; rations are cursed; saints’ icons weep pitch.

Anchors at Risk A veteran mentor; a field-chapel.

Escalation Beat The banners swap colors in wind.

Relief Broker a cease-fire; sanctify the plague ground; accept one charter and betray none.

Faction Entanglements

- **Condotta Brokers' Syndicate:** Register your charter and bank a *Broker's Favor*—spend to reduce one parley DV inside a war-camp. Skipping registration flags your unit with *Unauthorized Colors*: the first checkpoint scene gains a free “False Orders” SB.
- **Camp Quartermasters:** Accept ration-scale audits to cancel the first *Supply* tick this leg; refuse and mark a 4-segment *Short Rations* clock that worsens Position on marches.
- **Field Chaplains & Leech-Circles:** Donate time or tithe to clear 1 segment from *Camp-Fever*; if ignored, the Keeper may convert the first 1 SB of a scene into “Disease/Death.”
- **Steppe Envoys:** Honor horse-rites (salt, water, shade) to gain *Remount Rights*—once, treat a retreat as movement with +1 Effect. Break rites and add a *Soured Oath* tag that raises parley DV with riders until cleansed.
- **Hill Truce-Holders:** Enter a stones-circle under their witness to bank a *Blood-Truce*—spend to negate one ambush on hill roads. Violating the circle spawns a 4-segment *Guest Right Forfeit* clock.

Cross-Theater Ties & Soft Power (Optional Hooks)

- **River Prefects:** Stamp your manifests to drop crossing DV by 1 and gain a *Bridge Priority* chit; late tolls convert the next logistics SB into “Lock/Barrier.”
- **City-State Factors:** Accept a neutral factor to reroll one market roll in camp, but start a 4-segment *Price of Neutrality* clock (their cut grows, rivals notice).
- **Border Monasteries:** Carry bell-tokens to treat the first “Prisoners/Parley” scene as one step safer Position; burn bridges there and gain the *No Sanctuary* tag across nearby forts.

Trade Goods & Consequences

- **Salt & Shot:** Delivering either clears 1 *Supply*; flooding a front with both adds a roaming *Black Market* clock that can flip a Club result to “Foe Appears.”
- **Winter Fodder & Remounts:** Bank a *Cold March* boon—once, ignore weather penalties on movement. Seizing fodder from locals adds a persistent *Reprisal Tax* at village stops.
- **Plague Cordons:** Purchase *Cordon Passes* to bypass one quarantine; forging them risks converting the next minor SB into “Alarm Raised.”
- **Siege Timber & Powder:** Gain +1 Effect on assaults this session; mishandled stores let the Keeper auto-trigger “Key Gear Breaks” once.

Patron Networks (Optional, if in play)

- **The Traveler:** Wayshrines along war-roads let you finish one travel clock tick for free after honoring safe-road rites.
- **Mykkiel:** A stamped writ turns one battlefield judgment (parley, surrender, exchange) into a codified Diamond for enforcement.
- **Maelstraeus:** Convert a resource at fair rate once per campaign phase (pay in Obligation if skewed); abuse invites a *Karmic Debt* clock.

- **The Sealed Gate:** Chalked lines around a field HQ negate one intrusion or night raid this scene.
- **Varnek Karn:** Naming the dead settles a *Fallen Oath*—clear 1 *Payday* but bind your unit to a memorial duty.

Field Procedures (Use at the Table)

- **Colors & Countersigns:** Declaring correct countersigns cancels the first “False Orders” SB each night; wrong signs worsen Position on first contact.
- **Payline Drill:** If a scene depicts orderly pay, clear 1 *Payday*. If pay is “creative,” clear it but mark *Black Mark*—future officers begin one step colder in parley.
- **Scavenge Doctrine:** After battles, you may gain 1 temporary Gear tag or advance *Supply* by 1; on a 1–2 on 1d6, spawn “Honor vs. Pragmatism” conflict immediately.

Diplomatic Favor & Reputation Echoes

- **Mercenary Credit (minor resource):** Earned by rescuing allies, paying arrears, or holding the line; spend to downgrade one contract-friction Club result.
- **Marks:**
 - *Black Mark:* Faster requisitions from quartermasters, colder receptions from nobles.
 - *Steppe-Favored:* Easier horse trade, harder foot levy in farming towns.
 - *Hill-Trusted:* Safer passes, stricter scrutiny from fortress clerks.

Boss Archetypes in Black Banners

Contract & Command (Human Adversaries)

- **Banner-Captain (Fixer General):** Wins by paperwork and parade-ground precision. *Break their chain-of-command clock [6] by flipping lieutenants, forging orders, or seizing the paychest.*
- **Condotta Broker (Color-Flipper):** Turns loyalties like cards. *Expose a dual contract or force public arbitration under neutral bells to collapse their leverage track.*
- **Quartermaster-Provost (Logistics Tyrant):** Starves you with ledgers. *Complete the Three Cuts: road, ration, rumor—any two stalls them; all three topple their supply engine.*

Tribe & Tactic (Field Sovereigns)

- **Ykrul Raid-Mother (Oath-Weaver):** Fights with remounts and safe-hostages. *Honor horse-rites to gain truce windows; break one braid in parley to end a phase.*
- **Vilikari Hill-Fox (Ambush Architect):** Owns ridgelines and feint paths. *Clear Three High Stones (overwatch, supply cache, signal cairn) to force even ground.*

Faith & Fear (Camp Powers)

- **Field Chaplain-Inquisitor (Morale Engine):** Smelts guilt into zeal. *Win by sanctifying plague-ground or redeeming prisoners; each rite drops their Zeal track [0–3].*
- **Surgeon of the Red Ledger (Mercy’s Price):** Keeps units marching past sense. *Expose graft or pay blood-debts; on three reconciled names the operating tent stands down.*

The Unquiet Field (Supernatural Front)

- **The Singing Wastes (Weapon-Host):** The battlefield itself retaliates. *Complete the Silencing Acts: oil the choir (funeral honors), bury the standards, ring the wind-break bell—each lowers its Tier for one exchange.*
- **Black Colonel's Banner (Legend in Motion):** A rumor that commands. *Prove the lie or become the truth: either unmask the courier network (three ciphers cracked) or fly a counter-sigil to pull rank on the myth.*

Boss Mechanics (Pick 2–3 dials)

- **Allegiance Track [4]:** Each bribe, oath, or rumor tick shifts thirds of a unit; on fill, one enemy squad swaps sides for a phase.
- **Payday Pressure [4]:** When it fills, the boss gains *Deserter Surge* once; clearing a payline removes the surge and downgrades Position against them.
- **Fog of War (Orders) [6]:** Each forged, lost, or late order advances it; when full, the boss misdeploys *or* the PCs act twice before the next enemy phase.
- **Honor vs. Pragmatism Dial:** Slide one step per notable act. *Honor side:* +1 Position in parleys; logistics DV +1. *Pragmatism side:* +1 Effect on sabotage/ambush; social Position –.
- **Ground Truth (Terrain) [3x2]:** Three terrain knots (ford, ridge, siege-row). Each solved converts one boss action to *Ineffective Maneuver*.
- **Lair Actions (War-Camp):** *Countermand* (rewrite one PC order), *Powder Scare* (free “Key Gear Breaks”), *Banner Rally* (heal 1 on Allegiance), *Saint's Bell* (force a ceasefire test, DV by Tier).

1.16 Dungeon — “Living Infrastructure”

Elite (Dungeon’s Creator)

“I built more than walls and corridors – I crafted a living symphony of stone and shadow, where every passage breathes and every chamber remembers. The structure itself is the true inhabitant.”

Commoner (Scholar-Prisoner)

“The walls here got a memory like old parchment – they remember every scream, every spell, every drop of blood spilled on the stones. And sometimes, when the air’s just right, they whisper it back to you.”

Theme & Atmosphere

Beneath the surface, ancient places breathe with mechanical lungs and dream electric dreams. Dungeons are not merely ruins but living systems—vascular networks of stone and shadow where every corridor hums with purpose and every chamber holds its own hungry logic. The walls remember every footfall, the air carries whispers of forgotten conversations, and the very architecture shifts like a sleeper turning in bed. Here, the boundary between structure and organism blurs, and those who would plunder its secrets must first learn to speak its language of echoes, scents, and subtle pressures.

(Chamber/Feature) Cracked gallery veined with damp; grit ticks from the ceiling like a slow clock.

Spades — Places (categories)

2. **Cracked Gallery** — Hairline faults veined with damp; grit ticks from the ceiling like a slow clock.
3. **Sunken Vestibule** — Waist-deep water glazed with oil rainbows; cold leeches the knees, something brushes past.
4. **Vaulted Refectory** — Tables laid for a meal gone to dust; goblets taste faintly of iron when breathed upon.
5. **Spiral Stairwell** — Steps cupped by centuries; one cough ricochets down into a throat not your own.
6. **Collapsed Observatory** — Stars stare through ribs of broken dome; wind brings ash that smears like soot.
7. **Armory Alcove** — Weapon shadows longer than the racks; a glass-front case fogs from the inside.
8. **Chained Sanctuary** — Prayer-niches and iron hooks; stone bruised where something strained to leave.
9. **Mirror Hall** — Reflections lag by a heartbeat; one pane shows you older, another shows you missing.
10. **Garden of Stone** — Statues mid-breath; a chisel-mark still weeps dust as if freshly struck.
- J **Throne of Echoes** — A single block worn satin-smooth; sit and your name returns in a stranger’s verdict.

- Q Vault of Whispers** — Books exhale when opened; vowels crawl up the spine and into the ear.
- K Chamber of Seasons** — Air flips from pollen-sweet to knife-cold; breath ghosts, sweat beads, leaves skitter.
- A The Heart Chamber** — Mortar smells like blood, light like fever; floor hums to your pulse then sets its own.

(Inhabitant/Faction) Forgotten custodian with keys like teeth on a ring; polishes thresholds no one crosses.

Hearts — People & Factions (categories)

2. **Forgotten Custodian** — Keys like teeth on a ring; polishes thresholds no one crosses.
 3. **Scholar-Prisoner** — Ink-stained nails, hollow cheeks; knows which lies the walls prefer.
 4. **Symbiotic Colony** — Many mouths, one hunger; bargains in warmth, hoards salt.
 5. **Cursed Noble** — Velvet rotted to lace; voice drags like chain, eyes beg for ending.
 6. **Mercenary Remnant** — Dried mud, wet fear; map carved into forearm with a dinner knife.
 7. **Bound Guardian** — Filigree of wards across stone skin; obeys the letter, hears the spirit.
 8. **Cult Initiate** — Pupil-widened zeal; speaks passwords like prayers, prayers like debts.
 9. **Refugee Family** — Boot-scrapes under cots; clutch charms that grow warm when danger nears.
 10. **Merchant of Curiosities** — Breath like cloves and rust; sells certainty bottled and slightly used.
- J Ascended Vermin** — Crown of wire, court of nests; taxes crumbs, enforces with a thousand eyes.
- Q Fallen Hero's Shade** — Armor of frost, sword of grievance; wants one last right choice.
- K Dungeon's Creator** — Architect's hands cracked with mortar; still moving rooms the way others move chess.
- A The Collective Consciousness** — Voices braided into one intention; your thoughts return carrying fingerprints.

(Hazard/Threat) Shifting walls pop mortar like knuckles; corridors narrow behind you with polite insistence.

Clubs — Complications/Threats (categories)

2. **Shifting Walls** — Mortar pops like knuckles; corridors narrow behind you with polite insistence.
3. **Hungering Dark** — Wicks gutter blue; shadows lip the flame and swallow the heat first.
4. **Memory Fog** — Cool on the gums, sweet on the tongue; you “recall” a door that never was.
5. **Gravity Wells** — Knees turn to iron; dropped coins smack floor like thrown knives.
6. **Temporal Echoes** — Footfalls not yours keep pace; a conversation repeats with one word wrong.
7. **Corrosive Atmosphere** — Leather slimes, metal freckles; breathe shallow or taste copper.

- 8. **Phantom Locks** — Doors exist when watched sidelong; they prefer particular hands and hours.
- 9. **Borrowed Time** — Hair whitens at the tips; hunger leaps ahead of the clock.
- 10. **Infectious Transformation** — Fingertips grain to stone, pupils catch light like a cat’s; urges shift.
- J **Reality Anchor Points** — Candles burn sideways, water beads uphill; spells itch in the teeth.
- Q **The Dungeon’s Will** — Maps argue with themselves; paths rephrase your intentions.
- K **Cascading Failure** — A cracked lintel sighs and the far cistern answers; systems talk in groans.
- A **The Price of Passage** — Each shortcut salts your tongue with loss; the house keeps its ledger.

(Tool/Reward) Wayfinder compass needle twitches toward safety like a frightened animal; steadies if you hum.

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (categories)

- 2. **Wayfinder Compass** — Needle twitches toward safety like a frightened animal; steadies if you hum.
- 3. **Key of Echoes** — Warms in the palm when a door remembers being opened.
- 4. **Lantern of Clarity** — Light outlines hollows in the world; truths show up as clean edges.
- 5. **Cloak of Passage** — Hem sips through stone or mist; leaves damp prints on the far side.
- 6. **Tome of Convenient Knowledge** — Pages grow new margins; ink creeps to answer the question you’re afraid to ask.
- 7. **Ration of Sustenance** — Bread that tastes like last winter; settles the stomach, quiets the shakes.
- 8. **Focus Crystal** — Thrum matches your breath; thoughts align the way teeth fit.
- 9. **Token of Safe Return** — Thread around a wrist; tugs once when it’s time to flee.
- 10. **Map that Grows** — Charcoal blooms corridors as you walk; tiny figures drift where things currently are.
- J **Shield of Temporary Immunity** — Hazards strike sparks and spend themselves like rain on slate.
- Q **Crown of Momentary Authority** — Creatures blink, recognize a crest they cannot name, and obey.
- K **Forge of Quick Repair** — Heat like a heartbeat; fractured gear exhales and remembers its shape.
- A **The Dungeon’s Blessing** — A knack that lingers in the bones; doors like you now, as do certain hungers.

Quick use notes

- Draw until you have all four suits: Spade = place, Heart = actor, Club = pressure, Diamond = leverage. Highest rank sets the main Clock (2–5 → 4, 6–10 → 6, J/Q/K → 8, A → 10).

- Diamonds are codified outcomes (papers/claims/safe-conducts) that change position rather than call for a roll.
- If any A appears, echo **living infrastructure**—walls shift, voices repeat your plans, light returns redder.

Additional Features

- **Living Infrastructure:** Fluids, heat, dust, and sound move like blood—follow the drafts, the drips, the echoes to find organs: cisterns, chimneys, nerve-halls.
- **Scent Ledger:** Track smells (ozone, wet lime, tallow, old wine); they foretell hazards and factions before you see them.
- **Echo Etiquette:** Some rooms reward whispers and punish shouts; others demand a spoken price to cross. Listen first.

Patronage & Power

The true dungeon is not a place but a process—a slow alchemy that transforms intruders into something the structure can understand or consume. Every chamber is a test, every corridor a negotiation, and every inhabitant a symptom of the site's deeper hungers. The wise explorer learns to read the dungeon's moods in the way light falls, the way echoes return, and the way the very air seems to lean toward certain passages. Here, knowledge is not power but currency, and the smart adventurer knows when to pay with memory, when to pay with blood, and when to simply walk away.

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

- **Exposure:** Your actions draw unwanted attention from **dungeon dwellers or factions**.
- **Noise:** Sounds of your actions alert nearby **creatures or echoes**.
- **Trace:** Evidence of your passage marks your route for **trackers or spirits**.
- **Delay:** A brief but meaningful setback costs you **time or resources**.
- **Supply Strain:** Mark +1 segment on a relevant **resource clock**.

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

- **Alarm Raised:** **The dungeon's will** becomes aware and begins responding.
- **Position Lost:** You lose advantageous ground/cover/stealth due to **shifting architecture**.
- **Foe Appears:** A **minor entity or faction member** arrives on scene.
- **Gear Trouble:** A piece of equipment becomes **Compromised/Neglected**.
- **Lock/Barrier:** A simple obstacle now requires a test to overcome.

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

- **Reinforcements:** Additional **dungeon entities or guardians** arrive.
- **Key Gear Breaks:** A crucial tool/weapon becomes temporarily unusable.

- **Major Twist:** The situation fundamentally changes - **trap springs/route blocked/ally turns**.
- **Rail Tick:** Advance a relevant campaign/front clock by 1 segment.
- **Condition Applied:** Mark **Fatigue 1/Harm 1/Condition** appropriate to fiction.

Major Turns (4+ SB)

- **Trap Springs:** A prepared danger activates with full effect.
- **Authority Arrival: The Dungeon’s Creator or Collective Consciousness** intervenes.
- **Scene Shift:** The environment changes dramatically - **walls shift/floor collapses/air thickens**.
- **Patron Omen:** Divine/arcane forces take notice - **omen appears/blessing lost/curse manifests**.
- **Narrative Pivot:** The story takes an unexpected turn that reframes objectives.

Region-Specific SB Options

- **Dungeon (Living Infrastructure):** Corridors whisper your name, reflections blink slower, scent trails loop back.
- **Dungeon (Echo Etiquette):** Shouts echo thrice, silence answers back, doors ask riddles.
- **Dungeon (Cascading Failure):** One crack becomes many, water flows uphill, lights dim in sequence.

Dungeon — Living Infrastructure

Starting Location: A spiral stairwell deep beneath a forgotten citadel, pulsing with a heartbeat not entirely mechanical.

“In the Dungeon, walls breathe, corridors shift, and memory is the only map worth keeping.”

In... A spiral stairwell, the steps hum underfoot. A Forgotten Custodian keys a door that wasn’t there yesterday. “The Heart Chamber hungers,” they whisper. “Will you feed it—or be fed?”

Regional Motifs Maintenance spirits, adaptive stone, ritual vents, memory valves.

Whispers to Offer “Take the shortcut that erases you,” “Trade blood for passage,” “Leave a companion behind as toll.”

External Clocks Threat: “Heart Pressure Rises”; Fracture: “Floorplan Loops”; Anchor: “Safe Route Fails.”

Complications Corridors swap; keys rust to teeth; the Custodian forgets who asked.

Anchors at Risk Camp cache; a mapping apprentice.

Escalation Beat The stairwell adds a step every circuit.

Relief Vent the Heart with a true name; feed it a secret belonging to all PCs (reduces Threat by one).

Plug-in Expedition Layer

- **Universal Clocks (drop into any site):**
 - *Dungeon Awareness (Heat)* [10]: rises on loud actions, light spillage, blood, or haste. At 4/7/10, the Keeper may promote Clubs results one step.
 - *Structure Stress* [6/8]: ticks on blasts, overloading mechanisms, or ignored warnings; when full, trigger *Cascading Failure*.
 - *Expedition Supply*: three pooled tracks—*Light* [4], *Air* [4] (if sealed), *Load* [4] (fatigue/overburden). Each empty track worsens Position for relevant actions until refreshed.
- **Safe Route Tokens:** On a strong success mapping/scouting, issue a *Safe Route* token. Spend to bypass one known hazard in that segment or to negate a single “Position Lost” SB.
- **Retreat & Seal:** When withdrawing, a PC may *seal the way* (chalk, wedges, wards). Clear 1 Heat, but tick *Structure Stress* or spawn a *Phantom Lock* in that lane.

Interfaces & Entanglements (use what fits your campaign)

- **Surface Stakeholders:** *Scavenger Union*, *Shrinekeepers*, *Civic Factors*. Register finds to bank a *Finder’s Favor*—spend to reduce one sell-off DV; skipping registration adds a “Disputed Claim” tag to the haul.
- **Internal Politics:** *Custodians*, *Bound Guardians*, *Refugee Enclaves*. Parley with proper tokens (salt, names, warmth) to downgrade the next Clubs result in their turf.
- **Patron Hooks (optional):**
 - **The Sealed Gate:** Chalk lines cancel one intrusion for a scene; breaking them adds 1 Heat.
 - **Lunara:** Moon-silver reveals one hidden organ (cistern, nerve-hall); mark Exposure +1.
 - **The Traveler:** Waymarks let you finish one travel tick after a room clear.
 - **Varnek Karn:** Naming the dead here clears 1 *Awareness* but starts a *Ledger Attention* [4].
 - **Maelstraeus:** Trade salvage tags at “fair rate” once/expedition; skewed trades create a *Karmic Debt* [6].

Keys, Locks, & Doors (drop-in schema)

- **Door Attitudes:** *Literal* (wants the right key), *Courteous* (opens to the right words), *Hungry* (takes a toll), *Shy* (hates crowds), *Proud* (demands ceremony).
- **Key Types:** *Mechanical* (wards/picks), *Mnemonic* (password, name), *Somatic* (gesture, breath), *Affective* (emotion offered), *Sacrificial* (blood, time, memory).
- **Rule of Two:** Each important barrier recognizes two different key types; learning either grants +1 Effect to breach or parley with it.

Salvage, Haul, & Conversion

- **Salvage Tags:** *Stable* (safe to carry), *Volatile* (ticks Stress on jostle), *Bound* (linked to site), *Loud* (adds Heat when moved), *Forbidden* (attracts factions).

- **Convert on Exit (choose one):** trade haul for a *Map that Grows* upgrade, a *Pass-Key Writ* (one automatic door compliance), or *Market Credit* (reduce next sell-off complication).

Table Prompts (d6 each, fast prep)

Echo Questions

1. What does the room want?
2. Who set this alarm?
3. What was repaired last?
4. Where does the draft go?
5. What memory sticks here?
6. What price opens the way?

Find the Organ

1. Cistern (fluid)
2. Bell-shaft (signal)
3. Heat lung (thermal)
4. Nerve-hall (control)
5. Waste sluice (decay)
6. Relay shrine (intent)

Procedures at the Door (one-minute read-aloud checklist)

1. **Sense:** Name two smells; ask which grew stronger.
2. **Listen:** Offer one echo; ask what word returns wrong.
3. **Light:** Describe color/behavior; ask who steadies it (hum, prayer, silence).
4. **Count:** Beats, drips, or breaths—players may claim *Counting Etiquette* to shift Position safer once.
5. **Declare Price or Key:** Players state attitude + key type; on a hit, grant +1 Effect or a *Safe Route* token.

Plug-in SB Conversions (use with any dungeon)

- First 1 SB in a scene may become *Heat +1* instead of a narrative wrinkle (signal without immediate harm).
- Any 2 SB can instead tick *Structure Stress* and foreshadow *Cascading Failure* rather than spawn foes.
- On 3+ SB, offer a bargain: pay with *memory/gear/time* to halve the consequence and add *Price of Passage* [3].

Bosses & Lairs (Classic Crawl Feel, Fate’s Edge Framework)

Using Bosses Each boss runs on a **Phase Clock** and 2–3 **Lair Actions**. Tie them to the site’s *Dungeon Awareness (Heat)* and *Structure Stress*; as either rises, promote boss position/effect. Boss defeats should yield a Diamond-tier boon keyed to the lair.

Oculus Warden (many-eyed sentry)

A floating nerve-knot studded with glass eyes; lenses irise like gills.

- **Phase Clock:** [8] *Calibration* → *Overwatch* → *Lethal Focus* → *Blind Panic*
- **Moves:** *Disintegrate Signage* (erase waymarks), *Anti-magic Glare* (downgrade 1 magical effect this exchange), *Scry Ping* (advance Awareness +1).
- **Lair Actions (Mirror Hall / Vault of Whispers):**
 1. *Prismatic Sweep:* Split the party’s positions (each PC steps one tier toward Controlled).

2. *Echo False Order*: One PC hears an ally's command that was never given; test or waste an action.
 3. *Lens Flare*: Next ranged attack against the Warden loses 1 Effect unless the light source is doused.
- **Counters**: Smoke, darkness, reflective shields, calling shots on specific lenses (name a lens: cancel one Move this round).
 - **Drop (Diamond)**: *Crown of Momentary Authority* or *Lantern of Clarity*.

Digestive Array (cube-that-crawls)

A transparent, room-sized solvent held in grid tension; carries tools it cannot digest.

- **Phase Clock**: [6] *Probe* → *Enmesh* → *Dissolve*
- **Moves**: *Corrode* (apply COMPROMISED to metal/wood), *Engulf* (split group; trapped PC marks Fatigue or gear loss), *Clean Bones* (remove tags from fallen).
- **Lair Actions (Sunken Vestibule / Chained Sanctuary)**:
 1. *Flood Gate Twitch*: Water level rises a step; footing worsens.
 2. *Sluice Pulse*: Pushes all creatures one range band.
 3. *Reagent Bloom*: Vapors add −1 die to breathy actions this round.
- **Counters**: Grates, cold cinders, base powders; lures with iron filings or salted meat (draw off for a scene).
- **Drop (Diamond)**: *Forge of Quick Repair* salvage or *Ration of Sustenance* (3).

Ledger Lich (archivist revenant)

A curator bound by indices; hands of ink, breath of dust.

- **Phase Clock**: [8] *Citation* → *Injunction* → *Foreclosure* → *Redaction*
- **Moves**: *Name Forfeiture* (steal a declared tag until bell), *Writ of Seizure* (lock a Diamond or gear under spectral seal), *Errata* (retroactively worsen one PC's prior roll Outcome).
- **Lair Actions (Vault of Whispers / Deep Archive)**:
 1. *Quiet Hours*: Casting/rites generate +1 SB or fail softly.
 2. *Reference Only*: Movement through stacks costs an action unless proper tokens are presented.
 3. *Cross-reference Collapse*: Bookshelves reconfigure; split the party.
- **Counters**: True names carved in quartz, burning a citation (sacrifice an *index*—a map, a ledger, a vow) to cancel one Move.
- **Drop (Diamond)**: *Key of Echoes*, *Tome of Convenient Knowledge*.

Protocol Titan (stone sentinel)

A walking paragraph of law in granite; joints clock with tiny bells.

- **Phase Clock**: [6] *Challenge* → *Adjudicate* → *Execute*
- **Moves**: *Ward Stomp* (shockwave; prone or position −), *Clause Capture* (binds a PC to a declared rule), *Countermeasure* (reflect mundane force).
- **Lair Actions (Measure Vault / Throne of Echoes)**:

1. *Bell of Standing*: Only those who declare an intent may act this round.
 2. *Weigh Deceit*: The largest lie in the scene takes Harm 1 (Stress).
 3. *Seal Turned*: A door the party used closes and locks under new terms.
- **Counters**: Present certified measures, exploit contradictions, or swear a binding minor oath (shift boss Position –).
 - **Drop (Diamond)**: *The Under-Seal Clause* (local), *Key-Writ*.

Mimetic Colony (door-that-eats)

An ecosystem of impostor hinges, handles, chests, and carpets.

- **Phase Clock**: [6] *Invitation* → *Adhesion* → *Ingestion*
- **Moves**: *Stickfast* (immobilize limb/gear), *Swallow Noise* (negate assists), *Split & Flank*.
- **Lair Actions (Armory / Garden of Stone)**:
 1. *Everything's a Mouth*: First interacted object bites.
 2. *False Safe*: Creates a “short rest” that actually advances Heat +2.
 3. *Chew Through*: Destroys one rung/bridge segment.
- **Counters**: Iron spikes, chalk lines, bait boxes; fire/acid cause the colony to fragment (treat as minions).
- **Drop (Diamond)**: *Cloak of Passage*, *Token of Safe Return*.

Sluice Dragon (steam & acid wyrm)

A heat lung grown proud; scales are boiler plates, breath a flash-boil scream.

- **Phase Clock**: [10] *Banked Heat* → *Pressure Rise* → *Vent Fury* → *Rupture*
- **Moves**: *Scalding Cone*, *Vacuum Lurch* (pull PCs), *Steam Blind* (Position –).
- **Lair Actions (Heat Lungs / Cistern)**:
 1. *Valve Spin*: Change terrain tags (Dry/Wet/Boiling).
 2. *Gauge Pop*: Structure Stress +1; cracks form.
 3. *Pressure Shadow*: The dragon gains +1 Effect for one exchange.
- **Counters**: Chill the room (dump cistern), bleed valves (two actions), or bait with metal ingots.
- **Drop (Diamond)**: *Forge of Quick Repair*, *Shield of Temporary Immunity*.

Crawl Procedures (Quick, Crunchy Options)

- **Short Rest (10 minutes)**: Clear Fatigue 1 *or* refresh one spent tool; advance *Dungeon Awareness* +1 and roll once on *Ambient Signs* (below).
- **Secure Camp (1 hour, defensible)**: Clear Fatigue 2 and one *Condition* (not Harm); *Structure Stress* +1d2 from barricading/heat, *Awareness* +2 unless *Sealed*.
- **Search a Room (5 minutes)**: On success, gain 1 *Safe Route* token *or* a *Map that Grows* tick; on miss, trigger a *Door Attitude* complication.
- **Light, Air, Load**: Track three pooled clocks [4] (see Plug-in Expedition Layer). Empty tracks worsen Position until restored.

Wandering Signs & Encounters (d12)

1. Whisper returns one word wrong; nearest door adopts a *Hungry* attitude.
2. Drip changes rhythm; nearby *Gravity Well* awakens.
3. Custodian chalk erased and redrawn *behind* you.
4. A stack exhales: *Memory Fog* for one exchange.
5. Pilfer-vermin court demands toll (crumbs, salt, *or* gossip).
6. Bound Guardian patrol, willing to debate terms (papers help).
7. Refugee child with a *Key of Echoes* that hates you.
8. Floor warms; *Heat Lung* cycling—steam hazard next room.
9. Echo sermon on “proper doors”; ignoring it adds Heat +1.
10. Sloshing in walls; *Digestive Array* scouts with a filament.
11. A mirror shows your gear two items lighter—choose which or mark Fatigue 1.
12. Stone hymn—sing along to cancel first SB this scene, or suffer *Hungering Dark* pulse.

Classic Traps, Living-Site Style (pick 1–2 tags)

- **Pressure Mosaic** (Artful, Loud): Floor pattern asks for a dance step; wrong beat drops spears from *ceiling*, not floor.
- **Breath Tax** (Subtle, Lingering): Room meters exhalations; excess vents sleeping gas; counting etiquette downgrades risk.
- **Magi-Siphon Grate** (Hungry, Magnetic): Drains charges from tools/wards; feeding it a *Focus Crystal* buys safe passage.
- **Echo Latch** (Riddle, Social): Door opens to a truth spoken softly; lies trigger *Phantom Locks*.

Treasure & Upgrade Hooks (d8 hoard seeds)

1. Cage of *tame echoes*—store a sentence for later; release as perfect mimicry.
2. *Map that Grows* (upgraded): shows *organs* (cistern/nerve-hall) when rubbed with tallow.
3. *Wayfinder Compass* attuned: hum a note to swap “nearest exit” with “nearest objective.”
4. *Key-ring of Attitudes*: once each—*Courteous*, *Hungry*, *Proud*.
5. Bottle of *stolen seasons*: pour to set room to *pollen-sweet* or *knife-cold* for one scene.
6. *Token of Safe Return* (party-wide) that tugs twice when the *Heart Pressure* hits threshold.
7. A ledger page signed by the *Dungeon’s Creator*—treat one barrier as if you are expected.
8. *Lantern of Clarity* mantle: once/session, reveals the *Price of Passage* without paying it.

Boss Build Template (one-minute prep)

1. **Name & Nature:** What organ of the dungeon is this boss the face of?
2. **Phase Clock:** 6/8/10 with 2–4 titled phases.
3. **Three Moves:** One space-control, one resource-tax, one identity/knowledge twist.
4. **Two Lair Actions:** Environmental toggles keyed to this lair.
5. **Counters:** A courtesy, a tool, a sacrifice. (Players should be able to *learn* these.)
6. **Drop:** A Diamond (from §??) or bespoke boon tied to the organ.

Dungeon Boss: The Heart Itself (set-piece)

A chamber of ribs and lintels; mortar smells like blood, light like fever.

- **Phase Clock:** [10] *Palpate* → *Synchronize* → *Pacemaker* → *Arrest*
- **Moves:** *Syncopate* (force actions to resolve off-beat; assist dice misfire), *Tachycardia* (Heat +2, Structure Stress +1), *Backflow* (reverse one clock tick on *Floorplan Loops*, but split the party).
- **Lair Actions:**
 1. *Valve Close:* Seal exits; require a “Somatic” or “Affective” key to reopen.
 2. *Adrenal Surge:* The Heart acts twice next round unless fed a secret *all PCs share*.
- **Counters:** Speak the dungeon’s *true purpose* (as inferred via organs), vent a heat lung, or sacrifice mapped ground (tear up a *Safe Route*).
- **Victory States:** *Stabilize* (site becomes safer; Awareness clears to 0), *Pacify* (gain *Dungeon’s Blessing*), or *Slay* (collapse risk; Structure Stress +2 across the level).

1.17 Ecktoria — “Marble & Fire”

Elite (Grand Magistrate)

“The law here is written not in books but in marble and flame. Every edict carries the weight of centuries, and every judgment echoes in the very stones of the Forum.”

Commoner (Ferryman who knows which banners pay late)

“I’ve seen the city burn three times and rise again like a phoenix made of stone. The marble remembers, the bells tell the truth, and the fire judges all – especially those who think coin can buy clean hands.”

Theme & Atmosphere

Once the heart of the Utaran Empire, Ecktoria has worn its laurels into chains. Three centuries of sack, fire, and slow decline have not stripped its marble forums nor its gold-sealed coin-houses—but each day, more of its wealth slips into the hands of mercenaries and factions. The Black Banners march on its purse, avenging old Ykrul wounds by proxy. Processions still crown its stairways, yet ash lines every step. The city burns not only with memory, but with ambition still unquenched.

(Forum/Arena/Road) Milk-stone steps where dawn petitions are pinned; tally-ford ferryhouse with rope-drums thrumming all day.

Spades — Places (categories)

2. **Petition Steps** — Milk-stone steps where dawn petitions are pinned.
 3. **Tally-Ford Ferryhouse** — Rope-drums thrum all day; ferryman watches coin and banners.
 4. **Arena Hypogeum** — Practice sand and whispered secrets beneath the games.
 5. **Everflame Cloister** — Candle markets and side-chapels where flame speaks truth.
 6. **Shatterline Bazaar** — Between quake-toppled columns, merchants hawk broken dreams.
 7. **Coin-House Floor** — Counting ledgers under glass; factors seal credit with three ribbons.
 8. **Mile-Zero Obelisk** — Surveyors’ starting point; all roads measured here.
 9. **Triumph Stairs** — Processional Way switchback; marble worn smooth by ambition.
 10. **Aqueduct Walk** — Narrow guardpath above the city’s arteries; perfect for ambush or escape.
- J **Ducal Loggia** — High above a packed square; duchess watches and waits.
- Q **Censor’s Hall** — Red-lacquered tablets record every name, every shame.
- K **Grand Forum** — Statues tarped, echoes loud; where crowds become mobs.
- A **Imperial Arena** — The Marble Bowl, gates chained—for now.

(Glory/Law/Pageant) Torchbearer child with ash-smudged hands; ferryman who knows which banners pay late.

Hearts — People & Factions (categories)

2. **Torchbearer Child** — Ash-smudged hands; knows every shortcut through the ruins.
3. **Ferrymaster** — Knows which banners pay late; collects more than coin.
4. **Coin-House Factor** — Seals credit with three ribbons; eyes twitch at defaults.
5. **Lanista** — Owns fighters—and their secrets; sells victory in the sand.
6. **Decumanus-Master** — Surveyor who “moves” stones; rewrites the city’s shape.
7. **Procession Marshal** — Permits and whistle; keeps order in ceremonial chaos.
8. **Grain-Prefect** — Allots loaves; knives in the margins of every ledger.
9. **Censor’s Clerk** — “Misfiles” careers; knows which names to forget.
10. **Veteran Standard-Bearer** — Sells honor as a retainer; medals heavier than sword.
- J **Gladiatrix** — Darling of the crowds; owes no one but the sand.
- Q **Duchess-Regent** — Behind a silk screen; speaks through cousins, rules through silence.
- K **High Priest of Everflame** — Smiles like law; flame judges truth and debt.
- A **Grand Magistrate** — Guardian of forms, breaker of them when needed.

(**Edict/Crowd/Fault-line**) Procession blocks the only bridge till sundown; sudden edict makes your sigil proscribed.

Clubs — Complications/Threats (categories)

2. **Blocked Bridge** — Procession blocks the only crossing till sundown.
3. **Proscribed Sigil** — Sudden edict: your mark is now forbidden.
4. **Bread Riots** — Grain barges late; hunger hisses at the city’s edges.
5. **Arena Spill** — Riot spills into streets; shutters slam, guards draw steel.
6. **Ducal Conflict** — Rival dukes levy the same ward; your recruits vanish.
7. **Border Dispute** — Re-plat redraws boundaries; your deed becomes “disputed.”
8. **Frozen Purse** — Coin-house calls in notes; purse frozen at worst moment.
9. **Inquisitorial Visit** — Relic authenticity questioned; penalties swift and public.
10. **Aftershock** — Masonry and timetables fall; scaffolds groan with new cracks.
- J **Counterfeit Laurel** — Your win void unless you find the forger.
- Q **Church Purge** — “Spectacles” banned; your venue canceled by zealots.
- K **Rerouted Triumph** — Crowd follows the favored path; your moment stolen.
- A **Red List** — Secret ledger; your patron’s name appears overnight.

(**Paper/Favor/Precedence**) Bread chit for a ward—street patience for a week; procession permit moves sacred flame through crowded quarters.

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (categories)

2. **Bread Chit** — Ward sustenance for a week; street patience guaranteed.
3. **Procession Permit** — Move sacred flame through crowded quarter; law walks with you.
4. **Arena Purse** — Settles debts and hires mouths; blood-money in coin.

5. **Survey Writ** — Reset one boundary stone; redraw the city's shape.
 6. **Ducal Safe-Conduct** — Four guards and a trumpet; noble favor walks ahead.
 7. **Coin-House Credit** — Silent and immediate; debt becomes opportunity.
 8. **Magistrate's Postponement** — Buy a tenday against any suit; law delayed, not denied.
 9. **Laurel-Deed** — Crowd favor follows you into court; glory as shield.
 10. **Grain Ledger** — Name who eats this month; hunger bends to your will.
- J **Minor Title** — Style opens doors that bolts resist; rank as key.
- Q **Basilica Audience** — One private hour with the High Priest; flame speaks truth.
- K **Censor's Indulgence** — One banned thing becomes permitted (for you).
- A **Golden Edict** — Exception carved in marble; precedent travels like law.

Quick use notes

- Draw until you have all four suits: Spade = place, Heart = actor, Club = pressure, Diamond = leverage. Highest rank sets the main Clock (2–5 → 4, 6–10 → 6, J/Q/K → 8, A → 10).
- Diamonds are codified outcomes (papers/favor/precedence) that change position rather than call for a roll.
- If any A appears, echo **marble & fire** motifs—statues that watch, flames that judge, and law that remembers every name.

Additional Features

- **Imperial Ruins:** Every district bears half-collapsed arcades, serving as markets, courts, or shelters for mercenary companies.
- **Competing Factions:** Dukes, guilds, and priests stage processions that collide at bridges and squares, each claiming legitimacy.
- **Monuments as Weapons:** Statues, obelisks, and colonnades are not only symbols—they're barricades, rallying points, and high ground when the city riots.
- **Everflame Orthodoxy:** The basilicas preach unity, but each sermon is a coded signal for a political camp. The High Priest plays balance while cultivating his own following.
- **Black Banner Contracts:** Foreign mercenaries fill the gaps left by a shrinking citizen levy, their loyalty secured only by steady coin.

Patronage & Power

Ecktoria’s decline is not collapse, but transformation. Wealth bleeds into patronage webs: a senator’s indulgence, a censor’s indulgence, a noble’s purse. The city’s great houses keep mercenary captains on retainer, while priests sell ritual processions as public theater and private favor.

For the GM: Patronage should function as both opportunity and trap. Any gift (a purse, permit, or charter) binds the receiver to service, but patrons can die, fall from favor, or suddenly proscribe what they once allowed. To emphasize this:

- Tie rewards to visible symbols (seals, ribbons, laurel crowns) that can be stolen, forged, or voided.
- Let rival patrons issue conflicting “safe-conducts,” forcing players to choose whose favor matters more.
- Use processions, funerals, or trials as arenas for social contests, where patronage debts surface and shift allegiances.

Patronage in Ecktoria is not mere background—it is the engine of politics, coin, and survival.

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

- **Exposure:** Your actions draw unwanted attention from **city guards or rival factions**.
- **Noise:** Sounds of your actions alert nearby **crowds or ceremonial processions**.
- **Trace:** Evidence of your passage marks your route for **patrols or inquisitors**.
- **Delay:** A brief but meaningful setback costs you **time or ceremonial opportunity**.
- **Supply Strain:** Mark +1 segment on a relevant **resource clock**.

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

- **Alarm Raised:** **City authorities or noble house** becomes aware and begins responding.
- **Position Lost:** You lose advantageous ground/cover/stealth due to **crowd movement or procession**.
- **Foe Appears:** A **rival faction member or city official** arrives on scene.
- **Gear Trouble:** A piece of equipment becomes **Compromised/Neglected**.
- **Lock/Barrier:** A simple obstacle now requires a test to overcome.

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

- **Reinforcements:** Additional **guards, mercenaries, or zealots** arrive.
- **Key Gear Breaks:** A crucial tool/weapon becomes temporarily unusable.
- **Major Twist:** The situation fundamentally changes - **procession turns violent/boundary dispute erupts/patron turns**.
- **Rail Tick:** Advance a relevant campaign/front clock by 1 segment.
- **Condition Applied:** Mark **Fatigue 1/Harm 1/Condition** appropriate to fiction.

Major Turns (4+ SB)

- **Trap Springs:** A prepared danger activates with full effect.
- **Authority Arrival: High Priest, Grand Magistrate, or Duchess-Regent** intervenes.
- **Scene Shift:** The environment changes dramatically - **procession erupts/arena gate opens/monument collapses**.
- **Patron Omen:** Divine/arcane forces take notice - **flame speaks/blessing lost/curse manifests**.
- **Narrative Pivot:** The story takes an unexpected turn that reframes objectives.

Region-Specific SB Options

- **Ecktoria (Marble & Fire):** Statues turn their heads, flames burn blue, ceremonial masks appear in windows.
- **Ecktoria (Procession):** Crowds chant your name, banners block your path, trumpets announce your arrival.
- **Ecktoria (Patronage):** Seals break in your hand, favors are revoked, noble houses compete for your allegiance.

Ecktoria — Marble and Fire

Starting Location: The Coin-House floor, marble cracked with soot lines, where votive candles burn beside melted icons.

“In Ecktoria, even faith must balance its ledgers, and the gods audit in ash.”

In... The Coin-House floor, a factor with smoke-singed ledgers offers a purse. “The Lame King moves,” she says. “And the Basilica burns with him.”

Regional Motifs Coin-oaths, basilica relics, marble acoustics, augury smoke.

Whispers to Offer “Bid against the city,” “Pocket the relic shard,” “Name an innocent debtor.”

External Clocks Threat: “Procession of Ash”; Community: “Credit Panic”; Anchor: “Basilica Choir.”

Complications Smoke speaks truths; coins stick to skin; a reliquary runs hot.

Anchors at Risk A choir novice; a patron account.

Escalation Beat The Basilica tolls a note only one PC hears.

Relief Return the shard; pay a city-debt in blood or ; route the procession elsewhere.

Extensions (Plug-in)

- **Cross-Region Hooks (optional draws):**
 - *Aeler True Masons bid* to shore a failing aqueduct; accepting stabilizes *Aftershock* but grants them soft leverage in the ward.
 - *Aelinnel Green-Market broker* offers “truth-credit” on court gossip; pay later in favors or names.
 - *Black Banner retainer* parade demands back pay on the Triumph Stairs; crowd sympathy tilts your next parley.
- **Faction Entanglements During Travel (use en route or on city entry):**
 - If the party holds any *Condotta* Diamonds, begin with *Bread Riots* at +1 segment (mercenary grain trains re-routed).
 - Entering with an *Underway Pass* (Aeler) grants +1 Position on *Aqueduct Walk* scenes but ticks *Ducal Conflict* once (guild jealousy).
 - Carrying *Green Market* tags downgrades one *Censor’s Hall* action but flags *Inquisitorial Visit* at the next temple.
- **Patron Touchpoints (drop the ones you like):**
 - **Maelstraeus (Cosmic Ledger):** Coin-houses keep shadow ledgers; once/session convert one social success into a *Coin-House Credit* Diamond but start a *Karmic Debt* [6].
 - **Mykkiel (The Writ):** Any *Procession Permit* can be notarized as an *Oath Irons* lite: breaking its terms applies -1 die to legal actions for a scene.
 - **Lunara (Witchlight):** *Everflame Cloister* niches hide “silver mirrors”; on use, ask one yes/no about civic intrigue; mark Exposure +1.
 - **The Traveler (Ways):** Map the *Triumph Stairs* as a living route: spend 1 Boon to treat one crowd scene as *overland progress* for clocks.
- **Trade Good Consequences (pick 1 when a haul sells):**
 - *Arena Steel* → street duels spike → start *Arena Spill* at 1.
 - *Relic Fragments* → basilica prestige swings → tick *Church Purge* or grant *Basilica Audience*.
 - *Survey Rights* → boundary re-plat → downgrade one *Border Dispute* or upgrade a rival’s.
- **Diplomatic Favor (minor currency):**
 - Earn by resolving a public scene without bloodshed (Forum, Procession, Coin-House).
 - Spend 1 to reduce DV of a permit/audience by 1, or to ignore *Blocked Bridge* for one crossing.
 - Holding 2+ makes you “interesting”: start a *Red List* [4] that advances on snubbed patrons.
- **Reputation Echoes (soft power):**
 - *Crowd-Loved (Laurel-Deed):* first time per session you face a mob, set Position one step safer.
 - *Coin-House Trusted (Credit):* ignore the first *Frozen Purse*; next time, it returns at +1 severity.
 - *Clerically Vouched (Everflame):* downgrade one *Inquisitorial Visit*; if abused, promote *Church Purge*.

Monuments as Mechanics (opulence with teeth)

- **Processional Geometry:** When acting on the *Triumph Stairs*, choose: +1 Effect *or* -1 Heat; on a miss, *Rerouted Triumph* advances.
- **Aqueduct Leverage:** Securing an aqueduct span grants a one-scene *high ground* tag in any linked ward; if collateral hits, tick *Aftershock*.
- **Forum Acoustics:** Rally speeches at the *Grand Forum* grant an extra assist die if at least 20 witnesses; failure spawns *Bread Riots* at +1.

Plug-in SB Conversions (Ecktoria flavor)

- Any 1 SB may become *Crowd Drift*: shift the scene's terrain in favor of or against you (bridges clog, stairs clear).
- Any 2 SB may become *Seal Revoked*: void one paper (Permit/Chit/Indulgence); to avert, sacrifice *Diplomatic Favor*.
- On 3+ SB offer *Patron Bargain*: accept a visible mark (ribbon, laurel brand) to halve consequences; start a *Patron Debt* [6].

Hidden Orders & Ancient Conspiracies (d12 hooks)

Roll when you want the marble to remember an older game being played beneath the current one.

1. **The Ash Senate** — a ledger of “extinguished” patrician lines still voting by proxy through funerary guilds.
2. **Surveyors of the Ninth Mile** — decumanus-masters who can *move* boundaries with ritual math; a lost rod sets precedent across the city.
3. **Lantern Tetrarchy** — four basilica beadles who decide which miracles are counted; the fifth lamp was broken in a purge.
4. **The Red Marble Compact** — coin-house founders who tithe 1 in 100 coins to a secret indemnity fund used to flip coups.
5. **Archivum Umbrae** — censor clerks maintaining a *shadow index* of names that must not stand trial (yet).
6. **Peregrine Brotherhood** — ferrymasters trading in sealed confessions; blackmail that floats.
7. **The Laurel of Dust** — a gladiators' mutual that chooses which champions live long enough to hold office.
8. **Aqueduct Collegium Obscura** — engineers who keep a second set of sluice keys; droughts become elections.
9. **Order of the Broken Obelisk** — survey-cult that believes Mile-Zero is *wrong* and can re-found the city with one stone.
10. **The Funeral Republic** — undertakers running a parallel courier state through catacombs and wakes.
11. **The Ember Vault** — a sealed reliquary under the Arena; victors' sweat was bottled for augury.
12. **Triumphal Maskers** — procession costumers who encode heretical theses into robe pleats and torch patterns.

Conspiracy Clocks (drop-in)

- *Cover-up* [4/6]: advances when witnesses vanish or records “misfile.” On fill: downgrade one public proof to rumor.
- *Exposure* [6/8]: advances when players air secrets in the right venue. On fill: flip one powerful NPC’s stance.
- *Countercoup* [8]: set by foes when you score big; on 4/6/8, a Diamond is voided, a permit revoked, a bridge blocked.

Cults & Mystery Rites (d10)

Use as Hearts (people), Clubs (pressures), or Diamonds (leverage) by framing their rite, cost, and token.

1. **Children of the Phoenix** (*rebirth by fire*): ash-marks grant +1 die vs. fear in crowds; mark Fatigue if you hesitate near open flame.
2. **Verdant Laurel** (*blood to marble, sap to coin*): once/session turn 1 Harm into 1 Coin-House Credit; start a *Green Debt* [4].
3. **Mask of the Thirteenth** (*forbidden procession step*): walk through a riot unmolested; next parley with clergy begins one step worse.
4. **Brotherhood of the River Tongue** (*truth ferried at night*): ask the Dolmis one yes/no; a ferryman shows up later to collect a name.
5. **Candlemakers of Ever** (*flame remembers lies*): blue flame points to falsehood; the liar dreams of you for three nights (Exposure +1).
6. **Sable Standard** (*war saint cult*): your banner ignores morale checks once; start a *Blood-Tithe* [4] owed to the saint’s chapel.
7. **The Ninth Bell** (*hour that is not kept*): skip a queue or sentence; next edict you need arrives late (Delay SB free once).
8. **Guild of Red Accountants** (*sin as ledger*): convert 2 SB into a *Magistrate’s Postponement*; add *Karmic Debt* [6].
9. **The Marble Eaters** (*mortification sect*): bite stone, gain +1 Effect resisting crowd crush; take Harm 1 (Stress) if you boast.
10. **Torch of Saint Vessa** (*saint of necessary arson*): sanctify a fire to purge a tag (Plague/Corruption); City Heat +2.

Cult Tokens (Diamonds, pick one)

- **Ash-Scrip**: one public sin remitted (once); rival cult gains leverage.
- **Processional Mask**: legal night travel under festival cover for a scene.
- **Ferryman’s Knot**: secure river crossing *during curfew*.

Religious Schisms & Trials

The Everflame Divide (choose a live schism)

1. **Orthodox Basilica vs. Ember Reformers**: Is miracle *counted* by law or *kindled* by need?
2. **Laurel Theologians vs. Street Saints**: Does glory flow *down* from triumphs or *up* from bread-lines?
3. **Iconoclast Ward vs. Reliquary Keepers**: Is the flame purer without images?

Schism Mechanics (table-facing)

- **Heresy Index** [0–6]: ticks when players publicize a stance, defy clergy, or wield cult rites in view. At 3: inquisitorial audits become common; at 6: *Church Purge* (Q) auto-triggers once/session until lowered.
- **Sanctuary / Anathema Tags**: locations acquire tags during arc scenes. *Sanctuary*: first harm in scene becomes Fatigue; *Anathema*: first social miss spawns “Proscribed Sigil.”
- **Trial by Fire (mini-procedure, 3 beats)**:
 1. *Assembly*: set the forum/stair as arena; state thesis in one sentence (players or NPCs).
 2. *Witness*: three proofs (relic, miracle, precedent). Each proof: test Social/Arcana/Resolve vs. crowd DV; on success, reduce Index by 1 or gain *Basilica Audience*.
 3. *Judgment*: roll Crowd Mood (1d6): 1–2 mobs, 3–4 silent acceptance, 5–6 laurel toss (gain *Laurel-Deed*). If Index ≥ 4 , -1 to the roll.

Schismatic SB Conversions (use in Ecktoria scenes)

- Any 1 SB \rightarrow *Blue Flame Flicker*: nearest flame reveals a lie/object; you choose who notices.
- Any 2 SB \rightarrow *Doctrinal Ambush*: a zealot cell interrupts; treat as Foe Appears *or* gain *Diplomatic Favor* if parleyed.
- 3+ SB \rightarrow *Edict From the Pulpit*: convert scene goal into a public stance; tick *Heresy Index* +1 but earn a Diamond (Procession Permit *or* Magistrate’s Postponement).

Boss Seeds (Cults & Conspiracies)

- **The Ember Prefect** (schismatic inquisitor): *Phase* [8] Citation \rightarrow Censure \rightarrow Auto-da-fé \rightarrow Purge. Lair: Everflame Cloister. Counters: relic provenance, crowd-favor, rival sermon.
- **The Surveyor-Primus** (geomantic usurper): *Phase* [6] Re-plat \rightarrow Dispossess \rightarrow Erase. Lair: Mile-Zero. Counters: Aeler measure-rods, witness line, broken rod.
- **Phoenix of the Arena** (miracle or hoax?): *Phase* [10] Hype \rightarrow Immolation \rightarrow “Rebirth” \rightarrow Riot. Lair: Imperial Arena. Counters: doused ash, Mask of the Thirteenth, Everflame test.

Diamonds: Forbidden Leverage (add to \$??)

14. **Shadow Index Leaf** — remove one name from the Red List for a week; add *Countercoup* +1.
15. **Ember Writ** — sanction one cult rite as “orthodox” for a scene.
16. **Surveyor’s Ninth Rod** — redraw one ward line unnoticed (until dawn).

Cross-Contamination (fast ties)

- **Aeler True Masons**: backing an iconoclast audit grants shoring crews; bell-codes now gate temple entries.
- **Aelinnel Thorn Courts**: hawthorn chaplains host “mirror sermons”; a basilica gains *Sanctuary* while a rival becomes *Anathema*.
- **Black Banners**: war-chaplains monetize indulgences; clearing *Payday* risks +1 *Heresy Index*.

1.18 Kahfagia — “Pilot’s Mirror”

Admiral of Lantern-Law (Elite): “Every mirror is a blade, every beacon a promise. The sea itself obeys when we move the lights — and woe to the fool who rows against them.”

Dockside Factor (Commoner): “The pilots see farther than kings or priests. A gesture in lantern-code can open ports, or close them. So keep your debts paid, and your lamps trimmed.”

Theme & Atmosphere

Kahfagia is the western hinge of the Amaranthine: a thalassocracy of pilots, factors, and admirals who alone control the lanes to the Great Western Sea. By lantern-law and mirror-signal, they enforce their hegemony, restricting neighbors to inward seas while they slip beyond to distant markets and stranger shores. Kahfagia is no empire of land, but of water, light, and ledgers—and no rival survives long if the beacons are moved against them.

(Littoral/Lane/Law) Tidal mudflat with hidden plank-way at low water; salt-scar pier behind dawn spice auctions.

Spades — Places (categories)

2. **Tidal Mudflat** — Hidden plank-way at low water; smugglers’ shortcut.
3. **Salt-Scar Pier** — Behind dawn spice auctions; where fortunes wash ashore.
4. **Reedbelt Creeks** — Smuggler paths where tax boats won’t follow.
5. **Breakwater Gap** — Under repair; cutters slip at dusk through the works.
6. **Dredged Channel** — Fresh with temporary beacons; tomorrow’s safe water.
7. **River Sluice** — Tide-gate and boom-chain; access controlled by rope and writ.
8. **Cutter Yard** — Narrow-keel vessels; apprentices work night shifts.
9. **Lantern Alley** — Fog-lane where beacons migrate with the tide.
10. **Admiralty Quay** — Bonded warehouses under seal; law walks the decks.
- J **Red Shoal** — Quiet water, loud reputations; where deals are made.
- Q **Mirror Tower** — Pilot station that certifies safe water—today.
- K **Kassamira Port** — Presidial; auctions at dawn, courts by noon.
- A **The Pointe** — Strait of storm-lights and wreckers’ tales.

(Pilot/Corsair/Admiral) Tide-runner with bell and rope; pilot’s apprentice with perfect memory for shoals.

Hearts — People & Factions (categories)

2. **Tide-Runner** — Bell and rope; knows every tide-table by heart.
3. **Pilot’s Apprentice** — Perfect memory for shoals; tomorrow’s navigator.
4. **Lantern Clerk** — Knows which lights moved, and why; keeper of the shifts.

5. **Oshiiran Factor** — Two ledgers; one for Kahfagia, one for truth.
6. **Dock-Syndic** — Makes queues vanish; power in the pause.
7. **Lantern Advocate** — “Jurisdiction moves like tide”; law in flux.
8. **Privateer Captain** — “Crooked” letter of convoy; profit in the margins.
9. **Thalassoi Sergeant** — Shore leave but still on duty; marine precision.
10. **Admiralty Magistrate** — Rules fast, travels faster; justice in a hurry.
- J **Dredging Foreman** — Channel follows their purse; water reshaped.
- Q **Mirror-Keeper** — Commodore’s confidante; places beacons that bind.
- K **Kahfagian Commodore** — Off the books but on the water; shadow admiral.
- A **Admiral of Red Shoal** — Offers wine, figs—once; price in stories.

(**Tide/Law/Weather**) Tide turns two bells early—grounding risk rises; smothering fog where sound travels but sight does not.

Clubs — Complications/Threats (categories)

2. **Early Tide** — Turns two bells early; grounding risk rises like the sea.
3. **Smothering Fog** — Sound travels, sight does not; navigation by ear alone.
4. **Boom Slam** — Harbor chain slams shut; wrong side means delay or danger.
5. **Light Shift** — Beacons change mid-approach; your lane just moved.
6. **Pilot Strike** — No escorts available; average unpaid, risk assumed.
7. **Customs Inspection** — Ladder audits cargo and crew; delays bite deep.
8. **Reef-Runners** — Corsair skiffs circle with boarding hooks; steel in the spray.
9. **Jurisdiction Flip** — Lantern-law shifts; your writ no longer bites.
10. **Fire Risk** — Alchemical cargo aboard; quarantine if anything spills.
- J **Quartermaster Betrayal** — Tide-tables sold to rival; route compromised.
- Q **Yellow Flag** — Port quarantine; deadlines rot on the hook.
- K **Fleet Redeploy** — “Safe” corridor becomes parade ground; chaos in formation.
- A **Black Squall** — At the Pointe; scatters ships and stories alike.

(**Paper/Right/Priority**) Priority mooring chit (skip Mooring Roll once); pilotage token for certified escort through bad channel.

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (categories)

2. **Mooring Chit** — Skip the Mooring Roll once; harbor favors you.
3. **Pilotage Token** — One certified escort through a bad channel.
4. **Fee Waiver** — Cargo cleared today; ledger smiles included.
5. **Safe-Conduct** — Along specific beacons lane; law walks with you.
6. **Salvage Rights** — On named quay or reach; flotsam becomes fortune.
7. **Warehouse Access** — Bonded storage; seal prize before rivals sniff.
8. **Lantern Code** — Tonight’s signals revealed; navigation advantage.
9. **Dredging Grant** — You decide where next channel runs; reshape the sea.

10. **Letter of Marque** — Convoy protection for one season; legal blades.
 J **Admiralty Judgment** — Precedent travels with you; law bends.
 Q **Mirror Warrant** — Legal right to post a beacon; redraw the map.
 K **Spice Share** — Stake in Kassamira auction floor; profit in pepper.
 A **Lantern License** — Temporary authority to redefine the lane.

Quick use notes

- Draw until you have all four suits: Spade = place, Heart = actor, Club = pressure, Diamond = leverage. Highest rank sets the main Clock (2–5 → 4, 6–10 → 6, J/Q/K → 8, A → 10).
- Diamonds are codified outcomes (papers/rights/priority) that change position rather than call for a roll.
- If any A appears, echo **sea & signal** motifs—beacons that migrate, tides that remember, and law that flows like water.

Additional Features

- **Pilot’s Mirror:** Kahfagia’s strength is not fleet but monopoly on light and lane. To post beacon is to redraw map.
- **Oligarchic Rule:** Families rule by shares in ports and auctions; politics is brokerage in ledgers and lanterns.
- **Western Reach:** Captains boast of ports “beyond mirror,” bringing rumors, goods, and curses Amaranthine can scarcely name.

Patronage & Power

In Kahfagia, power flows through control of the sea lanes themselves. The maritime oligarchs have built their empire not through conquest of territory but through mastery of navigation. Every beacon, every channel marker, every mirror-light is both a navigational aid and a legal instrument. To control the lights is to control the sea, and to control the sea is to control the destiny of nations.

For the GM: Kahfagian patronage revolves around access—to channels, to cargo, to legal protection. Rewards often take the form of pilotage tokens, safe-conducts, or salvage rights that can be leveraged into greater influence. To emphasize this:

- Tie rewards to visible symbols (beacons, writs, lantern codes) that can be challenged, moved, or voided.
- Let rival admirals issue conflicting safe-conducts, forcing players to choose whose favor matters more.
- Use the Admiralty courts and spice auctions as arenas for social contests, where legal maneuvering determines success.

In Kahfagia, your route is your rank, and your rank determines your right to passage.

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

- **Exposure:** Your actions draw unwanted attention from **harbor guards or rival pilots**.
- **Noise:** Sounds of your actions alert nearby **ships or dock workers**.
- **Trace:** Evidence of your passage marks your route for **customs or trackers**.
- **Delay:** A brief but meaningful setback costs you **time or favorable tide**.
- **Supply Strain:** Mark +1 segment on a relevant **resource clock**.

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

- **Alarm Raised:** **Admiralty magistrate or harbor master** becomes aware and begins responding.
- **Position Lost:** You lose advantageous ground/cover/stealth due to **weather shift or beacon change**.
- **Foe Appears:** A **rival ship or customs cutter** arrives on scene.
- **Gear Trouble:** A piece of equipment becomes **Compromised/Neglected**.
- **Lock/Barrier:** A simple obstacle now requires a test to overcome.

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

- **Reinforcements:** Additional **ships, marines, or privateers** arrive.
- **Key Gear Breaks:** A crucial tool/weapon becomes temporarily unusable.
- **Major Twist:** The situation fundamentally changes - **beacon moved/channel blocked/law invoked**.
- **Rail Tick:** Advance a relevant campaign/front clock by 1 segment.
- **Condition Applied:** Mark **Fatigue 1/Harm 1/Condition** appropriate to fiction.

Major Turns (4+ SB)

- **Trap Springs:** A prepared danger activates with full effect.
- **Authority Arrival:** **Admiral, Commodore, or Mirror-Keeper** intervenes.
- **Scene Shift:** The environment changes dramatically - **storm hits/beacons shift/quarantine declared**.
- **Patron Omen:** Divine/arcane forces take notice - **omen appears/blessing lost/curse manifests**.
- **Narrative Pivot:** The story takes an unexpected turn that reframes objectives.

Region-Specific SB Options

- **Kahfagia (Lantern Law):** Beacons shift without warning, writs expire mid-sentence, jurisdiction flips underfoot.
- **Kahfagia (Western Trade):** Strange cargo manifests, foreign spices bloom in wounds, rumors prove true.
- **Kahfagia (Tide Masters):** Channels silt overnight, tides run backward, anchors refuse to hold.

Kahfagia — Salt Thrones and Tide Courts

Starting Location: The Lantern Pier admiralty chapel, where votive ships hang from the ceiling and brine drips from the icon of a drowned saint.

“In Kahfagia, law rides the tide: debts are weighed at high water, mercy at the ebb.”

In... A Sea-Notary unlocks a salt-stained reliquary and produces a chart with gilt edges. “By writ of the Tide Court,” she says, “the Red Current owes tithe and penance. Fetch the contraband bell from the corsair galleass *Santa Dolorosa* before moonrise—or the harbor names you accomplices.”

Motifs Admiralty chapels, corsair charters, tiled courts, incense and tar, salt pans, drowned-saint relics, cofradía oaths, lantern fleets.

Whispers Drink from the captain’s chalice; Spare the corsair who kneels; Let the tide take the debtor’s breath.

External Clocks Threat: *Corsair Retaliation*; Community: *Harbor Unrest*; Anchor: *Cofradía Peace*; Fracture (optional): *Bell Wakes the Sea*.

Complications Pilgrims crowd the pier; the bell tolls underwater; harbor chains rise on their own; the Sea-Notary’s seal appears on a rival’s papers.

Anchors at Risk A dockside confraternity that shelters the PCs; a lighthouse keeper cousin; a merchant’s pledge held against a PC’s kin.

Escalation The drowned saint’s icon weeps seawater that spells a PC’s family name across the tiles.

Relief Return the bell to neutral altar and publicly renounce profit (reduce Community by one); present a corsair captain’s confession to the Tide Court (advance Threat back by one); spend 2 to “buy the tide” for a scene—harbor chains lower, patrols thin, and witnesses look away.

Extensions (Plug-in)

• Cross-Region Hooks (optional draws):

- *Mirror Convoy* requests you escort a foreign barge through a disputed inlet; accept to downgrade *Jurisdiction Flip* once, but start *Diplomatic Ripples* [4].
- *Harbor Missionaries of Lantern-Law* establish a pilot shrine upriver; local rulers bristle, giving +1 Position on Kahfagia courts, -1 with that realm’s officials.
- *Quiet Blacklist*: A distant port’s beacon-codes “forget” your patron; treat its approaches as *Smothering Fog* until you secure a *Mirror Warrant*.

• Faction Entanglements During Travel (use en route or on approach):

- Holding any *Letter of Marque* bumps *Customs Inspection* by +1 segment (privateers breed paperwork), but grants +1 Effect against *Reef-Runners*.
- Carrying a rival oligarch’s seal advances *Pilot Strike* once (no one wants that job), unless you spend a *Mooring Chit*.

- Displaying *Safe-Conduct* along a beacons lane ignores the first *Boom Slam* this session; if used to cut a queue, tick *Dock Unrest* [4].
- **Patron Touchpoints (drop the ones you like):**
 - **Maelstraeus (Ledger of Tides):** Once/session convert a social success at dockside into a *Fee Waiver* Diamond; begin *Karmic Tariff* [6].
 - **The Traveler (Way of Water):** Spend 1 Boon to treat a fog-bank as a *Marked Path*: +1 die to navigation; on a miss, *Light Shift* advances.
 - **The Sealed Gate (Closed Lanes):** Sanctify a boom-chain as a temporary [WARD]; enemies resist with Spirit+Resolve (DV 4). When it lifts, mark *Backed-Up Harbor* [4].
 - **Lunara (Witchlight at Sea):** Moonlit sounding lets you ask one yes/no about a hidden channel; mark Exposure +1 as the *Mirror Tower* takes notice.
- **Trade Good Consequences (pick 1 when a haul lands):**
 - *Spice Flood* → prices crash → downgrade one *Pilot Strike* (everyone wants the overtime), but tick *Oligarch Feud* [4].
 - *Contraband Bell/Relic* → advance *Yellow Flag*; or surrender it for a *Lantern License*.
 - *Salvaged Charts* → gain *Lantern Code*; start *Chart Dispute* [4] with a Mirror-Keeper.
- **Harbor Favor (minor currency):**
 - Earn by resolving dock conflicts without bloodshed, or returning wrecked gear tagged to the Admiralty.
 - Spend 1 to reduce DV of pilotage/inspection by 1, or to step past one *Customs Inspection* queue.
 - Holding 2+ paints a target: begin *Oligarch Attention* [4]; when it fills, a magnate “offers” partnership.
- **Reputation Echoes (soft power on the water):**
 - *Admiralty-Backed:* Ignore the first *Jurisdiction Flip* per session; next flip returns at +1 severity.
 - *Trusted Pilot:* Once/session set Position one step safer on *Breakwater Gap/Dredged Channel*.
 - *Oligarch-Tied:* +1 Effect on auctions at *Kassamira Port*; *Pilot Strike* starts at +1 when their rivals run the quay.

Signal Geometry (infrastructure with teeth)

- **Beacon Leverage:** Controlling a *Mirror Tower* grants a one-scene *lane control* tag: shift one ship conflict to your preferred range; if abused, *Fleet Redeploy* advances.
- **Chains & Courts:** Raising harbor chains grants +1 Position to allies in the roadstead; on failure, trigger *Boom Slam* and tick *Harbor Unrest*.
- **Fog Acoustics:** On *Smothering Fog*, a successful hail grants an extra assist die; on a miss, your call is triangulated—*Customs Inspection* enters play.

Naval Intelligence Layer (the Lantern Office)

- At scene start in sensitive waters, roll 1d6:
 1. *Signal Audit:* lantern clerks board; reveal one forged paper or owe a favor.

2. *Shadow Tow*: an unmarked cutter mirrors your course; +1 Heat if you change plan.
3. *Sting Ledger*: a factor pays over market to mark your cargo for tracing.
4. *Whisper List*: rival oligarch denounced; gain +1 Position vs. their assets this scene.
5. *Pilot Swap*: your pilot is reassigned; choose delay *or* accept a loyal but green apprentice (-1 die once).
6. *False Quarantine*: Yellow Flag raised on rumor; spend *Harbor Favor* or fight it in Tide Court.

Plug-in SB Conversions (Kahfagia flavor)

- Any 1 SB may become *Wake Surge*: currents shove positions one range band; choose who benefits.
- Any 2 SB may become *Light Swap*: a beacon shifts—advance or negate *Light Shift* once.
- On 3+ SB offer *Admiralty Summons*: accept a visible mark (paint, pennant) to halve consequences; begin *Court Obligation* [6].

Lantern-Code Etiquette (1-minute table use)

1. **Declare Channel**: Near, Mid, or Far (*range sets DV 3/4/5*).
2. **Signal**: Roll *Performance + Sail* or *Wits + Sail* vs. DV. *Assist* if another reads mirrors.
3. **On a Hit**: *Pick one*: +1 Position, or cancel the first *Light Shift* this scene.
4. **On a Miss**: Keeper may convert 1 SB to *Jurisdiction Flip* or spawn a *Shadow Tow*.

Tide Court in Session (3 beats, fast)

1. **Motion & Merit**: Name the grievance in one line (cargo, corridor, quarantine). Roll *Lore + Society* vs. DV 4 to be heard today.
2. **Proofs**: Offer any two: chart, beacon-log, pilot testimony, cargo manifest. Each success: reduce opposing DV by 1 or bank 1 *Harbor Favor*.
3. **Judgment (1d6)**: 1–2 Delay; 3–4 Fee; 5 Precedent (*Admiralty Judgment*); 6 Lantern Mark (*Mirror Warrant (temporary)*). If *Harbor Unrest* ≥ 3 , -1 to the roll.

Western Reach Rumors (d6, fast hooks)

1. A harbor where bells toll under water; cargo *must* be named aloud.
2. A spice that stops bleeding—until moonrise.
3. A mirror-reef that reflects storms from a week ahead.
4. A pilotage guild that uses birds, not beacons.
5. A fleet that sails by *shadow* cast on fog.
6. A court that weighs debts in *breath*, not coin.

Sea Superstitions (burn for +1 die once)

- **Bread to the Wake**: Toss a crust; ignore the first *Smothering Fog* penalty.
- **Turn the Lantern**: Spin the binnacle lamp once; cancel *Boom Slam* or take -1 die next pilot check (your choice).

- **Name to the Deep:** Whisper a true name; gain +1 Effect vs. corsairs, mark *Obligation* to the Tide Court.

Pursuit Ladder (Near/Mid/Far)

- **Advance/Withdraw (Sail + Wits):** On a hit, shift one band. On a strong hit, also impose *Wake Surge*.
- **Cut the Lane (Pilot + Tactics):** On a hit, freeze range for one exchange; if a beacon is under your color, +1 die.
- **Weather the Squall (Resolve + Sail):** On a hit in *Black Squall*, you pick who drifts; on a miss, Keeper does.

Boss Seeds (Sea & Signal)

- **The Mirror-Keeper of Kassamira** (signal tyrant): *Phases*—Audit → Blacklist → Light Embargo. Counters: rival beacon logs, Tide Court precedent, stolen codebook.
- **Corsair-Chaplain of the Pointe** (relic raider): *Phases*—Charm → Board → Bell-Wake. Counters: sanctified boom, cofradía oath, drowned-saint tithe.

Supplemental Diamonds

14. **Pilot's Oath-Bead** — One sworn escort ignores *Early Tide* this leg.
15. **Court Delay Writ** — Quarantine holds but *your* manifest clears.
16. **Fog Charter** — Treat one *Smothering Fog* scene as if beaconed (+1 Position once).

1.19 Linn — “Skerries & Storm-Oaths”

Elite (High Jarl)

“The sea keeps better counsel than any scribe, and the storm remembers every oath sworn upon its winds. To rule these shores is to dance between their moods and never miss a step.”

Commoner (Net-wife who reads the sea like a ledger)

“The water speaks to those who know how to listen – the way it moves tells you if the fish are running, if the weather’s turning, or if something’s coming that wasn’t invited to the feast.”

Theme & Atmosphere

North of the Aberderrin Sea, where fjords split the coast and skerries break the tide, dwell the Linn. They are traders and raiders in equal breath, their longships crowding the whale-road and river mouths. They descend the Ylolka like an axe-blade and cut into southern shores, or slip through the Thin Strip where the Valewood dares not touch salt. Yet even these storm-oath people dread the Mistlands and the Valewood, whose fog and trees have no need of ships or harbors to claim their due.

(Fjord/Skerry/Hall) Kelp-skerry gut: a narrow channel where oars scrape weed and rock; tide-shed of longship houses with tar smoke and gulls for sentries.

Spades — Places (categories)

2. **Kelp-Skerry Gut** — Narrow channel where oars scrape weed and rock.
3. **Tide-Shed** — Longship houses; tar smoke and gulls for sentries.
4. **Wave-Gate Reef** — Just off a raiding beach; only locals know the cut.
5. **Runestone Causey** — Across tidal flat; names half lost to barnacle.
6. **Herring-Stairs** — Drying racks above cliff path; knives flicker like fish.
7. **Winter Hall** — Turf walls, smoke-eye roof, benches crowded with shields.
8. **Mistlands Maze** — Reed-channels braid and vanish; navigation by instinct.
9. **Boomed Harbor** — Iron rings in whale-bone posts; controlled access.
10. **Aberderrin Headland** — Current rips past wreck timbers in the kelp.
- J **Dolmis Waystation** — Low isle with fresh water and old debts.
- Q **Thing-Holm** — Flat islet ringed with stones for speaking and swearing.
- K **High Jarl’s Seat** — Above fjord, beacon tower glaring out to sea.
- A **Whale-Road Horizon** — Open water where storms are born and names are made.

(Jarl/Oar-Crew/Keeper) Net-wife who reads the sea like a ledger and the sky like a mood; steersman whose tiller-hand never shakes.

Hearts — People & Factions (categories)

2. **Net-Wife** — Reads sea like ledger, sky like mood; weather-witch in all but name.

3. **Steersman** — Tiller-hand never shakes, even when keel does.
 4. **Shipwright** — Pitch on palms, schedule in teeth; knows every plank's story.
 5. **Oar-Master** — Sets beat that decides if home is today or never.
 6. **Mist-Pilot** — Ghosts boats through marsh lanes; reed-runner with secret paths.
 7. **Skald** — Verses buy silence, start fights, end them; law in rhyme.
 8. **Shield-Band** — Cousins fine with coin, better with cattle.
 9. **Foster-Son** — Southern coast birth; speaks both laws and subtext.
 10. **Thing-Speaker** — Makes war into lawsuit, lawsuit into lunch.
- J **Sea-Queen's Hand** — Envoy with seal-bag and sword-belt; queen's will made manifest.
- Q **Sea-Queen** — Crown of hammered silver, eyes for weather and law.
- K **High Jarl** — First among raids, last to boast; paramount over strands.
- A **Volva of Mist** — Oath-reader whose nod stills surf; seer of tides and truth.

(**Weather/Reef/Feud**) Black squall drops from clear band; oars or prayers—pick one; fogfall makes friend and reef trade places.

Clubs — Complications/Threats (categories)

2. **Black Squall** — Drops from clear band; oars or prayers—pick one.
 3. **Fogfall** — Sound travels, sight does not; friend and reef trade places.
 4. **Boom Lift** — Harbor chain rises; schedules drown in harbor mouth.
 5. **Levy Clash** — Viterra's wardens arrive with polite spears.
 6. **Keel-Rot Rumor** — Crews beach mid-voyage; trust in timber fails.
 7. **Feud Token** — Raid becomes wedding... or funeral; oath-debt called due.
 8. **Oath Matured** — Verse sworn last winter comes due today.
 9. **Mistlands Miscount** — Channels "move," cargo vanishes without witnesses.
 10. **Aberderrin Race** — Contrary currents split flotilla; half late, half lost.
- J **Southron Fire-Pots** — Night-run turns to day-light; surprise ashore.
- Q **Thing Injunction** — No sailing till grievance heard (hours? days?).
- K **General Muster** — Horns on every headland; all bays become spears.
- A **Ground-Sea** — Long, blind swell rolls under; steering lies.

(**Right/Token/Escort**) Harbor-green mark—dock without levy in named strand; oar-share claims two benches on fast longship.

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (categories)

2. **Harbor-Mark** — Dock without levy in named strand (once).
3. **Oar-Share** — Claim two benches on fast longship for season.
4. **Pilot's Token** — Mist-runner guides through reed-maze safely.
5. **Wharf-Right** — Dolmis waystation loading priority; first ashore.
6. **Salvage Claim** — Flotsam on reef stretch becomes "inventory."
7. **Thing Ruling** — Verdict in your favor that travels with you.

- 8. **Raid-Truce** — Immunity in named bay for one market day.
- 9. **Foster-Bond** — Guest-kin by jarl’s house; hospitality guaranteed.
- 10. **Herring Allotment** — Priority barrels when run hits; silver in season.
- J **Escort Writ** — Eight shields and wolf-banner from cape to cape.
- Q **Queen’s Audience** — Whisper exits as policy; sea-law bends.
- K **High Jarl’s Pennon** — Levies open booms and mouths when it flies.
- A **Storm-Oath Clause** — Temporary exception to any sea-law, sealed.

Quick use notes

- Draw until you have all four suits: Spade = place, Heart = actor, Club = pressure, Diamond = leverage. Highest rank sets the main Clock (2–5 → 4, 6–10 → 6, J/Q/K → 8, A → 10).
- Diamonds are codified outcomes (rights/tokens/escorts) that change position rather than call for a roll.
- If any A appears, echo **sea-omens**—horns on wind, white horses on swell, verse unfinished until landfall.

Additional Features

- **Storm-Oaths:** Every raid or voyage sealed by oath to sea/storm. Break one, invite sea’s judgment.
- **Skald’s Burden:** Verses are law, history, curse. Poor rhyme can damn crew as surely as reef.
- **Mist-Dread:** Bravest Linns won’t enter Direwood’s breath or Valewood’s shade. Even Sea-Queen pales at Ninth Bell of Mistlands.

Patronage & Power

Among the Linn, power flows through oaths, kinship, and the spoken word. Jarls maintain authority through successful raids and wise judgments, while skalds wield influence through their ability to immortalize deeds in verse—or damn names through satire. The Sea-Queen holds sway over the coastlands, but her rule depends on the respect of the High Jarl and the Thing-speakers who interpret ancient laws.

For the GM: Power in Linn society is fluid and performance-based. Patronage often takes the form of foster-bonds, oar-shares, or raid-truces—each binding the recipient to service and reputation. To emphasize this:

- Tie rewards to visible symbols (tokens, banners, verses) that can be challenged, stolen, or voided.
- Let rival jarls issue conflicting claims, forcing players to choose whose favor matters more.
- Use the Thing-holm and harbor gatherings as arenas for social contests, where oaths are sworn and broken.

In Linn society, your word is your bond, and your reputation is your greatest treasure.

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

- **Exposure:** Your actions draw unwanted attention from **coastal guards or rival crews**.
- **Noise:** Sounds of your actions alert nearby **ships or harbor watch**.
- **Trace:** Evidence of your passage marks your route for **trackers or mist-pilots**.
- **Delay:** A brief but meaningful setback costs you **time or favorable tide**.
- **Supply Strain:** Mark +1 segment on a relevant **resource clock**.

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

- **Alarm Raised:** **Local jarl or harbor master** becomes aware and begins responding.
- **Position Lost:** You lose advantageous ground/cover/stealth due to **weather shift or reef hazard**.
- **Foe Appears:** A **rival crew or levy force** arrives on scene.
- **Gear Trouble:** A piece of equipment becomes **Compromised/Neglected**.
- **Lock/Barrier:** A simple obstacle now requires a test to overcome.

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

- **Reinforcements:** Additional **ships, warriors, or skalds** arrive.
- **Key Gear Breaks:** A crucial tool/weapon becomes temporarily unusable.
- **Major Twist:** The situation fundamentally changes - **storm hits/oath invoked/feud declared**.
- **Rail Tick:** Advance a relevant campaign/front clock by 1 segment.
- **Condition Applied:** Mark **Fatigue 1/Harm 1/Condition** appropriate to fiction.

Major Turns (4+ SB)

- **Trap Springs:** A prepared danger activates with full effect.
- **Authority Arrival:** **Sea-Queen, High Jarl, or Volva** intervenes.
- **Scene Shift:** The environment changes dramatically - **storm rises/reef shifts/mist closes in**.
- **Patron Omen:** Divine/arcane forces take notice - **omen appears/blessing lost/curse manifests**.
- **Narrative Pivot:** The story takes an unexpected turn that reframes objectives.

Region-Specific SB Options

- **Linn (Storm-Oaths):** Sudden calm, breaking waves speak names, verses come unbidden to lips.
- **Linn (Mistlands):** Channels shift without sound, voices call from reed-beds, compass spins.
- **Linn (Thing-Law):** Witnesses appear, oaths are demanded, skald begins composing your saga.

Linn — Skerry Stormcall

Starting Location: A longship house lined with storm-charms and whale-bone runes, salt wind clawing at the doors.

“In Linn, storms remember names, and the sea never forgives those who drown unwilling.”

In... A longship house, a Net-Wife binds a storm-token into a PC’s palm. “The Whale-Road sings,” she says. “But the Mistlands whistle back.”

Regional Motifs Keening ropes, skerry charts, oath-salt, bone whistles.

Whispers to Offer “Sail in fog,” “Break a rope ward,” “Name the drowned aloud.”

External Clocks Threat: “White Squall”; Fracture: “Compass Lies”; Community: “Boathouse Grief.”

Complications Nets pull memories; the token grows cold; gulls spell runes.

Anchors at Risk A boathouse elder; the keel of an ancestor ship.

Escalation Beat The tide comes in on both sides of the pier.

Relief Cast the token into a whirl; sing the loss back; accept a sea-mark scar to drop Fracture by one.

Extensions (Plug-in)

- **Cross-Region Hooks (optional draws):**

- *Thing Envoys Abroad* seek restitution for a raid gone wrong; accept to downgrade one *Levy Clash*, but start *Blood-Price* [4].
- *Winter Timber Pact* promises mastwood from a southern lord; +1 Position to ship repair scenes, begin *Oath Matured* at +1 if payment slips.
- *Shared Coast Ward* establishes a beacon/boom with neighbors; treat the first *Boom Lift* as a warning only, but tick *Border Grudge* [4].

- **Faction Entanglements During Travel:**

- Carrying a *Raid-Truce* ignores the first *Feud Token* this session; if you raid anyway, advance *General Muster*.
- Displaying *Foster-Bond* grants +1 die to parley with coastal keeps; on a miss, start *Hostage Talk* [4].
- Offloading *Herring Allotment* in a rival strand downgrades *Levy Clash* once, but ticks *Market Knives* [4].

- **Patron Touchpoints (use sparingly):**

- **Adar (Oath of Flame & Light):** Sanctify a storm-oath; once/scene set Position one step safer at sea; if you break it, trigger *Storm Omen*.

- **The Traveler (Open Wake):** Spend 1 Boon to treat a *Fogfall* as a marked path (+1 die to navigation); on a miss, *Aberderrin Race* advances.
- **The Sealed Gate (Closed Harbor):** Bless a boom as [WARD]; enemies resist with Spirit+Resolve (DV 4); when lifted, tick *Harbor Debt* [4].
- **Lunara (Tide-Whisper):** Ask one yes/no about reefs or weather under moonlight; mark Exposure +1 as the *Volva of Mist* takes notice.
- **Scarcity & Spoil (pick 1 when a haul lands):**
 - *Lean Catch* → clear 1 segment of *Boathouse Grief* but start *Winter Stores* [6].
 - *Rich Plunder* → gain *Wharf-Right* or *Thing Ruling*; tick *Feud Token* and *Keel-Rot Rumor*.
 - *Hostage Silver* → downgrade *Levy Clash*; begin *Thing Injunction* at +1 (law wants its share).
- **Harbor/Thing Favor (minor currency):**
 - Earn by honoring a Raid-Truce, rescuing crews, or yielding a fair tithe at Thing-Holm.
 - Spend 1 to reduce DV of local rulings or to step past one harbor queue or levy inspection.
 - Holding 2+ paints a target: begin *Jarl's Attention* [4]; when it fills, a claim is laid on your next voyage.
- **Reputation Echoes (soft power on the strands):**
 - *Law-Kept:* Ignore the first *Thing Injunction* per session; next legal scene starts at +1 scrutiny.
 - *Storm-Tried:* Once/session set Position one step safer during *Black Squall/Ground-Sea*.
 - *Saga-Loud:* +1 Effect persuading crews; *Feud Token* starts at +1 when rivals hear the same song.

Oath Geometry (infrastructure with teeth)

- **Verse as Writ:** A skald's stanza can *bind* or *shame*. On a social success at Thing-Holm, convert result into a temporary *Thing Ruling* Diamond; on a miss, start *Satire Debt* [4].
- **Booms & Banners:** Raising the boom under your *High Jarl's Pennon* grants +1 Position to allies entering; on failure, trigger *Boom Lift* and tick *Boathouse Grief*.
- **Mist-Soundings:** During *Fogfall*, correct horn-calls grant an extra assist die; on a miss, your call draws *Southron Fire-Pots*.

Raven Office (intelligence, gossip, reckoning)

- At voyage start, roll 1d6:
 1. *Raven Letters:* a skald's packet names a feud; gain +1 Position if you announce it, or tick *Feud Token*.
 2. *Hidden Levy:* an unmarked cutter shadows you; +1 Heat if you change course under oars.
 3. *Keel Audit:* shipwrights demand inspection; accept delay or roll to bluff past rot-rumors.
 4. *Thing Summons:* witnesses await at a strand; resolve a grievance or suffer *Thing Injunction*.
 5. *Foster Call:* guest-kin ask passage; grant and clear 1 *Community* segment, but start *Hostage Talk*.
 6. *False Beacon:* wreckers light a lie; resist to avoid *Aberderrin Headland* hazard entering

play.

Plug-in SB Conversions (Linn flavor)

- Any 1 SB may become *Cross-Sea Set*: a blind swell shifts ranges one band; choose who benefits.
- Any 2 SB may become *Oath Echo*: an old vow resurfaces; cancel one enemy assist or compel parley.
- On 3+ SB offer *Thing’s Demand*: accept a public arbitration mark (paint/pennon) to halve consequences; begin *Thing Oversight* [6].

Ancient Conspiracies & Tide-Schisms (Plug-in)

- **The Nine Nets** (oath-cabal): Nine knotted cords pass from steersman to steersman; whoever holds three can “claim” a storm. Goal: seat a puppet High Jarl by shipwrecking rivals at chosen reefs.
- **Bone-Whetters** (eaters-of-the-dead): Feast in silence on enemy hearts to “sharpen courage.” Publicly denounced, privately courted by raiders who fear the Mistlands. Sign: knifed vertebrae totems in net-lofts.
- **The Brine-Gospel** (sea-church schism): Teaches that drowning unwilling damns a strand for a year; “baptisms” are performed mid-squall. Their Volvas mark doors with salt-spirals. Conflict with Everflame and tide-shrines.
- **Grey Table of Thing-Holm** (legal conspiracy): Hidden bench of elders that swaps verdicts between halls. Tells skalds which verses to sing. Motive: keep war pointed outward.
- **Whale-Mother Choir** (relic cult): Wear blue-wax earplugs “to hear the deep.” Hunt a drowned bell said to wake whales to deliberate. Symptom: choir members sway to invisible surf.

Cult Signs & Tells (d6, quick read)

1. Knot-cord with *nine* uneven splices tucked under a bench.
2. Clay cup salted on the rim, never drunk from twice.
3. Fish spine charm polished at the *atlas* vertebra.
4. Hymn in a 5-7-5-7-5 meter hummed while mending nets.
5. Whale-fat candle that won’t gutter in squall-gusts.
6. Oath-splinters nailed above a door, all pointing *seaward*.

Mysteries of the Fog Template (5 beats)

1. **Omen**: Cattle found *bled but unbitten*, runes scrawled in kelp. *Ask the table*: “What rumor names the killers as not-quite-men?”
2. **Trail**: Witness accounts disagree by *one sense* (smelled brine inland; heard oars in fog on a hill). Gather *Evidence Tags*: SALT, SILENCE, BONE.
3. **Shape**: Signs suggest a monster—or men aping one. Each scene, Keeper may flip one tag from BEASTLY to HUMAN or back.

4. **Revelation:** The “thing” is a *practice*: funerary cannibal rites, trophy-feasts, or storm-oaths enforced by terror. Show one true supernatural beat (fog that answers a name) to keep doubt alive.
5. **Resolution:** Three choices: *Expose* (Thing Ruling), *Appease* (Storm-Oath), or *Exterminate* (General Muster). Each cures one clock, worsens another.

Evidence Tags (pick 3 at start)

- SALT-RIME (stings fresh cuts) HUSH-MARKS (throats packed with wool) BOAT-PRINTS (oar-soles inland)
- RITUAL SHARDS (burnt bone meal) VERSE-FRAGMENTS (half-rhyme threats) TIDE-MUD (wrong for the cove)

Counters & Rites (one-scene tools)

- **Keel-Candles:** Whale tallow on the gunwale; downgrade one *Fogfall* or *Mistlands Miscount*.
- **Salt-Bridge:** Circle of salt crossed by verse; treat first parley with cultists as one step safer Position.
- **Bone-Reading:** Break a cooked rib at Thing-Holm; ask one terse why/how about the conspiracy; Keeper answers as omen.

Boss Seeds (three-phase foes)

- **The Net-Father** (Nine Nets) — *Phases*: Harbor Favours → Orchestrated Wrecks → Thing Coup. *Cracks*: cut a cord lineage; reveal swapped verdict; survive a staged squall.
- **The Blue Cantor** (Brine-Gospel) — *Phases*: Drownings Called Mercy → Procession at Reef → Tide-Baptism of a Jarl. *Cracks*: relic earplugs, survivor testimony, storm turning against them.
- **The Hearth-Gnawer** (Bone-Whetters) — *Phases*: Night-Feasts → Trophy Shrines → Cannibal Oath at Thing. *Cracks*: prove famine-lie, shame via skald, sanctify the feast ground.

Investigation Scenes (drop-in prompts)

- **Net-Loft Vigil:** wait with the herring; on a miss, gulls spell your name in scales.
- **Reed Confessional:** mist-pilot swaps rumors for a *Storm-Oath Clause*; pay in truth.
- **Skald’s Contest:** win a verse-duel to force a reveal; lose and earn *Satire Debt*.

Two Mystery Starters (table-ready)

The Feast of Nine Tongues *Hook*: Nine skalds go mute after a victory feast. *Truth*: Tongues salted and offered to a storm-idol; the verses that would expose a shore-cabal are gone. *Clocks*: BOATHOUSE GRIEF, THING INJUNCTION, GENERAL MUSTER. *Relief*: Return the tongues (symbolic) with a counter-song; or seat a rival skald to break the cabal’s spell of reputation.

The Headland Lights *Hook*: False beacons wreck friendly boats on Aberderrin. *Truth*: Grey Table swaps rulings to protect a wreckers’ ring; Bone-Whetters “clean” the dead for courage. *Twist*: One light is a whale-eye relic that really calls fog. *Relief*: Sanctify a boom (*Ward*) and shame the ringleader at Thing-Holm; accept a scar to still the relic.

Schism Pressure (Linn flavor SB conversions)

- Any 1 SB → *Whispered Verse*: a rumor alters witness DV ± 1 .
- Any 2 SB → *Oath Split*: a patron demands you pick rite or reason; cancel one assist, gain +1 Position or vice versa.
- On 3+ SB offer *Blood-Price Bargain*: halve harm/heat but start *Blood-Price* [4] owed to a cult or cabal.

1.20 Mistlands — “Bells, Salt, and Breath”

Elite (Legate of Mists)

“The bells here do more than mark time – they weave the very fabric of reality, keeping the mist at bay and the dead in their proper places. Each chime is a thread in the pattern that holds the world together.”

Commoner (Salt-Monk who blesses pans and keeps ward-measure honest)

“Salt don’t just preserve the fish – it holds back the things that shouldn’t walk. Every grain blessed is a prayer, and every prayer keeps the mist from remembering your name.”

Theme & Atmosphere

The Mistlands lie north of the Aelerian mountains, where the Aberderrin Sea laps against reed-fens and drowned shores. It is a Protectorate of the Aeler, but their iron passes only hold the southern roads—the land itself belongs to fog and bells. Every levee hums with ward-notes, every ferry takes salt as tithe, and every shadow is measured against the Direwood’s endless breath. The people here live by the weight of salt, the echo of bells, and the hope that their names will not be spoken by the mists.

(Fen/Levee/Bell-line) Reed-fen causey with chalked ward-runes on every milestone; Bell-Line levee with iron posts and eight bells per span.

Spades — Places (categories)

2. **Reed-Fen Causey** — Chalked ward-runes on every milestone; safe path through the mist.
3. **Bell-Line Levee** — Iron posts, eight bells per span; one bracket empty, one note forbidden.
4. **Ghost-Ferry Slip** — Rope crosses black water; fares paid in salt and whispered names.
5. **Pall Watch-Tower** — Piles above mire; mirrors face west to the Direwood’s breath.
6. **Mist-Chapel** — Stilted planks; votive lanterns gutter under damp rafters.
7. **Dead-Cut Canal** — Old imperial ditch; patrolled by eel boats and law.
8. **Drowned Copse** — Root-tangles clutch tide like old hands; bones in the bark.
9. **Fogmill Ridge** — Wind vanes vanish into cloud; gears hiss like prayers to fog.
10. **Salt-Pan Terraces** — Patched with peat; ward-salt dries under nets, watched by monks.
- J **Fort-Stair** — Stacked timber and stone; flags swallowed by mist, guards by routine.
- Q **Witchlight Bridge** — Over black runnel; ninth plank “counted” but unseen.
- K **High-Mist Pass** — Through Aelerians; cairns ringed in iron nails, bells in the stones.
- A **Weeping Gate** — Western palisade facing Direwood; bells wired to bones of trees.

(Warden/Ferryman/Aeler) Bell-warden whose ringbook decides which notes keep which ghosts; oath-ferryman collecting fares in salt and names.

Hearts — People & Factions (categories)

2. **Reed-Cutter** — Peat-black hands, precise opinion on fog; knows every safe path.
3. **Salt-Monk** — Blesses pans, keeps ward-measure honest; salt as both shield and vow.
4. **Bell-Warden** — Ringbook decides which notes keep which ghosts at bay.
5. **Oath-Ferryman** — Fares in salt and names; remembers both, collects both.
6. **Lantern Acolyte** — Trims wicks and arguments; light as law in the mist.
7. **Mist-Pilot** — Linn refugee; ghosts ships through reed-lace—if paid in breath.
8. **Protectorate Clerk** — Aeler oilskin ledgers, narrow smile; law in triplicate.
9. **Shroud-Diver** — Harvests tokens from drowned fields before dawn’s false light.
10. **Direwood Refugee** — Cold breath, colder stories; knows what the trees whisper.
- J **Fog-Knight** — Cavalry rides levee crowns by bellcode; mist as their steed.
- Q **Legate of Mists** — Aeler governor; equal parts mercy and decree, bells at their command.
- K **Lord Warden** — Local strong hand sworn to Legate’s seal; law walks the fens.
- A **Mist-Seer** — Bargains breath for answers; candles shorten when she speaks.

(**Undead/Weather/Law**) Ground-mist lifts off fen and eats tracks by yard; witchlights try to count you; step wrong and bridge forgets you.

Clubs — Complications/Threats (categories)

2. **Ground-Mist** — Lifts from fen; eats tracks by the yard, names by the breath.
3. **Witchlight Count** — Try to count you; step wrong and bridge forgets your path.
4. **Ward-Salt Short** — Pans go green; bells ring, nothing answers from the other side.
5. **Wrong Bell** — Cracked note opens door Legate can’t close; mist takes the gap.
6. **Linn Raid** — Slips reed-maze; hearths douse, horns travel on the fog.
7. **Direwood Moan** — At dusk; Weeping Gate ropes go taut by themselves.
8. **Valewood Wind** — Crosses Aberderrin; voices sweet, landmarks false.
9. **Bell-Line Failure** — Levee breaks silence; wraith steps across like it owns the road.
10. **Marsh-Quake** — Sod heaves, dyke slumps; proofs and bodies sink together.
- J **Protectorate Interdiction** — All ferries sealed “until review”; routes dry up.
- Q **Rite-Purge** — Inspectors call local customs heresy; tempers at a boil.
- K **General Alarm** — Pall horns sound; every lantern becomes law, every shadow suspect.
- A **Tide-Mist** — Rolls from Aberderrin; spirits ride the white and won’t be named.

(**Pass/Seal/Token**) Ward-salt allotment draws safe circle once; ferry token crosses named black runnel regardless of curfew.

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (categories)

2. **Ward-Salt** — Pure measure draws safe circle once; mist parts, briefly.
3. **Ferry Token** — Cross named black runnel regardless of curfew or tide.
4. **Bell-Key** — Unlock and set one bell on Line to your note; change the song.

5. **Lantern Writ** — Lawful travel at night along levee crown with escort.
 6. **Exorcist's Seal** — Stamped clause downgrades “haunt” to “nuisance.”
 7. **Codeleaf** — Today's mirror and horn sequences; fog cannot hide what you know.
 8. **Protectorate Mark** — Priority rations and rope from Fort-Stair stores.
 9. **Wraith-Indemnity** — Legal immunity for actions taken under apparition threat.
 10. **Bone-Field License** — Salvage rights at drowned hamlet (with witnesses).
- J **Refuge-Right** — Move named household through Gate unchallenged; breath as passport.
- Q **Legate's Audience** — One whisper exits as policy; bells ring your decree.
- K **Warden's Commission** — Raise levee guards; local doors open, purses too.
- A **Pall Indulgence** — Temporary exception to ward law, spoken and sealed by bell.

Quick use notes

- Draw until you have all four suits: Spade = place, Heart = actor, Club = pressure, Diamond = leverage. Highest rank sets the main Clock (2–5 → 4, 6–10 → 6, J/Q/K → 8, A → 10).
- Diamonds are codified outcomes (passes/seals/tokens) that change position rather than call for a roll.
- If any A appears, echo **breath and boundary**—bells answering across water, salt that won't dry, voices returning late.

Additional Features

- **Breath-Toll:** Many claim mist remembers every breath. Travelers hold breath crossing bridges, fearing mist will count them wrong.
- **Salt as Promise:** Handful of salt is more than warding—it is vow. Spill on plank or stone swears safety; break it, invite Direwood's claim.
- **The Ninth Bell:** Legends say ninth bell once rang on Line. Note not in ringbooks; no warden speaks of it. Some nights, though, it rings—gates open where none should be.

Patronage & Power

In the Mistlands, power flows through ritual, warding, and the careful balance between the living and the dead. The Aeler Protectorate maintains nominal control through military presence and legal frameworks, but true authority lies with those who understand the bells, the salt, and the breath of the land itself. Local wardens, salt-monks, and bell-keepers hold sway over daily life, while the Legate of the Mists mediates between imperial law and ancient custom.

For the GM: Patronage in the Mistlands revolves around protection—from mist, from spirits, from the encroaching forest. Rewards often take the form of tokens, seals, or safe passage that can be leveraged into greater security. To emphasize this:

- Tie rewards to visible symbols (salt, bells, lanterns) that can be challenged, depleted, or voided.
- Let rival factions issue conflicting protections, forcing players to choose whose favor matters more.
- Use the levees, ferries, and watchtowers as arenas for social contests, where knowledge of the old ways determines success.

In the Mistlands, your safety is your standing, and your standing depends on who remembers your name.

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

- **Exposure:** Your actions draw unwanted attention from **wardens or fog-knights**.
- **Noise:** Sounds of your actions alert nearby **spirits or patrol boats**.
- **Trace:** Evidence of your passage marks your route for **trackers or mist-spirits**.
- **Delay:** A brief but meaningful setback costs you **time or favorable tide**.
- **Supply Strain:** Mark +1 segment on a relevant **resource clock**.

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

- **Alarm Raised:** **Protectorate forces or local warden** becomes aware and begins responding.
- **Position Lost:** You lose advantageous ground/cover/stealth due to **mist shift or bell failure**.
- **Foe Appears:** A **wraith, raiding party, or inspector** arrives on scene.
- **Gear Trouble:** A piece of equipment becomes **Compromised/Neglected**.
- **Lock/Barrier:** A simple obstacle now requires a test to overcome.

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

- **Reinforcements:** Additional **fog-knights, spirits, or Aeler forces** arrive.
- **Key Gear Breaks:** A crucial tool/weapon becomes temporarily unusable.

- **Major Twist:** The situation fundamentally changes - **bell-line fails/ward broken/mist claims name.**
- **Rail Tick:** Advance a relevant campaign/front clock by 1 segment.
- **Condition Applied:** Mark **Fatigue 1/Harm 1/Condition** appropriate to fiction.

Major Turns (4+ SB)

- **Trap Springs:** A prepared danger activates with full effect.
- **Authority Arrival: Legate, Lord Warden, or Mist-Seer** intervenes.
- **Scene Shift:** The environment changes dramatically - **mist thickens/bells ring/forest breathes.**
- **Patron Omen:** Divine/arcane forces take notice - **omen appears/blessing lost/curse manifests.**
- **Narrative Pivot:** The story takes an unexpected turn that reframes objectives.

Region-Specific SB Options

- **Mistlands (Bells & Breath):** Bells ring without cause, breath forms visible words, mirrors reflect wrong faces.
- **Mistlands (Salt & Warding):** Salt refuses to dry, ward-runes bleed color, protection tokens crack.
- **Mistlands (Direwood Threat):** Trees whisper your name, roots shift position, forest breath grows stronger.

Mistlands — Bells and Breath

Starting Location: A levee path veiled in fog, where bell-ropes sway though no wind stirs, and each ring tastes like a heartbeat.

“In the Mistlands, breath is currency and silence a sin.”

In... A Bell-Line levee, a Ferryman demands a name as toll. When the party hesitates, a Bell-Warden steps forward. “The Ninth Bell rings tonight. Will you answer—or flee?”

Regional Motifs River fog, toll-names, bell law, lung-charms.

Whispers to Offer “Give another’s name,” “Ring early,” “Take breath not yours.”

External Clocks Threat: “Ninth Peal”; Community: “Stampede on the Levee”; Anchor: “Ferryman’s Promise.”

Complications Breath frosts bells; names echo wrong; the levee shortens.

Anchors at Risk A ferryman’s child; a PC’s breath-charm.

Escalation Beat The river exhales.

Relief Pay with a memory; speak the unsaid name; spend 2 to buy silence.

Extensions (Plug-in)

- **Protectorate Dial (Aeler ↔ Local Custom):** Place a two-step dial; move it when scenes side with *Aeler decree* or *bell-lore*.
 - *Aeler High*: +1 Position when invoking writs, escorts, or ration claims; first folk-charm in a scene *fails politely*.
 - *Custom High*: +1 Effect for ward, bell, or salt rites; first Protectorate demand in a scene starts one step worse Position.
 - Center the dial by an offering (salt tithe repaid, bells re-hung, shared watch on a levee).
- **Cross-Region Hooks (optional draws):**
 - *True Masons Detachment* arrives to “standardize” a levee; accept their work to downgrade *Bell-Line Failure* once, but start *Customs Resentment* [4].
 - *Aeler Edgewalkers* scout new reed-cuts; escort them to clear *Ground-Mist* for one scene, then tick *Direwood Moan*.
 - *Kahfagian Tide Advice* conflicts with local bell-notes; choose one: +1 die to navigation or avoid *Wrong Bell* this scene (not both).
- **Faction Entanglements During Travel:**
 - Carrying a *Protectorate Mark* ignores the first *Protectorate Interdiction*; if you also refuse a bell-warden’s counsel, start *Rite-Purge* at +1.
 - Displaying *Refuge-Right* grants +1 die to cross Gate checkpoints; on a miss, begin *Names Disputed* [4] (paper vs. bell-book).
 - Trading *Ward-Salt* off-ledger downgrades *Ward-Salt Short* once, but ticks *Salt Audit* [4] with the Legate’s clerks.
- **Patron Touchpoints (use sparingly):**
 - **Adur (Flame & Light):** Sanctify a bell as WARD; once/scene you may steady panic on a levee (clear 1 segment of *Stampede on the Levee*). Breaking the sanctity triggers *General Alarm*.
 - **Mykkiel (Writ & Seal):** Name a *Wraith-Indemnity* clause; reduce legal fallout by one step, but mark Exposure +1 as bell-keepers object.
 - **Lunara (Whispered Tides):** Ask one yes/no about a mist-borne spirit under moonlight; on a miss, *Witchlight Count* enters play.
- **Salt & Breath Economy (minor currency):**
 - *Ward Salt* tokens earned by volunteering at pans or restoring bell-lines; spend 1 to cancel the first *Ground-Mist* penalty in a scene.
 - *Breath Chits* (glass ampoules knotted with thread) earned by ferry work, given for rescues; spend 1 to resist a name-taking effect or to cross a *Ghost-Ferry Slip* after curfew.
 - Holding 3+ of either paints a target: begin *Smugglers’ Interest* [4] or *Clerks’ Audit* [4] (GM choice).
- **Start-of-Scene Bell Count (1d6):**
 1. *Short Peal*: Bell-lines vigilant; +1 assist die to any action that cites posted bell-code.
 2. *Damp Tongues*: Bells mute; first alarm or warning *fails*, but you may slip one minor infraction unnoticed.
 3. *Off-Note*: A cracked bell adds *Wrong Bell* as an ambient threat.

4. *Pilgrims' Hour*: Procession on the levee; parley starts one step safer, movement one step worse.
 5. *Inspector's Tour: Rite-Purge* advances once unless placated with procedure (Mykkiel/Law leverage helps).
 6. *Ninth Rumor*: Whispers of the forbidden note; the GM may cash any 2 SB as *Ninth Bell Echo* (see below).
- **Oath-Works & Infrastructure (with teeth):**
 - *Bell-Book Concord*: Reconciling Legate writs with ringbooks cancels the first *Protectorate Interdiction* this session; on a miss, start *Names Disputed*.
 - *Salt-Share Muster*: Donating a pan's output clears 1 segment from *Ward-Salt Short*; mark *Marsh-Quake* +1 as labor shifts.
 - *Breath-Toll Bridges*: Paying in breath (Breath Chit) lets one PC ignore *Witchlight Count* for a crossing; the bridge "remembers" and will not accept that PC's breath again this arc.
 - **Bell Office (signals, gossip, reckoning):**
 - At each new leg, roll 1d6:
 1. *Mirror Drift*: Codeleaf is a day out of date; -1 die to evade patrols unless updated at a Pall tower.
 2. *Salt Theft*: Pans struck overnight; accept delay to assist repairs (earn 1 *Ward Salt*) or start *Salt Audit*.
 3. *Quiet Ferry*: A *Ghost-Ferry Slip* runs under curfew; cross free once, then tick *Protectorate Interdiction*.
 4. *Warden Wake*: Bells toll names you carry; reveal a concealed identity or begin *Names Disputed*.
 5. *Linn Smoke*: reed-line signals of a raid; +1 Position to avoid it or +1 Effect to intercept (choose).
 6. *Dire Breath*: the Weeping Gate exhales; introduce *Tide-Mist* at controlled strength for this scene.
 - **Plug-in SB Conversions (Mistlands flavor):**
 - Any 1 SB → *Fog Thickens*: visibility band worsens one step for *everyone*.
 - Any 2 SB → *Bell Miscount*: a posted code is wrong this scene; cancel one enemy assist or void one writ.
 - 3+ SB → *Ninth Bell Echo*: a forbidden overtone opens a side path *or* calls something through; GM advances *Ninth Peal* once.
 - **Reputation Echoes (soft power):**
 - *Bell-Trusted*: First levee checkpoint begins one step safer; clerks scrutinize coin-ledgers (treat first commerce action one step worse).
 - *Salt-Steady*: +1 Effect calming crowds on causeys; *Rite-Purge* starts at +1 if you snub Aeler procedure in public.
 - *Breath-Kind*: Once/session negate a name-taking consequence for an NPC; mist remembers the debt (GM adds a future call-in).

Direwood Horrors (Undead Ecology, Plug-in)

- **Breath-Taken (wights):** Faces rimed with reed-salt; steal a whispered name to wear it for a night.
- **Root-Bound (entangled dead):** Spines threaded through willow; tear free when bells miscount.
- **Drown-Saints (martyr revenants):** Bear cracked icons; demand processions to the water at dusk.
- **Pall-Hares (omens):** White fur, wet paw-prints; lead the living to where the levee will fail tomorrow.
- **Fog-Collectors (ghast swarms):** Carry fragments of last breaths; exhale them to confuse bell-books.

Undead Signs (d6)

1. Breath frosts on only one side of the mouth.
2. Footprints fill with black water that never ripples.
3. Bell-rope grows lichen overnight in the shape of a hand.
4. Salt cakes into letters you cannot read until twilight.
5. Lantern glass mists from the *outside*.
6. Reed mats hum a hymn with no words.

Counters (one-scene rites)

- **Name-Skein:** three threads knotted around a bell-clapper; cancel first *name-taking* effect.
- **Pan-Ash Line:** sweep ash in a doorway arc; downgrade the first *Ground-Mist* penalty.
- **Bone-Peal:** ring a sheep’s metacarpal with iron nail; force one wight to *hesitate* (buy 1 action).

Fae Oddness Across the Aberderrin (Plug-in)

- **Counting Lights:** Fae will-o’-wisps that tally footsteps; step on the *even* beats to keep the bridge’s memory.
- **Hawthorn Tithes:** Driftwood sprigs blooming petals in fog; demand a name’s *meaning*, not the name.
- **Mirror-Tide Guests:** Courteous strangers in salt-spotted finery; pay in riddles, enforce in proofs.

Fae Complications (swap-in for any scene)

- **Ledger of Leaves:** bargains require a said/ meant pair; fail to state both and gain *Geas: Return What Points the Way*.
- **Copper Courtesy:** producing copper cancels one *Wrong Bell* upgrade; showing iron promotes *Valewood Wind*.

Bridging Rite

Count 2–3–5–8 while crossing a Witchlight Bridge. On a hit, set Position one step safer. On a miss, add *Witchlight Count*.

Linn Raid Cycle (Skerry Pressure, Plug-in)

- **Signal Hours (1d6 at dawn):**
 1. *Quiet Nets*: -1 Effect to raids today.
 2. *Smoke on Reed-Line*: +1 Position to intercept *or* evade (choose).
 3. *False Beacon*: introduce *Boom Lift* at controlled strength.
 4. *Feud Banner*: first parley starts colder; gain +1 Effect to turn feud into lawsuit at Fort-Stair.
 5. *Ground-Sea*: navigation checks worsen one step unless a *Mist-Pilot* leads.
 6. *White Squall*: any 2 SB may become *Cross-Sea Set* (range band shifts).
- **Harbor Plays**: Spend a *Raid-Truce* to negate the first *Linn Raid* this session; if you raid under truce, *General Alarm* advances +1.

Aeler Stewardship & Protection (Standards & Relief)

- **Measure Patrols**: True Masons verify bell-heights, salt-weights, and levee pitch; presenting a certified rod cancels the first *Rite-Purge* tick this scene.
- **Breath Ledger**: Register bodies, lamps, and ferries; compliance downgrades one *Bell-Line Failure*. Skipping registry adds *Thin Air* penalty on the next confined action.
- **Under-Seal Relief**: Spend 1 *Protectorate Mark* to call an Aeler shoring crew; clear 1 *Marsh-Quake* but start *Customs Resentment* [4].

Boss Seeds (three-phase foes)

- **The Ninth Bell Ringer** (Direwood herald) — *Phases*: Lost Names → Broken Lines → Open Gate. *Cracks*: restore a ringbook; trade a breath; rehang a forbidden bell with copper nails.
- **Queen of Counting Lights** (fae arbiter) — *Phases*: Courteous Tithes → Geas-Market → Ledger of Leaves. *Cracks*: return stolen way-marks; speak said/ meant; gild the iron.
- **Reed-Wolf Captain** (Linn raider) — *Phases*: Smoke Signals → Night Oars → Thing Verdict. *Cracks*: name a feud-token; win a skald-duel; force harbor-truce under bell and banner.

Two Scenario Starters

The Breath-Tithe *Hook*: Ferries demand two breaths per crossing. *Truth*: a Drown-Saint cult fuels a *Ninth Peal*. *Relief*: sanctify one bell (WARD), repay the extra breaths as salt at a pan; or expose the cult to the Legate and accept *Rite-Purge* at +1.

Lights on the Dead-Cut *Hook*: Witchlights count barges wrong; cargo vanishes “between bells.” *Truth*: Mirror-Tide Guests skimming toll-names for a leaf-ledger court. *Relief*: stage a two-ledger parley (said/meant) and buy back the names; or ring *Bone-Peal* thrice to drive them to open terms.

Start-of-Night Undead Table (1d6)

1. *Quiet Breath*: -1 die to undead tracking this night.
2. *Wet Silence*: first shout in fog *fails* to echo; you may cross one *Ghost-Ferry Slip* unseen.
3. *Name Drip*: a bell leaks a PC’s true name; resist or suffer *name-taking* risk.
4. *Reed Choir*: disadvantage to lies—mist repeats *meant*, not said.

5. *Pall Hunt*: Fog-Collectors trail a lantern; +1 Heat if you hurry.
6. *Dire Breath*: introduce *Tide-Mist* at standard strength for all scenes until dawn.

Plug-in SB Conversions (Theme Mix)

- Any 1 SB → *Fog Borrowed*: a fae quirk or undead chill shifts Position one step (GM chooses which axis).
- Any 2 SB → *Bell vs. Banner*: pick *Aeler decree* or *bell-lore*; cancel one assist from the other side.
- On 3+ SB offer *Protector's Bargain*: halve the consequence if you take an Aeler audit mark (visible token); start *Clerks' Audit* [4].

1.21 Silkstrand — “City of Bridges & Dyewater”

Elite (The Matron)

“In this city, every bridge is a ledger and every current carries coin. The dye that stains our waters never washes out, just as the bargains struck in our shadows never quite fade from memory.”

Commoner (Bobbin-runner child with feet sure on parapets)

“I can cross this city faster than any grown-up, and I know which planks creak and which merchants lie. The bridges remember every step, and the canals carry more secrets than fish.”

Theme & Atmosphere

Silkstrand is a city strung across canals and arches, a place where every bridge is a ledger line and every current carries rumor. The dyes that stain its waters never wash out, and neither do the bargains struck in shadow. Merchants rise and fall with the Exchange, bravos carve reputations on the planks of Three-Queens Bridge, and curses cling to the very cloth that leaves the looms. The Matron rules from her palazzo stairs with velvet and iron, but the city itself belongs to silk and tide.

(Bridge/Canal/Mill) Mulberry garths and wormhouses outside North Gate with steam and sweet rot; Filature hall where whispers travel faster than steam.

Spades — Places (categories)

2. **Mulberry Garths** — Wormhouses outside North Gate; steam, sweet rot, desperate pickers.
 3. **Filature Hall** — Cocoon-boil chambers; whispers travel faster than steam.
 4. **Redwater Dyeworks** — Along stain-canal; brick stained forever with forgotten dyes.
 5. **Spindle Tower** — Creaking windlass-lifts and posted rates; heights and hazards.
 6. **Three-Queens Bridge** — Stacked market stalls; cells under arches, reputations made and broken.
 7. **Salt Gate Quay** — Rope booms, chalk tallies, tired eyes; customs and coin.
 8. **Silk Exchange** — Floor with chalk circles and clappers for opening bids.
 9. **Ropewalk Sheds** — Arrow-straight; bruisers hired by the yard, muscle for hire.
 10. **Old Arsenal** — Free Company’s barracks now; arms and ambitions stored.
- J **The Archivolt** — Arcaded street of notaries, seals, and quiet knives.
- Q **Basilica of Azerin** — Weaver-saint; confraternity rooms hum with vows.
- K **Palazzo della Matrona** — Ruling seat with private river stairs; velvet and iron.
- A **Flood-Stairs** — Bronze flood marks, bell rope ready when Strand runs wild.

(Guild/Factor/Crown) Bobbin-runner child with feet sure on parapets; foreign factor seeking warehouse and friend at customs.

Hearts — People & Factions (categories)

2. **Bobbin-Runner** — Child with sure feet on parapets, rumors in pocket.
 3. **Mulberry Steward** — Counting leaves; desperate for pickers, quick with coin.
 4. **Foreign Factor** — Seeking warehouse and friend at customs; connections for sale.
 5. **Guildmistress** — Dyers’ hands stained, permits tighter than purse strings.
 6. **Bridge Bailiff** — Rents stalls, sells gossip by the breath; power in position.
 7. **Archivolt Notary** — “Fixes” missing recitals—for a donation; law as service.
 8. **Watch Captain** — Condotta to three lords; passwords change with wind.
 9. **Spinner-Matron** — Wormhouses; temper like hot copper, secrets in the steam.
 10. **Exchange Caller** — Clap can still thousand voices; auction master.
- J **Night-Boat Smuggler** — “Ravel,” silent oar, louder favors; shadows for coin.
- Q **The Matron** — Patient, velvet, iron; city’s thread pulled through her hands.
- K **Lame King’s Envoy** — Velvet boots; claims certain alleys “protected.”
- A **Saint of Warps** — If real: sees curses braided in cloth; holy unraveler.

(**Flood/Interdict/Riot**) Flood siren with gates lowering—move crates or kiss them goodbye; quarantine flag at Redwater sealing dyers’ row.

Clubs — Complications/Threats (categories)

2. **Flood Siren** — Gates lowering; move crates or kiss them goodbye to tide.
 3. **Quarantine Flag** — Redwater dyers’ row sealed; your cargo implicated.
 4. **Loom Strike** — Over “bad cocoons”; streets fill with idle frames.
 5. **Seal Counterfeit** — Discovered at Archivolt; all contracts frozen.
 6. **Bridge Riot** — Dropped stall blocks lanes; tempers boil faster than vats.
 7. **Condottieri Flip** — Colors change; watchwords shift, escorts vanish.
 8. **Blackwood Panic** — Witch-posts hammered on quay doors overnight.
 9. **Fungus Blight** — Silk-fungus; wormhouses burn, refugees flood piazze.
 10. **Salt-Tax Doubled** — At Salt Gate; boats stack three deep, bribes flow.
- J **Duel Challenge** — Booked on Three-Queens Bridge; you’re named as seconds.
- Q **Exchange Corner** — Rivals hoard raw thread; prices go vertical.
- K **Saint’s Procession** — Closes half wards; ignore at peril, faith walks streets.
- A **Curse Awakened** — In canals: no route reaches address you seek.

(**Permit/Seat/Escort**) Bridge token for peak-hour cart crossing free; dye-permit chit to process “questionable” color this week.

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (categories)

2. **Bridge Token** — One peak-hour cart crossing free; traffic as currency.
3. **Dye-Permit** — Process “questionable” color this week; law bends for coin.
4. **Warehouse Seal** — From Matron’s office; rivals legally shut out.

5. **Exchange Pass** — Day pass to trade without sponsor; freedom in paper.
 6. **Watergate Priority** — Skip one flood closure when it matters; tide waits for none.
 7. **Notarial Indulgence** — Retrofit missing recital; past deals stand.
 8. **Wormhouse Allotment** — Claim share of next hatch; future in cocoons.
 9. **Ropewalk Credit** — Hire crews before you have coin; muscle on credit.
 10. **Arsenal Key** — One night's issue for retinue; arms in trusted hands.
- J **Condotta Rider** — City watch escorts through any ward, once.
- Q **Matron's Audience** — Private whisper becomes policy; velvet commands.
- K **Tax-Farm Share** — On Three-Queens stalls for season; profit in peddlers.
- A **Golden Thread** — Temporary charter to set tolls on named canal.

Quick use notes

- Draw until you have all four suits: Spade = place, Heart = actor, Club = pressure, Diamond = leverage. Highest rank sets the main Clock (2-5 → 4, 6-10 → 6, J/Q/K → 8, A → 10).
- Diamonds are codified outcomes (permits/seats/escorts) that change position rather than call for a roll.
- If any A appears, echo **silk & water** motifs—threads that bind, currents that remember, bargains that stain canal beds.

Additional Features

- **Duel Etiquette:** Duels fought on bridges draw crowds eager for wagers as blood. Refusing stains name worse than losing.
- **Dyewater Omens:** Canals run strange colors at dawn; red foretells riots, blue brings calm, black means curses awakened.
- **Matron's Seal:** Any contract bearing her seal is law—but Matron known to rescind seals without warning, leaving debts tangled.

Patronage & Power

In Silkstrand, power flows through commerce, connections, and the careful weaving of influence. The Matron maintains control through a web of guilds, factors, and condottieri, each bound by contracts and customs that shift like the tides. Merchants rise and fall with the Exchange, while the city's bravos and smugglers operate in the spaces between law and profit.

For the GM: Patronage in Silkstrand revolves around access—to bridges, to warehouses, to the Exchange floor itself. Rewards often take the form of permits, seals, or safe passage that can be leveraged into greater influence. To emphasize this:

- Tie rewards to visible symbols (seals, tokens, contracts) that can be challenged, stolen, or voided.
- Let rival guilds issue conflicting charters, forcing players to choose whose favor matters more.
- Use the bridges, markets, and Exchange as arenas for social contests, where reputation and connections determine success.

In Silkstrand, your word is your weave, and your weave determines whether you rise or drown.

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

- **Exposure:** Your actions draw unwanted attention from **city watch or rival merchants**.
- **Noise:** Sounds of your actions alert nearby **crowds or bridge traffic**.
- **Trace:** Evidence of your passage marks your route for **trackers or customs**.
- **Delay:** A brief but meaningful setback costs you **time or favorable tide**.
- **Supply Strain:** Mark +1 segment on a relevant **resource clock**.

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

- **Alarm Raised:** Bridge **bailiff or guildmaster** becomes aware and begins responding.
- **Position Lost:** You lose advantageous ground/cover/stealth due to **crowd movement or flood**.
- **Foe Appears:** A **rival merchant or hired bravo** arrives on scene.
- **Gear Trouble:** A piece of equipment becomes **Compromised/Neglected**.
- **Lock/Barrier:** A simple obstacle now requires a test to overcome.

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

- **Reinforcements:** Additional **condottieri, smugglers, or guild enforcers** arrive.
- **Key Gear Breaks:** A crucial tool/weapon becomes temporarily unusable.
- **Major Twist:** The situation fundamentally changes - **flood hits/contract voided/duel declared**.
- **Rail Tick:** Advance a relevant campaign/front clock by 1 segment.
- **Condition Applied:** Mark **Fatigue 1/Harm 1/Condition** appropriate to fiction.

Major Turns (4+ SB)

- **Trap Springs:** A prepared danger activates with full effect.
- **Authority Arrival:** **The Matron, Watch Captain, or Guildmistress** intervenes.
- **Scene Shift:** The environment changes dramatically - **flood rises/bridge collapses/procession blocks streets**.
- **Patron Omen:** Divine/arcane forces take notice - **omen appears/blessing lost/curse manifests**.
- **Narrative Pivot:** The story takes an unexpected turn that reframes objectives.

Region-Specific SB Options

- **Silkstrand (Bridges & Trade):** Bridge planks shift underfoot, bargains restructure mid-speech, coins change hands without touch.
- **Silkstrand (Dyewater):** Canal colors shift ominously, dyes stain more than cloth, water carries whispered names.
- **Silkstrand (Duel Culture):** Challenges are issued mid-conversation, seconds appear from crowd, honor prices rise with each breath.

Silkstrand — Bridges and Dyewater

Starting Location: Three-Queens Bridge, dripping with dyewater, its stones painted in a thousand forgotten shades.

“In Silkstrand, beauty is bought with blood and color, and both wash downstream.”

In... Three-Queens Bridge, a Guildmistress with dyed hands offers a dye-permit. “The Redwater boils,” she says. “And something in the canals remembers your scent.”

Regional Motifs Loom-prayers, bridge duels, scent-rights, dyewater ghosts.

Whispers to Offer “Forge the seal,” “Dump waste at night,” “Cut a rival’s warp.”

External Clocks Threat: “Canal Memory”; Community: “Guild Schism”; Anchor: “Bridge Peace.”

Complications Fabric bleeds back; permits rewrite; canal-echoes take form.

Anchors at Risk A weaver lover; an apprentice crew.

Escalation Beat The canal runs the wrong color.

Relief Wash the canal with a shared confession; bind scent-rights correctly; forgo profit to cool tensions.

Extensions (Plug-in)

- **Mask & Ledger Dial (Bravura ↔ Prudence):** Place a two-step dial tracking the crew’s public style.
 - *Bravura High:* +1 Effect on daring stunts, leaps, duels, and public gambits; first quiet bribery/forgery starts one step worse Position.
 - *Prudence High:* +1 Position on paperwork, permits, smuggling, and subtle influence; first public duel/boast starts one step worse Position.
 - Center the dial by a costly gesture (pay a rival’s debt, host a peace-feast, save civilians during a flood).
- **Bridge Gambits (free once/scene if fiction fits):**
 - *Parapet Dash:* Turn any foot chase into a *Canal/Bridge* chase (see below) and clear 1 segment on your escape clock.
 - *Market Flourish:* Convert 1 SB into *Crowd Screen* (ignore one ranged attack or tail).
 - *Awning Swing:* Shift Position one step safer on a risky traverse or lunge between boats.
- **Canal/Bridge Chase (quick procedure):**
 - Create two clocks: *Get Away* and *Cut Them Off* (size by card rank per normal Quick Use).
 - Each exchange, the leader picks *Roof*, *Bridge*, or *Boat* lane; the opposition counters.

- Matching lanes: contest is even. Advantage lane vs. other: +1 die (Roof beats Boat, Boat beats Bridge, Bridge beats Roof).
- *Dyewater Splash* (1 SB): Force lane change or mark 1 Fatigue ignoring armor.
- **Duel Stakes (Three-Queens etiquette):**
 - Declare *Stakes: Purse, Permit, or Pride*. *Purse*: winner gains a minor Diamond; *Permit*: winner treats one gate/closure as open; *Pride*: winner sets a 4-seg *Reputation* clock on loser.
 - Seconds may spend 1 Boon to *Call the Colors*: shift Position one step safer for their champion once.
 - Refusing a witnessed duel immediately ticks *Bridge Peace* and starts *Whispers of Cowardice* [4].
- **Exchange Mini-Game (fast trading):**
 - Track a scene-long *Spread* (starts 1). Each *good call* on the floor (clever rumor, quick audit, timed bid) moves Spread by ± 1 (cap 3).
 - Cash Out: gain a temporary *Price Edge* tag (+1 die) when buying/selling that class of goods this session. On a miss, start *Cornered Market* [4] against you.
- **Cross-Region Hooks (optional):**
 - *Kahfagian Lane Favor*: Treat *Watergate Priority* as also skipping one customs inspection—then roll on Kahfagia’s *Clubs* once.
 - *Black Banners in the Arsenal*: Accept a *Condotta Rider* to clear one *Bridge Riot* tick; start *Colors Flip* [4].
 - *Aelinnel Dyes*: Gain +1 Effect reading omens in dyewater at dawn; on a miss, introduce *Curse Awakened*.
- **Start-of-Scene Street Beat (1d6):**
 1. *Festival Banners*: +1 assist die to flash or performance; stealth starts one step worse.
 2. *Quiet Watch*: City watch thin; first illicit move ignores *Exposure*.
 3. *Guild Rumor*: Pick a guild; +1 die dealing with them, -1 with their rivals.
 4. *High Water*: Flood sirens loom; any chase on bridges gains one free *Awning Swing*.
 5. *Seal Panic*: Notaries overbooked; paperwork begins one step worse unless you spend coin or favor.
 6. *Matron’s Eye*: A runner tails you; the GM may convert 2 SB into *Summoned to Palazzo*.
- **Swashbuckler’s Kit (1 pick per PC once/session):**
 - *Cloak-Feint*: Disarm or create *Off-Balance* on a foe for one exchange.
 - *Pommel Tap*: Inflict *Dazed* (brief) instead of Harm on a hit in a public space.
 - *Hat-Tip Patter*: Immediately reframe a hostile parley to neutral; clears 1 *Bridge Peace* tick.
- **Plug-in SB Conversions (Silkstrand flavor):**
 - Any 1 SB → *Crowd Surges*: reposition all parties; one delicate action becomes risky.
 - Any 2 SB → *Seal Questioned*: voids a single paper advantage this scene (Permit/Pass).
 - 3+ SB → *Color Runs*: the canal “remembers”—route blocks or draws unwanted witnesses; GM advances *Canal Memory*.

- **Reputation Echoes (soft power):**

- *Bridge-Darling*: First public stunt each session gains +1 die; first clandestine act after a stunt suffers -1 die.
- *Matron-Favored*: May treat one *Clubs* draw as a *Diamonds* (once/arc); rivals gain +1 die when targeting your allies socially.
- *Guild-Steady*: Ignore the first *Loom Strike* penalty in your ward; *Exchange Corner* starts at +1 against you if you undercut prices.

The Weft-Curse (citywide, slow-blooming)

- **Definition:** A distributed hex woven into contracts, cloth, and canal echoes. It does not smite; it *tilts*—routes go long, papers misread, colors run back into hands.
- **Clock:** *Weft-Curse* [8/10]. Ticks on forged seals, dumped dyewater, broken duel-etiquette, or unpaid bridge tolls. At 4/7/Max the GM may promote **Clubs** results by one step in markets/bridges.
- **Tell:** When the curse touches a scene, silk frays silently, coins feel tacky, and reflections lag by one blink.

Curse Symptoms (d8, sprinkle lightly)

1. Thread knots itself into a knot you’ve tied before—somewhere else.
2. Canal returns a whispered price from yesterday’s market.
3. Notary’s ink turns the color you lied about.
4. Bridge plank creaks the name you omitted from the contract.
5. Dyewater splash won’t dry on one PC’s wrist until a debt is paid.
6. Street map re-inks a lane so your shortcut loops.
7. Dice roll true numbers but *mean* different stakes.
8. Your shadow wears a different hat for one heartbeat.

Local Counters (rituals anyone can do, 1/scene)

- **Warp-Prayer (whispered):** Trace a figure-eight on a railing and breathe through cloth; cancel the *first* “Seal Questioned” effect this scene.
- **Flood-Wash (public):** Pour a cup of clear water into a canal while naming a debt; downgrade one **Clubs** to **Minor Complication** in markets/bridges.
- **Knot of Mercy (tactile):** Tie three knots in a scrap of thread while naming who benefits; next social miss in that ward creates an *Offer* instead of an *Ultimatum*.

Cults, Conspiracies, & Schisms (quiet knives in soft rooms)

- **Confraternity of the Black Warp** (*cabal of dyers*): harvests curse-stained runoff to “season” luxury cloth. Goal: corner *Exchange Corner* then blame rivals for the hex.
- **Archivolt Circle of Additions** (*notary ring*): sells *retroactive recitals* that redirect liability. Their ledgers double as a grim ledger of who the curse should touch next.
- **Saint of Warps Schism:**
 - *Unravellers*: purge cursed cloth; ask for public penance processions over bridges (closes lanes, cools the Clock by 1).

– *Weavers-by-Night*: integrate curse-thread into civic banners to “anchor” it (opens gates, but ticks *Weft-Curse* +1).

- **The Matron’s Inner Loom** (*palazzo faction*): claims a ward-wide remedy—actually a throttle: they can lift *Curse Awakened* from allies and press it onto enemies’ routes.

Curse Geometry (how it bites at the table)

- **Said/Meant Clauses**: Any *contract scene* that states both what is *said* and what is *meant* cancels the first **Clubs** in that scene. If players omit one, tick *Weft-Curse*.
- **Bridge Balance**: In any chase or duel on bridges, the GM may swap *lane advantage* once/scene if *Weft-Curse* ≥ 4 .
- **Dyewater Memory**: The first deception in a ward after dawn is at +1 die if you staged a *Flood-Wash*; otherwise, the first deception is at -1 die (the canal “remembers”).

Boss Seeds (three-phase foes)

- **The Corseted Ledger** (*a cursed accounting bound in silk*): *Phases* — Friendly Audit → Retroactive Debts → Names as Collateral. *Cracks* — burn one forged seal in public; settle a rival’s debt at cost; wash the book on Flood-Stairs at high bell.
- **Archivolt Ragman** (*collector of “missing recitals”*): *Phases* — Quiet Inserts → Paper Hunts → Bridge Vetoes. *Cracks* — win a duel for precedent; expose a double-entry altar; break his pen with *Matron’s Seal*.
- **Color That Walks** (*dyewater revenant*): *Phases* — Stain → Spread → Drown. *Cracks* — confess on Three-Queens; bind scent-rights properly; let the Saint of Warps unpick a life’s thread (costly).

Scenario Starters (plug-and-play)

The Missing Recital *Hook*: Your Notarial Indulgence vanishes from the Archivolt registry. *Truth*: The Circle of Additions traded it to the Black Warp for a barrel of “seasoned” red. *Relief*: Stage a public *Flood-Wash* with rivals confessing—drop *Weft-Curse* by 1 and recover your recital; or duel the Circle’s pen-man on Three-Queens for a *precedent writ*.

Golden Thread, Golden Noose *Hook*: Your new *Golden Thread* charter twists routes around a competitor—too well. *Truth*: The Matron’s Inner Loom piggy-backed a throttle on your charter. *Relief*: Accept a *Matron’s Audience* and trade a favor to retune the throttle; or side with the *Unravellers*, burning stock at dawn to cleanse the charter’s clause.

Saint Under the Bridge *Hook*: A miracle: cloth unravels a bruise. Crowds flock, bridges clog. *Truth*: A schismatic relic sponges harm *by diverting it*—onto the canal’s memory. *Relief*: Return the relic to Basilica of Azerin and sponsor a peace-feast (cool *Guild Schism*); or anchor the relic’s use to *Permit-bearing* clinics only (earn enemies, gain order).

Start-of-Scene Dye Omens (1d6, citywide color check)

1. *Pale Rose*: Favors reconcile; +1 die to parley, -1 to ambush.
2. *Verdigris*: Papers tarnish; the first Permit/Pass is questioned.
3. *Indigo Calm*: Crowd noise damped; stealth +1 die, stunts -1 die.

4. *Saffron Surge*: Markets run hot; *Exchange* actions +1 die, duels attract wagers (tick *Bridge Peace*).
5. *Coal Black Rim*: *Weft-Curse* ticks +1 if a deal is struck on a bridge this scene.
6. *Madder Vein*: Harm heals easy, reputations don't—on social fallout, start a 2-seg *Whispers* clock.

Schism Mechanics (Basilica of Azerin)

- Track a *Saint of Warps Schism* dial (Unravellers ↔ Weavers-by-Night).
 - *Unravellers High*: +1 Position to purge/cleanse actions; *Loom Strike* advances on profit-first scenes.
 - *Weavers High*: +1 Effect to bind/anchor rites on bridges; *Weft-Curse* advances +1 if a rite is performed for coin.
 - Center the dial by sponsoring a free public mending on Flood-Stairs.

Plug-in SB Conversions (Curse flavor)

- Any 1 SB → *Snagged Thread*: a small convenience flips (wrong key fits, right key sticks).
- Any 2 SB → *Rewritten Margin*: a line on your paper changes tense; treat one Diamond as suspended unless publicly affirmed.
- 3+ SB → *City Takes Its Cut*: halve a consequence by accepting a visible stain (glove, cuff, cheek); tick *Weft-Curse* and start *Matron's Eye* [4].

Reputation Echoes (curse-aware)

- *Bridge-Blessed*: First bridge duel/chase each session begins one step safer; first Archivolt scene starts one step worse (notaries resent luck).
- *Archivolt-Clean*: Ignore the first *Seal Counterfeit*; canals “remember” you—social stealth near water is -1 die.
- *Saint-Favored*: Once/arc convert a public sacrifice into a ward-wide *Flood-Wash* (cool *Weft-Curse* by 1); rivals mark you for hypocrisy if profit follows (start *Whispers*).

1.22 Theona — “Three Greens, No Ninth”

Elite (Matron of Wells)

“The wells here hold more than water – they hold the dreams and prayers of generations. To govern is to tend these sacred spaces where the living commune with what came before.”

Commoner (Peat-cutter with steady barrow and steadier gossip)

“The land here remembers everything, especially what you don’t say. Skip the ninth step, forget the ninth name, and the green earth takes note. Best keep your omissions honest.”

Theme & Atmosphere

The isles of Theona rise green and jagged from the Dolmis, their basalt cliffs wrapped in mists and moorland song. Nominally a duchy sworn to Viterra, in truth the Three Greens heed no crown but their own moots, no law but their taboos. The greatest of these is the silence of Nine: no bell tolls a ninth, no bridge counts that span, no oath dares its syllable. It is said that those who break the ban invite the Green Host, and that debts of nine can never be paid in coin.

(Ringfort/Well/Cliff) Basalt tide-stairs cut into cove; everyone steps past “missing” rung; Saint’s Well under hawthorn hung with ribbons.

Spades — Places (categories)

2. **Tide-Stairs** — Basalt steps into cove; everyone skips the “missing” rung.
3. **Saint’s Well** — Under hawthorn hung with ribbons and secrets; wishes tied in cloth.
4. **Fog-Wick Tower** — Burning peat; bell plays eight notes, never nine.
5. **Black Bog Causeway** — White stones like teeth; will-lights test your stride.
6. **Cliff Ringfort** — Over kelp-nets; storm-ladders creak like hymns.
7. **Barrow Field** — Standing stones; birds hush at noon, earth remembers.
8. **Sea-Cave Harp** — Tide-ropes sing under headland; echoes bargain for safe passage.
9. **Uncounted Bridge** — Nine-arch causeway locals tally “eight-and-one.”
10. **Ogham Grove** — Carved pillars around absent ninth post; runes speak in silence.
- J **Coracle Harbor** — Jammed in notch; upturned boats roof the sheds.
- Q **Green Moot Hill** — Three Greens’ court; benches of turf, salt wind judges.
- K **High Hall** — Whale-rib beams; storm banners sleep, kings are chosen.
- A **Lookout Cliff** — One vantage where all three isles stand in single gaze.

(Moot/Keeper/Court) Peat-cutter with steady barrow and steadier gossip; well-keeper who ties ribbons and unknots feuds.

Hearts — People & Factions (categories)

2. **Peat-Cutter** — Steady barrow, steadier gossip; knows every hidden path.

3. **Well-Keeper** — Ties ribbons, unknots feuds; wishes and wisdom in equal measure.
4. **Kelp-Netter** — Reads rip lines like ledgers; tide as teacher.
5. **Harp-Satirist** — Few bars can end career or war; music as weapon.
6. **Wick-Warden** — Tends fog-lamps, counts in eights; guardian of the silent count.
7. **Taboo-Witness** — Geas-keeper who knows which words ruin deals.
8. **Island Abbot** — Saint's bell, tolerant smile; faith in the old ways.
9. **Green Neighbor** — Polite emissary from under hill; borrowed boots, strange customs.
10. **Coracle-Captain** — Eight-boat flotilla; swift as rumor, sure as tide.
- J **Bride-Peacemaker** — Walks between bloodlines with silver knife; peace in marriage.
- Q **Matron of Wells** — Queen-mother in truth if not name; wisdom in water.
- K **Three-Isles King** — Elected by moots; whale-bone throne, weathered eyes.
- A **Lady Beneath** — Unseen queen who bargains in dreams; hawthorn's whisper.

(Fog/Feud/Taboo) Ground-mist erases tracks; horns travel, edges do not; bog-lights lure teamster off causeway.

Clubs — Complications/Threats (categories)

2. **Ground-Mist** — Erases tracks; horns travel, edges do not; navigation by sound alone.
3. **Bog-Lights** — Lure teamster off causeway; recovery costs time and pride.
4. **Spoken Geas** — No ninth word in parley—or deal curdles like milk.
5. **Salt-Rot** — Smokehouse fails; fish spoil, tempers rise like tide.
6. **Procession Clash** — Saint-day vs hawthorn taboo; shutters slam, peace fractures.
7. **Wave-Count** — Eighth swells, Nameless follows—boats tremble, sailors pray.
8. **Ringfort Wakes** — Bone-judge “consulted,” now you're named in the old law.
9. **Ninth Law** — Something vital cannot be counted, measured, or named.
10. **Net-Surge** — Harbor stairs; kelp wraps ankles and alibis like truth.
- J **Bride-Theft** — At Moot—peace flips to feud; you're caught mid-ritual.
- Q **Mainland Return** — Exile with papers; elders arrested “for progress.”
- K **Green Host Rides** — Hooves like drums, cattle scatter, sentries sleep.
- A **Great Fog** — Routes loop, bells lie, every promise takes the long way.

(Blessing/Token/Right) Well-blessing for named ford crossing; moot token with eight-knotted cord skips local queues.

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (categories)

2. **Well-Blessing** — Named ford crosses you safely, once; water remembers your need.
3. **Moot Token** — Eight-knotted cord; skip any local queue or judgment.
4. **Harbor-Green** — Painted mark exempts boat from next levy; tide as ally.
5. **Hawthorn Pass** — Immunity from single local taboo (for one scene).
6. **Bell-Right** — Lawful ring at fog-wick summons watchers; law travels on sound.
7. **Coracle Share** — Crew and oars pledged for one crossing; tide as steed.

8. **Ogham Ruling** — Monk’s reading settles dispute in your favor; runes as law.
9. **Unnumbered Right** — Ignore Ninth prohibition for one action (costs favor later).
10. **Salt-Cure License** — Process scarce fish despite ration edicts; preservation as power.
- J **Bride-Charter** — Two feuding houses sheath knives for season; peace in marriage.
- Q **Private Moot** — With Matron and King; whispers become policy.
- K **Whale-Escort** — Eight-oar guards across Dolmis reach; strength in numbers.
- A **Green Favor** — One uncanny exception to custom, spoken beneath hawthorn.

Quick use notes

- Draw until you have all four suits: Spade = place, Heart = actor, Club = pressure, Diamond = leverage. Highest rank sets the main Clock (2–5 → 4, 6–10 → 6, J/Q/K → 8, A → 10).
- Diamonds are codified outcomes (blessings/tokens/rights) that change position rather than call for a roll.
- The “No Ninth” custom: whenever a 9 appears in your seed, add an omission to the scene (a missing step, an unsaid name, an unseen guest). If the 9 is a Diamond, you may break the taboo once—but someone will come to collect later.
- If any A appears, echo **green & count** motifs—hawthorn that whispers, bells that miscount, promises that take the long way home.

Additional Features

- **The Silent Count:** Players and GMs are encouraged to omit a detail (a name, a step, a tally) when the Ninth appears, echoing Theona’s taboo.
- **Green Host’s Omen:** Any dream-sequence or omen may be framed as ride of Green Host—hoofbeats across sky, wind through moors, sea-spray tasting salt and blood.
- **Bride-Peace Feasts:** Weddings, truces, funerals blur; sharing feast can end feud for season—or doom guest if ninth cup poured.

Patronage & Power

In Theona, power flows through ancient custom, sacred spaces, and the careful observance of taboo. The Three Greens maintain their independence through a web of moots, well-keepers, and geas-keepers who ensure the old laws are honored. The King and Matron rule by consensus and tradition, while the unseen Lady Beneath influences events through dreams and whispers.

For the GM: Patronage in Theona revolves around blessings, exemptions, and the delicate balance of keeping or breaking taboos. Rewards often take the form of tokens, rights, or divine favor that can be leveraged into greater influence. To emphasize this:

- Tie rewards to visible symbols (ribbons, tokens, blessings) that can be challenged, stolen, or voided.
- Let rival factions issue conflicting exemptions, forcing players to choose whose favor matters more.
- Use the moots, wells, and causeways as arenas for social contests, where knowledge of custom determines success.

In Theona, your word is your weave, and your weave determines whether you walk the green path or invite the Host.

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

- **Exposure:** Your actions draw unwanted attention from **moot-keepers or well-guardians**.
- **Noise:** Sounds of your actions alert nearby **coracle crews or ringfort sentries**.
- **Trace:** Evidence of your passage marks your route for **trackers or green neighbors**.
- **Delay:** A brief but meaningful setback costs you **time or favorable tide**.
- **Supply Strain:** Mark +1 segment on a relevant **resource clock**.

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

- **Alarm Raised:** **Wick-warden or moot official** becomes aware and begins responding.
- **Position Lost:** You lose advantageous ground/cover/stealth due to **mist shift or taboo breach**.
- **Foe Appears:** A **feuding house member or bone-judge** arrives on scene.
- **Gear Trouble:** A piece of equipment becomes **Compromised/Neglected**.
- **Lock/Barrier:** A simple obstacle now requires a test to overcome.

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

- **Reinforcements:** Additional **coracle crews, green neighbors, or moot enforcers** arrive.
- **Key Gear Breaks:** A crucial tool/weapon becomes temporarily unusable.
- **Major Twist:** The situation fundamentally changes - **taboo broken/green host rides/feud declared**.
- **Rail Tick:** Advance a relevant campaign/front clock by 1 segment.
- **Condition Applied:** Mark **Fatigue 1/Harm 1/Condition** appropriate to fiction.

Major Turns (4+ SB)

- **Trap Springs:** A prepared danger activates with full effect.
- **Authority Arrival: King, Matron, or Lady Beneath** intervenes.
- **Scene Shift:** The environment changes dramatically - **fog rises/bells ring/causeway shifts**.
- **Patron Omen:** Divine/arcane forces take notice - **omen appears/blessing lost/curse manifests**.
- **Narrative Pivot:** The story takes an unexpected turn that reframes objectives.

Region-Specific SB Options

- **Theona (Silent Count):** Steps disappear mid-climb, names vanish from lips, ninth item in list goes unmentioned.
- **Theona (Green Host):** Hoofbeats echo without horse, mist takes familiar shapes, dreams predict next action.
- **Theona (Taboo Law):** Words refuse to form, actions miscount, promises require exact phrasing.

Theona — No Ninth

Starting Location: A Moot Hill under rain, where vows are carved into stone and knives gleam beside the altar.

“In Theona, peace is a ritual, and every word sharpens the blade that seals it.”

In... A Moot Hill, a Bride-Peacemaker draws a blade between two bloodlines. “The ninth vow was never spoken,” she says. “But the Green Host remembers.”

Regional Motifs Vows, moot law, bride-knives, hill spirits.

Whispers to Offer “Take the ninth alone,” “Name a false witness,” “Bury a blade in the wrong earth.”

External Clocks Threat: “Green Host Rises”; Community: “Blood Feud”; Anchor: “Bride’s Peace.”

Complications Oath-stones crack; witnesses forget; blades hum.

Anchors at Risk A grandmother-judge; a field sacred to both sides.

Escalation Beat Grass stands up against the wind.

Relief Speak the ninth vow with a cost; trade life for lineage; sacrifice a claim to reduce Community.

Extensions (Plug-in)

- **Silent Count Dial (Orthodoxy ↔ Accommodation):** Track how strictly your party keeps Theonan taboos.
 - *Orthodoxy High*: +1 Position when invoking custom (wells, ribbons, eight-count rites); your first attempt to use foreign papers or clocks starts one step worse.
 - *Accommodation High*: +1 Effect with outsiders (Viterra clerks, foreign captains, notaries); your first sacred-site action each session begins one step worse.
 - Center the dial by offering restitution (feast for a slighted house, re-tying ribbons at three wells, or sponsoring a Bride-Peace).
- **Omen & Geas (fast procedure):**
 - When a **9** appears in any draw/roll, name *what goes uncounted* in the scene (a step, a witness, a tithe).
 - Anyone may *break the silence* once/scene: take +1 die *or* treat a Club as a Diamond, then mark *Green Debt* [4]. When *Green Debt* fills, introduce a *Green Host* complication immediately.
 - Speaking a *Geas* (simple phrasing): on a hit, target gains +1 Effect when honoring it; on a miss, the geas binds a bystander as well.
- **Causeway Chase (bog, bridge, or cliff path):**
 - Make two clocks: *Reach the Moot* and *Dragged to the Bog* (size by highest rank in your seed).
 - Pick a lane each exchange: *Stone Teeth* (causeway), *Mire Edge* (bog), *Cliff Track*.
 - Advantage: Stone▷Mire (footing), Mire▷Cliff (cover), Cliff▷Stone (vantage).
 - *Will-Lights (1 SB)*: force a lane change or erase the last segment you filled on *Reach the Moot*.
- **Moot Contest (quick social court):**
 - Lay three stones: *Custom*, *Kin*, *Cost*. Each proof shifts one stone toward you.
 - Win any two: you secure a *Theona Diamond* (Well-Blessing, Ogham Ruling, or Moot Token).
 - *Harp-Satire (2 SB or favor)*: flip one stone, but start *Satire Sticks* [4] against you with that house.
- **Raider Crossroads (optional hooks):**
 - *Linn Raid Pressure*: Convert any **Linn Escort Writ** into a one-time *Whale-Escort* here, then roll once on *Theona Clubs*.
 - *Ashaani/Sidhi Corsairs*: When foreign sails draw near, you may swap one *Theona Spades* for a *Kahfagia Spades* draw; treat beacons as *absent* unless a Wick-Warden spends a *Bell-Right*.
 - *Viterra Claim*: A Viterra official can convert *Ogham Ruling* to *paper* (temporary recognition) but starts *Mainland Return* [4].
- **Start-of-Scene Portents (1d6):**
 1. *Eight Bells Only*: next taboo-check gains +1 die if you omit a detail in play.
 2. *Green Neighbor Visits*: first bargain with fae courtesy ignores 1 SB.
 3. *Moot on the Wind*: rumor grants +1 die to *Custom* proofs; -1 die to *Cost*.

4. *Fog Lifts, Swell Rises*: travel faster; stealth worse.
 5. *Song at the Well*: a blessing is on offer; accept and mark *Green Debt* [1].
 6. *Mainland Clerk Ashore*: paper begins one step safer; sacred acts begin one step worse.
- **Plug-in SB Conversions (Theona flavor):**
 - 1 SB → *Taboo Tangle*: a word refuses to be said; increase DV by 1 unless you mime/custom-workaround.
 - 2 SB → *Bog Claims Proof*: a key token/paper is damp, smudged, or lost; switch to *Kin* or *Custom*.
 - 3+ SB → *Green Hoofbeats*: enforce an immediate lane swap (Causeway) or summon a *Green Neighbors* witness who demands a price.
 - **Reputation Echoes:**
 - *Well-Favored*: once/session treat a failed sacred crossing as a *mixed* result; next foreign parley starts worse.
 - *Moot-Wise*: +1 die on *Custom* proofs; your rivals gain +1 die citing *Cost*.
 - *Mainland-Touched*: ignore the first *Spoken Geas* penalty in a scene; local taboos scrutinize you (GM may add 1 SB when you boast).

The Hidden Ninth (citywide, slow-blooming)

- **Definition:** An omission-geas braided through wells, moots, and ringforts. It does not smite; it *rephrases*. Paths add a turn, proofs lose a witness, vows need one word more than you have breath for.
- **Clock:** *Hidden Ninth* [8/10]. Ticks when: a ninth is spoken, a taboo is mocked, or a vow is completed without proper witness. At 4/7/Max the Keeper may promote a **Clubs** result by one step on causeways, at moots, or near wells.
- **Tells:** Ribbons count “eight-and-one”, cups reset themselves to eight, and hawthorn petals drift in patterns missing a leaf.

Subtle Symptoms (d8, sprinkle lightly)

1. A ninth footstep never sounds; gravel falls silent mid-stride.
2. A guest’s name is remembered by everyone but cannot be *spoken* by anyone.
3. A tithe chest always comes up eight coins light—until a *story* is offered.
4. A bell rope gains a new, unused knot between the eighth and the tenth.
5. A witness raises a ninth finger, then laughs and lowers it without knowing why.
6. A bread-loaf splits into eight slices and a heel that no one claims.
7. A map shows eight farms; the unmarked ninth casts smoke at dusk.
8. Ravens fly in eights; a shadow follows behind them that isn’t a bird.

Cults, Conspiracies, & Schisms

- **Wick Brethren of Eight** (*lamp guild*): enforce the silent count in towers. *Goal*: keep foreign clocks (and taxes) from owning the night. *Method*: “mis-count” fog bells to stall outsiders.
- **Order of the Missing Step** (*cloistered jurists*): archive omissions as law. *Goal*: weaponize *Ninth Law* in moot. *Method*: teach phrase-traps that force rivals to omit themselves.

- **Hawthorn Compact** (*old-faith ring*): dream-courtiers who bargain with the *Lady Beneath*. *Split*:
 - *Greenhands* bind taboos to protect wells.
 - *Host-Callers* loosen them to draw the *Green Host* against outsiders.
- **Saint's Ninth Bell** (*abbey schism*): the abbot denies the forbidden peal; a reformer claims the saint kept it for *mercy*. *Trial*: ring an unsounded note to save a life—or open a path for the Host.

Ninth Geometry (how it bites at the table)

- **Omission Tax**: In any *moot*, *oath*, or *crossing* scene, each PC must *omit* one detail (name, step, item). If no one omits, tick *Hidden Ninth*. Clever omissions create +1 Position once/scene.
- **Green Debt**: Breaking the taboo grants +1 die *or* lets you treat a **Clubs** as **Diamonds** once, then starts *Green Debt* [4]. When it fills, introduce a *Green Host Rides* complication tailored to the oath broken.
- **Well Logic**: Speaking a vow *into water* stores its last word; retrieving it later (ritual, price) lets you rewrite a clause—at the cost of *Green Favor* owed.

Green Courts (fae procedure, fast)

- Lay three counters: *Courtesy*, *Memory*, *Price*.
 - **Courtesy**: bows, phrasing, gifts of bread/salt/hawthorn.
 - **Memory**: recite lineage, cite local taboo without erring.
 - **Price**: offer a *non-coin payment* (a dawn's silence, a winter's story, a true omission).
- Win two counters: the Court grants a *Green Favor* (treat one **Clubs** as **Hearts** this scene) or an *Unnumbered Right*. Lose two: a fae witness claims a breath, a shadow, or a seat at your next feast.

Ritual Counters (anyone can attempt, 1/scene)

- **Eight-Plait Ribbon**: weave at Saint's Well; cancel the first *Spoken Geas* penalty this scene.
- **Kelp-Knot Promise**: tie on a tide-stair; downgrade one **Clubs** on a crossing to *Minor*.
- **Bog-Bread Share**: break one loaf into eight; the ninth heel tossed to the fen grants +1 die to sway *Green Neighbors*.

Boss Seeds (three-phase, Theona style)

- **The Unsung Bell** (*forbidden note given will*): *Phases* — Hum in Mist → Echo Under Well-stone → Command of Fog. *Cracks* — bind its clapper with eight ribbons; let a rival speak the ninth and pay; drown the echo at Sea-Cave Harp.
- **Bride-Thief of the Green Host** (*dream raider*): *Phases* — Invitation in Sleep → Procession Across Moor → Feast Without Ninth Cup. *Cracks* — cut the dream-veil with silver; sing satire at the *Green Moot Hill*; trade a *Bride-Charter*.
- **The Missing Step** (*living omission*): *Phases* — Vanished Witness → Unread Clause → Unwalkable Bridge. *Cracks* — invite a Taboo-Witness to count aloud; spill nine drops into Saint's Well but *name only eight*; let the *Lady Beneath* keep a memory.

Scenario Starters (plug-and-play)

Nine Cups Poured *Hook:* A peace-feast accidentally pours the ninth cup; knives hum. *Truth:* Order of the Missing Step staged it to void a *Bride-Charter*. *Relief:* Re-pour with bog-water and satire (cool *Blood Feud*); or let the *Green Courts* witness and accept *Green Debt* for one season of truce.

The Mainland’s Ninth *Hook:* Viterra surveyors install nine benchmarks; fog eats the map. *Truth:* Wick Brethren mis-counted bells to protect wells; now routes loop. *Relief:* Trade an *Ogham Ruling* for a paper map in eights; or escort the surveyors to rename the benchmarks at *Lookout Cliff* (start *Mainland Return*).

A Well Without a Word *Hook:* Saint’s Well refuses every wish; ribbons mildew. *Truth:* A vow’s last word was stolen by a *Green Neighbor* as price. *Relief:* Pay with *silence at dawn* on *Black Bog Causeway*; or ring an off-note at *Fog-Wick Tower* (risks *Ninth Law* entering play).

Cross-Region Threads

- **Mistlands Bells:** If the *Ninth Peal* is active there, any Theona scene near bells starts with *Hidden Ninth* +1 and allows one *Bell-Right* to negate a *Ground-Mist*.
- **Linn Raids:** Converting a *Linn Escort Writ* to *Whale-Escort* here cools *Green Host Rises* by 1 but advances *Bride-Theft*.
- **Kahfagia Lights:** A *Mirror Warrant* can “post” a courtesy beacon off Theona; while lit, treat *Great Fog* once as *Ground-Mist*, then tick *Ninth Law*.

Start-of-Scene Omens (1d6, Theona tint)

1. *Eight Echoes:* any shouted word returns eightfold; +1 die to ritual phrasing.
2. *Green Ribbon Wet:* wells generous; first *Diamonds* gains +1 potency.
3. *Heel for the Fen:* a free *Bog-Bread Share* is on offer; refuse and tick *Hidden Ninth*.
4. *Bride’s Knife Glints:* first social scene can stake *peace by marriage* (on a miss, start *Bride-Theft*).
5. *Wick Sputters:* fog-lamps falter; first *Bell-Right* costs a *favor* or *Green Debt* [1].
6. *Hawthorn Dreams:* a PC wakes with an omitted memory—and a usable *Unnumbered Right* this scene.

Plug-in SB Conversions (Ninth flavor)

- Any 1 SB → *Skipped Step:* reposition everyone one “count” off (causeway lane swaps; a proof misses its turn).
- Any 2 SB → *Unspeaking:* a key noun cannot be uttered this scene; use symbol, music, or gift instead.
- 3+ SB → *Host’s Glance:* halve a consequence by inviting a *Green Neighbor* to witness; begin a *Green Favor* call-in clock [4].

Reputation Echoes (who you are to the Greens)

- *Well-Kept*: once/session treat a failed well crossing as mixed; foreign paper starts one step colder.
- *Host-Gentled*: your first fae bargain ignores 1 SB; mortal rivals gain +1 die citing *Cost*.
- *Eighth-Counter*: you and your crew may declare “eight-and-one” to cancel the first *Hidden Ninth* tick in a public rite; start *Taboo-Watcher* [4] on you.

1.23 Thepyrgos — “City of a Thousand Stairs”

Elite (The Archon)

“Every stair climbed is a word in the great conversation between earth and sky. This city is not built – it is grown, stone by stone, law by law, until the very architecture speaks wisdom.”

Commoner (Bell-runner child whose feet know every stair by heart)

“I know every step that creaks a warning and every landing that whispers gossip. The bells tell the city’s mood better than any lord – three chimes means business, six means trouble.”

Theme & Atmosphere

Thepyrgos is both realm and city, a former province whose capital rises in tiers of towers, terraces, and endless stairs above the Dolmis shore. Once an Utar bastion, now a nation unto itself, it is famed for its universities, libraries, and debating synods, where precedent and philosophy weigh as much as pikes or coin. Every stone stair carries the echo of old campaigns and civic quarrels, every bell carries law across the wind. Here, authority climbs as much as it rules: archons elected by the city’s wards, synods decreeing rites and edicts, guilds policing ropes, cranes, and chains. In Thepyrgos, height is hierarchy, sound is sovereignty, and law is etched into every rung.

(Tower/Stair/Sea-wall) Pilgrim’s Stair zig-zagging sea-cliff to wicket gate; Tower Quarter with family keeps stitched by ladders.

Spades — Places (categories)

2. **Pilgrim’s Stair** — Zig-zagging sea-cliff to wicket gate; ascent as devotion.
 3. **Tower Quarter** — Family keeps stitched by ladders and bridges; vertical neighborhoods.
 4. **Chain-Barbican** — Harbor gate; capstans ready to raise the boom at horn’s call.
 5. **Blue Cistern** — Under forum; cool echo, strict tally; water as law.
 6. **Ropeyard Terrace** — Cranes walk cargo up slope by treadwheel; muscle and machinery.
 7. **Storm-Wall Arcades** — Wind shrieks through arched galleries; defense as architecture.
 8. **Beacon Crown** — Ring of watchtowers signaling along Dolmis; eyes of the city.
 9. **Library of Keys** — Archive vaults; shelves locked by rung and rite; knowledge as power.
 10. **Siege Court** — Test ramp and scarred stones; war never far from peace.
- J **Ladder Monastery** — Perched on needle of rock; monks climb toward truth.
- Q **Synod Hall** — Gold-glass mosaics; judgment audible at whisper’s distance.
- K **Archon’s Citadel** — Acropolis peak; mirror tiles glare like noon’s justice.
- A **Sky-Bridge** — Twin cliff towers joined over inner harbor; height as connection.

(Archon/Synod/Guild) Bell-runner child whose feet know every stair; Master of Ropes with palms like oak, voice like whistle.

Hearts — People & Factions (categories)

2. **Bell-Runner** — Child whose feet know every stair by heart; speed as currency.
3. **Master of Ropes** — Palms like oak, voice like whistle; guild head of lifters.
4. **Icon-Smith** — Portable shrine, temper about pigment; faith in detail.
5. **Wall Strategos** — Drills levies on test ramp; defense as daily ritual.
6. **Chain-Keeper** — Harbor boom; hates “surprises” at dusk; order as obsession.
7. **Oath-Examiner** — Weighs words like iron; notary of truth and consequence.
8. **Archive Sister** — Key to “forbidden rung”; keeper of dangerous knowledge.
9. **Salt-Fish Syndic** — Warehouse queen of quays; profit in preservation.
10. **Nomophylax** — Law-scholar whose citations close mouths; precedent as weapon.
- J **Palikar Captain** — Tower guards; ladder-quick and letter-shy; strength in motion.
- Q **Matriarch of Ladder** — Synod primate; calm as stone, wisdom in height.
- K **The Archon** — Elected, entrenched, counting bells; ruler of the ascent.
- A **Lighthouse-Patriarch** — Reclusive seer; said to steer beacons in storms.

(**Edict/Quake/Chain**) Tremor with hairline cracks racing down stair; crowd freezes; iconoclast riot in Tower Quarter.

Clubs — Complications/Threats (categories)

2. **Tremor** — Hairline cracks race down stair; crowds freeze, dust speaks.
3. **Iconoclast Riot** — In Tower Quarter; pigments and teeth fly through air.
4. **Chain Jam** — At barbican; capstan pins shear at worst moment.
5. **Black Northerly** — Pins cranes; cargo hangs between tiers, prayers below.
6. **Cistern Taint** — Sour water; inspectors padlock spouts, thirst rises.
7. **Synod Summons** — Chant or badge suddenly proscribed; law shifts like wind.
8. **Rope Guild Interdict** — No lifts until grievance heard; city stops climbing.
9. **Siege Drill Panic** — Practice horns mistaken for real; chaos in the ranks.
10. **Smuggler’s Ladder** — Discovered; whole stair sealed, routes rerouted.
- J **Ropeyard Fire** — Sparks leap uphill faster than boots; smoke chokes ascent.
- Q **Exarch’s Claim** — “Thepyrgos under my protection”; arrests follow papers.
- K **General Watch** — All towers manned; levies seize carts “for the walls.”
- A **Seaquake Seiche** — Surges harbor; chain, quays, timetables snap like twine.

(**Key/Rite/Paper**) Stair token passes barricaded stair without delay; harbor pass lowers boom for vessel on command.

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (categories)

2. **Stair Token** — Pass barricaded stair without delay (once); height as right.
3. **Harbor Pass** — Boom lowers for your vessel on command; sea as ally.
4. **Cistern Draw-Right** — Named ward during scarcity; water as favor.

5. **Crane Allotment** — One guaranteed lift on Ropeyard Terrace; height as service.
6. **Icon License** — Display disputed image without penalty; faith as leverage.
7. **Archive Hour** — Library of Keys; one shelf opened to you; knowledge as power.
8. **Bellmark** — Lawful right to ring tower bell (summons watch); sound as law.
9. **Watchlight Code** — Today’s beacon and mirror signals; navigation as paper.
10. **Synod Indulgence** — One proscribed chant or rite permitted (for you).
 - J **Pronoia Grant** — Temporary farm/tax of terrace hamlet; land as income.
 - Q **Synod Audience** — Private with Matriarch and clerks; wisdom as policy.
 - K **Archon’s Writ** — Palikars escort between towers; authority as escort.
 - A **Golden Key** — Open or seal any city gate once; access as power.

Quick use notes

- Draw until you have all four suits: Spade = place, Heart = actor, Club = pressure, Diamond = leverage. Highest rank sets the main Clock (2–5 → 4, 6–10 → 6, J/Q/K → 8, A → 10).
- Diamonds are codified outcomes (keys/rites/papers) that change position rather than call for a roll.
- If any A appears, echo **height & sound** motifs—bells that carry, wind that remembers, stairs that echo with purpose.

Additional Features

- **Bell-Law:** Bells are law made sound. Once per session, bellmark/tower bell summons watch, levy, decree. False rings stain reputation; Synod may inquire.
- **Stair-Rights:** Every stair owned, owed, or leased. Token bypasses barricades/tolls; wrong stair climbed without leave sparks riot or duel.
- **Synod Edicts:** Voice reshapes daily life. Once per session, decree grants/strips rights: chant forbidden, symbol proscribed, stair sealed. Rulings create leverage and risk.

Patronage & Power

In Thepyrgos, power flows through elevation, education, and the precise application of law. The Archon maintains authority through the complex web of guilds, synods, and civic institutions that govern every aspect of vertical life. Social mobility is literally upward mobility, with stair-rights, bellmarks, and archive access serving as both currency and status symbols.

For the GM: Patronage in Thepyrgos revolves around access—to towers, to knowledge, to the right to climb. Rewards often take the form of keys, passes, or legal exemptions that can be leveraged into greater influence. To emphasize this:

- Tie rewards to visible symbols (tokens, keys, papers) that can be challenged, stolen, or voided.
- Let rival guilds issue conflicting rights, forcing players to choose whose favor matters more.
- Use the synods, towers, and staircases as arenas for social contests, where knowledge of law and custom determines success.

In Thepyrgos, your ascent is your standing, and your standing determines whether you rise or fall.

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

- **Exposure:** Your actions draw unwanted attention from **tower guards or guild masters**.
- **Noise:** Sounds of your actions alert nearby **bell-runners or civic patrols**.
- **Trace:** Evidence of your passage marks your route for **trackers or archive keepers**.
- **Delay:** A brief but meaningful setback costs you **time or favorable ascent**.
- **Supply Strain:** Mark +1 segment on a relevant **resource clock**.

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

- **Alarm Raised:** **Wall Strategos or guild head** becomes aware and begins responding.
- **Position Lost:** You lose advantageous ground/cover/stealth due to **quake damage or stair closure**.
- **Foe Appears:** A **rival faction or civic enforcer** arrives on scene.
- **Gear Trouble:** A piece of equipment becomes **Compromised/Neglected**.
- **Lock/Barrier:** A simple obstacle now requires a test to overcome.

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

- **Reinforcements:** Additional **palikars, guild enforcers, or synod guards** arrive.
- **Key Gear Breaks:** A crucial tool/weapon becomes temporarily unusable.
- **Major Twist:** The situation fundamentally changes - **bell rings falsely/stair collapses/law changes**.
- **Rail Tick:** Advance a relevant campaign/front clock by 1 segment.

- **Condition Applied:** Mark **Fatigue 1/Harm 1/Condition** appropriate to fiction.

Major Turns (4+ SB)

- **Trap Springs:** A prepared danger activates with full effect.
- **Authority Arrival: Archon, Matriarch, or Lighthouse-Patriarch** intervenes.
- **Scene Shift:** The environment changes dramatically - **quake hits/bells ring/bridge collapses**.
- **Patron Omen:** Divine/arcane forces take notice - **omen appears/blessing lost/curse manifests**.
- **Narrative Pivot:** The story takes an unexpected turn that reframes objectives.

Region-Specific SB Options

- **Thepyrgos (Height & Law):** Stairs shift position, bells ring with wrong tone, legal papers rewrite themselves.
- **Thepyrgos (Synod Power):** Edicts change mid-speech, citations appear in air, wisdom comes unbidden.
- **Thepyrgos (Vertical City):** Ropes fray without warning, cranes swing cargo unexpectedly, tower windows show wrong views.

Thepyrgos — City of Stairs

Starting Location: A Synod terrace overlooking the endless ascent, each stair lit by a candle whose flame whispers names.

“In Thepyrgos, every step is confession, and no one reaches the top unjudged.”

In... A Synod Hall, a Matriarch of Ladder reads a scroll aloud. “The Archon falls silent,” she says. “And the Beacon Crown sees traitors in the smoke.”

Regional Motifs Stair cults, smoke augury, beacon law, oath-ladders.

Whispers to Offer “Skip a rung,” “Light a forbidden fire,” “Denounce a friend.”

External Clocks Threat: “Beacon Purge”; Community: “Crowd Panic”; Fracture: “Stairs Reorder.”

Complications Smoke writes names; steps vanish; rungs demand blood.

Anchors at Risk A rooftop refuge; a ladder-born cousin.

Escalation Beat The city adds a stair to the sky.

Relief Quench the beacon; walk every rung properly; disclose the Archon’s last signal.

Extensions (Plug-in)

- **Ladder-Law Dial (Orthodoxy ↔ Inquiry):** Track how the party moves between civic orthodoxy and free scholarship.
 - *Orthodoxy High*: +1 Position when invoking bell-law, permits, or precedent; first unsanctioned working or trespass into a restricted tier starts one step worse.
 - *Inquiry High*: +1 Effect on research, invention, or ritual improvisation; first public petition or legal appeal each session starts one step worse.
 - Center the dial by sponsoring a public colloquy, repairing a stair for common use, or submitting findings to Synod review.
- **College Quick-Prep (pick 1–2 to flavor a scene):**
 - *College of Chains & Loads*: cranes, engines, siege physics; *perk*: one free **Crane Allotment** use/session on campus.
 - *College of Keys (Library)*: restricted stacks, oath-ladders; *perk*: start research one step safer if you obey rung-rites.
 - *College of Augury & Flame*: beacon mathematics, bell acoustics, safe-fire theorems; *perk*: once/session read smoke or bell for a true omen.
 - *Collegium Nomikon (Law)*: citation duels, case orations; *perk*: treat a **Lock/Barrier** as a paperwork obstacle instead.
 - *Lethai-thora Lyceum*: refugee high-elves; luminous script, long-memory magic; *perk*: +1 die to diplomacy/translation with fae or ancient sources.
- **Scholastic Procedure (fast research):**
 1. Declare *Field* (Keys, Chains, Flame, Nomikon, Lyceum).
 2. Make a *Study* action: on a hit, fill a **Thesis** clock (4/6/8 by scope) and take a one-use *Citation Edge* (+1d or improved Effect when you apply the finding). On a miss, mark *Rector's Notice* [2] and a rival advances their claim by 1.
 3. Cash the *Citation Edge* by naming your source (fictionalize a shelf, bell, or professor).
- **Debate & Edict (Synod micro-court):**
 - Lay three *stones*: **Precedent**, **Public Good**, **Piety**. A compelling proof moves a stone to you.
 - Win any two to secure a temporary **Synod Indulgence**, **Bellmark**, or **Archive Hour**.
 - *Nomophylax's Interjection* (2 SB or favor): flip **Precedent** but begin *Censure Murmurs* [4] with that guild.
- **Stair Chase (vertical pursuit):**
 - Two clocks: *Gain the Height* vs *Pinned on the Rungs* (size by highest rank in your seed).
 - Choose a lane each exchange: *Public Stair* (crowds), *Service Ladder* (hazards), *Rope-Crane* (speed, exposure).
 - Advantage: Public▷Rope (cover), Rope▷Service (speed), Service▷Public (shortcuts).
 - *Bell-Roll* (1 SB): shift lane or erase your last segment on *Gain the Height* as the watch responds.
- **Refuge & Friction (Lethai-thora):**
 - *Refuge Grant*: once/session, convert a social failure with Lethai-thora scholars into mixed success if you offer memory (a written recollection, heirloom, or name) for their archive.

- *Old Wounds*: when a Club cites **Iconoclast Riot** or **Exarch’s Claim**, start *Sanctuary Tension* [4]; at 4, the Lyceum closes to non-vetted entrants until cooled by service or apology.
- **Ritual on the Rungs (safe-ish magic)**:
 1. *Mark the Rung* (chalk, bell, token) and name the *Ascent* (what the spell changes).
 2. Pay a *Stair Cost*: breath (fatigue), blood (harm 1), or paper (forfeit a Diamond until end of session).
 3. On success: improved Effect; on consequence: stairs demand tithe—add *Rope Fray* [2] or *Bell Debt* [2].
- **Start-of-Scene Signals (1d6)**:
 1. *Clear Bells*: first legal appeal gains +1 die.
 2. *Crosswind*: climbing faster; stealth worse.
 3. *Scholars’ Strike*: research starts one step worse; street support one step better.
 4. *Beacon Test*: a true omen if you read smoke; -1 die to any lie spoken outdoors.
 5. *Water Ration*: **Cistern Draw-Right** counts double value today.
 6. *Exarch’s Envoy*: papers begin safer; magic begins harsher.
- **Plug-in SB Conversions (Thepyrgos flavor)**:
 - 1 SB → *Wrong Stair*: detour adds a tick to *Pinned on the Rungs* or imposes -1d on a time-sensitive action.
 - 2 SB → *Cited Against*: a rival produces a ruling; increase DV by 1 unless you counter-cite or bribe a clerk.
 - 3+ SB → *Bell Sanction*: Synod freezes one permit/pass; swap a Diamond you hold for a lesser one until atonement.
- **Reputation Echoes**:
 - *Stair-Favored*: once/session downgrade a fall/collapse outcome; next rope/crane scene starts with *Rope Fray* [1].
 - *Bell-Trusted*: +1 die calling watch or proclaiming edict; any false alarm adds *Censure Murmurs* [2].
 - *Collegial*: +1 die on campus bargains; off-campus officials start one step more suspicious.

The Magic Colleges (at the University)

- **College of Ladders & Lines** (geomancy, architecture, constraint) — stairs as sigils, capstans as circles.
- **College of Bells & Beacons** (acoustics, omen-fire, signal calculus) — law made audible, augury made measurable.
- **College of Waters & Weights** (alchemy, cistern rites, dyes) — solutions, precipitates, and lawful flow.
- **College of Names & Oaths** (nomikon theurgy) — citations that bind, clauses that compel.
- **College of Mirrors & Haze** (illusion, scrutiny) — seeing, being seen, un-being seen.
- **College of Quiet** (ethics of death, memory rites) — permitted remembrances; anything more is heresy.

Campus Spades (drop-in sites)

- **Oculus Yard** — Twelve-mirror observatory; proctors count reflections like witnesses.
- **Hexgarden** — Chalk beds in terraces; proofs grow like vines between stones.
- **Proctors' Gate** — Brass wards hum; bells taste for unlawful auras.
- **The Exam Stair** — One hundred rungs, each a question; pass at sixty, transcend at eighty.

Campus Hearts (fellows, foes, and strays)

- **Rector Magnificus** — Voice like a hand on a rail; keeps peace with precedent.
- **Proctor of Wards** — Ink under nails, keys at throat; “step where permitted.”
- **Chair of Beacon Mathematics** — Sees storms in smoke long before sailors do.
- **Archivist of the Quiet** — Speaks for the dead, forbids *speaking to* them.
- **Bright Child** — Untrained potential; bells ring thin when they pass.
- **Street Thaum** — Hedge-binder with bad papers and worse patrons.

Campus Diamonds (papers/rights)

- **Collegium Writ** — Holder is a *student-in-protection*; hunters must petition Synod first.
- **Latency Seal** — Hides aura for one scene; burns the brow if broken.
- **Research License** — Sanctions one forbidden shelf in *Library of Keys*.
- **Sanctuary Badge** — Cross *Proctors' Gate* once with a named ward unhindered.

The Witch-Hunter Province

Thepyrgos-the-Province funds **Witch-Hunter Commissariats**—ministries with bounties posted per ward. Notices hang on stair-landings; bells announce *hunts lawful and hunts less so*. Hunters favor dawn raids, stair seizures, and “smoke tests” at cistern queues.

Hunter Hearts (factions & faces)

- **Commissary-Exarch** — Writs in triplicate; quotas in private.
- **Bounty-Reader** — Weighs children like coin; “verification” by bell.
- **Pardoner-Chaplain** — Sells absolution to informers; keeps a careful ledger.
- **Stair-Runner Informant** — Knows which doors open to the right knock.

Hunter Clubs (pressures & sweeps)

- **Bounty Posting** — New price on “untutored talent”; crowds turn into nets.
- **Candle-Smoke Test** — Lines at Blue Cistern; smoke curls toward the Gifted.
- **Commissary Sweep** — Ladders chained; whole tier searched under horn.
- **Quieted Child** — An “accident” near the Exam Stair; evidence goes missing.

Hunter Diamonds (leverage & reprieve)

- **Witness Pardon** — Informer absolved and paid; cancels one legal fallout *once*.
- **Archon's Clemency** — Suspends a bounty clock for one named; bell-marked and public.
- **Hidden Stair Token** — Through a maintenance run unseen; good for one group escape.

Detection & Denial (fast procedures)

Scry & Deny (evade the tests)

1. **Mask the Trace:** dye, salt, bell-oil; pick *one* (each grants +1 die to one approach).
2. **Pick the Test:** *Smoke, Sound, Mirror*. State how you spoof it (alchemical veil, bell overtones, angle games).
3. **On a hit:** cancel a **Candle-Smoke Test** or **Proctors’ Gate** tag for this scene. **Consequence:** start *Bell Debt* [2] or *Rector’s Notice* [2].

Exam as Duel (nonlethal, academic) Lay three stones: **Axiom, Method, Ethic**. Win two: secure *Collegium Writ* or *Research License*. Miss: a rival claims priority; start *Faculty Feud* [4].

Bounty Economy (quick table, GM picks or 1d6)

1. *Whisperer* (faint talent): 1 purse; informers abundant.
2. *Spark-Hand* (cantrip): 2 purses; “rehabilitation” promised.
3. *Mirror-Bent* (glamour): 3 purses; seized at once.
4. *Bell-Singer* (acoustic): 4 purses; Synod claims jurisdiction.
5. *Oath-Breaker* (binding): 5 purses; Exarch insists on custody.
6. *Quiet-Worker* (death-ethic): 6 purses; College of Quiet petitions for trial.

Start-of-Scene Campus Bells (1d6)

1. *Matins Clear:* +1 die to research; hunters -1 die to public grabs.
2. *Inquiry Strike:* students picket; covert moves easier, permits harder.
3. *Commissary Visit:* **Bounty Posting** advances one unless placated.
4. *Beacon Test:* read smoke for a true omen; lies outdoors suffer -1 die.
5. *Water Ration Alert:* **Cistern Draw-Right** counts double today.
6. *False Alarm:* a bell rings wrong; first **Synod Summons** enters play.

Cross-Region Hooks (optional draws)

- **Viterra Census Envoys:** Host a tally at the *Blue Cistern*; gain +1 Position on legal appeals this scene, then start *Exarch’s Claim* [2].
- **Viterra Exarchic Patent:** Convert a *Synod Indulgence* into a provisional *Provincial Patent* (treat one **Lock/Barrier** as paperwork). Begin *General Watch* at +1 if you snub city procedure.
- **Vhasian Wind-Stair Symposium:** Joint lecture on load, sand, and signal; once/scene ignore **Black Northerly** on cranes, then mark *Rope Fray* [2] (unfamiliar rigging norms).
- **Vhasian Glasswright Commission:** Install a mirror array on *Beacon Crown*; gain a one-use *Watchlight Code* upgrade (+1 die to read smoke). Start *Citation Trap* [2] as local guilds contest methods.
- **Theona Silent Count Colloquy:** Observe the *Three Greens* taboo; once this scene you may treat a drawn 9 as advantage (shift Position one step safer), then begin *Green Debt* [2].
- **Theona Bride-Peace Scholars:** Mediate a campus feud with *Bride-Charter* ritual; clear 1 segment of *Crowd Panic*, but introduce *Blood Feud* [4] if either side refuses the ninth vow.

- **Mistlands Bell-Science:** Aid a levee; treat one **Wrong Bell** as *controlled* this scene, then start *Rite-Purge* [4] back home.
- **Kahfagian Mirror Fellows:** Trade a *Watchlight Code* for a *Mirror Warrant*; hunters gain +1 die using *Jurisdiction Flip*.
- **Linn Storm-Oath Lecture:** Downgrade **Black Squall** once this arc; start *Thing Injunction* [2] when raiders dislike your thesis.

Plug-in SB Conversions (Colleges & Hunters)

- Any 1 SB → *Proctor's Glance*: a uniformed gaze adds +1 DV to any obvious magic.
- Any 2 SB → *Citation Trap*: a rival produces precedent; void one *Diamond* until argued down.
- 3+ SB → *Dawn Ladder*: hunters seize a stair; swap your current *Place* for *Proctors' Gate* or *Chain-Barbican* mid-scene.

Scenario Starters (plug-and-play)

The Bright Child on the Exam Stair *Hook:* A Bell-Runner begs you to get a latent to campus before dawn sweeps. *Complications:* **Candle-Smoke Test**, **Commissary Sweep**, a jealous **Street Thaum**. *Relief:* Trade a *Latency Seal* for testimony; or ring a lawful *Bellmark* to create a corridor—accept *Censure Murmurs* [2].

The Black Ledger of Bounties *Hook:* The College of Quiet wants proof that a Commissary inflates prices. *Complications:* **Synod Summons**, **Smuggler's Ladder**, **Chain Jam**. *Relief:* Publish via *Nomikon* colloquy (gain *Synod Indulgence*); or sell it to the Archon (gain *Archon's Clemency* but start *Faculty Feud*).

1.24 Ubral — “The Stone Between Spears”

Elite (Lady of Tor)

“The stone here remembers every oath sworn upon it and every blood spilled in its shadow. To lead is to understand that the land itself is the true sovereign, and we are merely its stewards.”

Commoner (Hearth-aunt who holds guest-cup and house’s temper)

“Hospitality’s a sacred thing in these hills – break bread at my table and you’re family till the sun sets twice. But cross that trust and the very stones will remember your name.”

Theme & Atmosphere

Ubral is a land of upland mists, stone cairns, and clan oaths held tighter than iron. Caught between the Aelerian mountains and the lowland courts of Viterra, its hills are scarred by old raids and crowned by watch-fires that speak faster than any rider. Here, law is written not in charters but in cattle, wergild, and songs; here, a guest’s word can buy more than a sword, but one broken vow can spark a feud lasting generations. Dwarves of Khaz-Vurim guard their mountain steps with tolls and grim patience, while clans hold their moots in hollows where voices echo long after speakers fall silent. Ubral is the stone between spears: a land of pride, passage, and peril.

(**Tor/Cairn/Hill-fort**) Sheepwalk Ledge with goat path and room for one honest lie; Warden’s Cairn on windy tor with signal-fire basket.

Spades — Places (categories)

2. **Sheepwalk Ledge** — Goat path with room for one honest lie at a time.
 3. **Warden’s Cairn** — Windy tor; signal-fire basket and dry cache; eyes of the hills.
 4. **Wergild Ford** — Flat stones, deep pools, table rock for counting silver.
 5. **Droppers’ Bridge** — Stone span rigged to fall; pins already loosened.
 6. **Scree-Ladder** — Climbing to notch; red rags mark safe steps through danger.
 7. **Moot Hollow** — Ring of standing stones; voices carry and won’t quite stop.
 8. **Reiver’s Gate** — Between boulders; cart-ruts vanish into heather’s memory.
 9. **Khaz-Vurim Steps** — Dwarf-cut switchbacks with iron mile studs; toll and toil.
 10. **Grey Tor Fort** — Earthen rampart, timber crown, smoky cook pits.
- J **Black Broom Bog** — Stepping-logs; wrong one drinks you into silence.
- Q **Bride’s Causey** — Raised road to valley kirk; ribbons hang like warnings.
- K **Three-Fires Ridge** — Watchposts see Viterra and Vhasia both; news travels fast.
- A **Pass of Ashes** — When snow closes here, upland becomes an island.

(**Clan/Dwarf/Reiver**) Hearth-aunt who holds guest-cup and house’s temper; hill guide with thorn-staff and quiet shortcuts.

Hearts — People & Factions (categories)

2. **Hearth-Aunt** — Holds guest-cup and house's temper; hospitality as power.
3. **Hill Guide** — Thorn-staff and ten quiet shortcuts; land as map.
4. **Feud-Broker** — Knows weight of life in cattle and coin; peace as trade.
5. **Reiver Band** — Light on tack, heavy on nerve, laughing in rain.
6. **Fire Warden** — Braziers speak faster than riders; warning as weapon.
7. **Wergild Counter** — Keeps tallies, ends grudges, starts others; law as math.
8. **Dwarf Warden** — Khaz-Vurim road; toll first, friendship later.
9. **Oath-Singer** — Verses bind hands and open gates; word as iron.
10. **Lowland Factor** — Buying iron blooms, selling trouble; coin as catalyst.
- J **Bride-Carrier** — Peaceweaver walking bloodlines with knife and smile.
- Q **Lady of Tor** — Clan-chief in cloak and mail; nod is winter or spring.
- K **Council of Cairns** — Greybeards and granite wills; they do not hurry.
- A **Stone-Speaker** — Dwarf envoy whose word moves roads and rates.

(Mist/Feud/Toll) Upland mist—hear horns but not edges; feud rekindled—cousin spits on guest-law.

Clubs — Complications/Threats (categories)

2. **Upland Mist** — Hear horns but not edges; navigation by sound and instinct.
3. **Feud Rekindled** — Cousin spits on guest-law; knives wake up from sleep.
4. **Bridge Dropped** — Pursuers fall... and route with them; passage becomes peril.
5. **Black-Rent Demand** — “Privateering on land”; pay or be “escorted.”
6. **Wergild Breach** — Silver short by head; tempers long by spear's length.
7. **Snow-Squall** — Seals notch; tents turn to coffins if you dally.
8. **Dwarf Toll Hike** — At Steps; papers right, purses wrong; law costs coin.
9. **Cattle Scatter** — Bells ringing downslope; cover story runs with herd.
10. **False Alarm** — Watch-fire beacons ridge to ridge; levies seize road.
- J **Bride-Theft** — Wedding becomes war-party; you're caught between both.
- Q **Royal Incursion** — Neighbor's “lawful” arrests in uplands; flags and chains.
- K **Clan Muster** — Horns call men from steading to spear; all traffic stops.
- A **Hill-Fall** — Rain liquefies slope; trail, proof, and bodies slide together.

(Oath/Right/Token) Guest-right token—one hearth owes food, bed, steel at dawn; guide's braid lawful passage on sheepwalks.

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (categories)

2. **Guest-Token** — One hearth owes food, bed, and steel at dawn.
3. **Guide's Braid** — Lawful passage on named sheepwalks (once).
4. **Ford Remission** — Cross Wergild Ford free for season; water as ally.

5. **Feud-Charter** — Two clans sheath blades until next harvest.
6. **Bloom Allotment** — Claim on week’s iron from hill bloomery.
7. **Watch-Code** — Today’s beacon order from Three-Fires Ridge.
8. **Pass-Ring** — Dwarf road priority for one train of carts.
9. **Bride-Escrow** — Hold purse; both sides must humor you.
10. **Shelter Writ** — Grey Tor opens gates during storm or pursuit.
- J **Oath-Bracelet** — One binding vow ends cleanly, witnessed.
- Q **Council Audience** — Cairns hear you alone; precedent sticks like stone.
- K **Road Commission** — Collect tolls on stretch of pass (for now).
- A **Stone-Clause** — Temporary exception to dwarf toll or law, sealed.

Quick use notes

- Draw until you have all four suits: Spade = place, Heart = actor, Club = pressure, Diamond = leverage. Highest rank sets the main Clock (2–5 → 4, 6–10 → 6, J/Q/K → 8, A → 10).
- Diamonds are codified outcomes (oaths/rights/tokens) that change position rather than call for a roll.
- If any A appears, echo **stone & spear** motifs—cairns that watch, voices that echo, and oaths that cut deeper than steel.

Additional Features

- **Guest-Law:** Breaking hospitality stains name worse than breaking sword. Guest-right tokens guarantee shelter, but abuse invites blood feud.
- **Wergild System:** Every injury has price in cattle or coin. Wergild counters keep tallies that outlive the injured; debts pass to kin.
- **Dwarf Toll Roads:** Khaz-Vurim gates charge for passage, but their roads are sure and swift. Pass-rings grant priority, but dwarf law is strict.

Patronage & Power

In Ubral, power flows through clan bonds, guest-right, and the careful balance of honor and iron. Clan chiefs maintain authority through wergild, moots, and the respect of their people, while the dwarves of Khaz-Vurim wield influence through their control of mountain passes and trade routes. Law is personal and passed down through generations, with each oath and debt creating a web of obligation that can last centuries.

For the GM: Patronage in Ubral revolves around hospitality, protection, and the resolution of feuds. Rewards often take the form of tokens, charters, or safe passage that can be leveraged into greater influence. To emphasize this:

- Tie rewards to visible symbols (tokens, bracelets, writs) that can be challenged, stolen, or voided.
- Let rival clans issue conflicting protections, forcing players to choose whose favor matters more.
- Use the moots, hill-forts, and watch-fires as arenas for social contests, where knowledge of custom and kinship determines success.

In Ubral, your word is your bond, and your bond determines whether you walk in peace or peril.

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

- **Exposure:** Your actions draw unwanted attention from **clan guards** or **reiver scouts**.
- **Noise:** Sounds of your actions alert nearby **watch-fires** or **hill guides**.
- **Trace:** Evidence of your passage marks your route for **trackers** or **feud-kin**.
- **Delay:** A brief but meaningful setback costs you **time** or **favorable weather**.
- **Supply Strain:** Mark +1 segment on a relevant **resource clock**.

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

- **Alarm Raised:** **Hill guide** or **clan chief** becomes aware and begins responding.
- **Position Lost:** You lose advantageous ground/cover/stealth due to **mist** or **bridge collapse**.
- **Foe Appears:** A **reiver band** or **feud-kin** arrives on scene.
- **Gear Trouble:** A piece of equipment becomes **Compromised/Neglected**.
- **Lock/Barrier:** A simple obstacle now requires a test to overcome.

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

- **Reinforcements:** Additional **clan warriors**, **reivers**, or **dwarf wardens** arrive.
- **Key Gear Breaks:** A crucial tool/weapon becomes temporarily unusable.
- **Major Twist:** The situation fundamentally changes - **feud declared/bridge falls/snow closes pass**.
- **Rail Tick:** Advance a relevant campaign/front clock by 1 segment.
- **Condition Applied:** Mark **Fatigue 1/Harm 1/Condition** appropriate to fiction.

Major Turns (4+ SB)

- **Trap Springs:** A prepared danger activates with full effect.
- **Authority Arrival: Lady of Tor, Council of Cairns, or Stone-Speaker** intervenes.
- **Scene Shift:** The environment changes dramatically - **mist thickens/bridge drops/hill falls.**
- **Patron Omen:** Divine/arcane forces take notice - **omen appears/blessing lost/curse manifests.**
- **Narrative Pivot:** The story takes an unexpected turn that reframes objectives.

Region-Specific SB Options

- **Ubral (Stone & Oath):** Cairns shift position, voices echo from empty air, oaths bind mid-speech.
- **Ubral (Hill Law):** Paths reroute without warning, tolls increase mid-journey, guest-rights expire.
- **Ubral (Feud Culture):** Insults are overheard, weapons appear in sheaths, kin arrive unsummoned.

Ubral — Stone Between Spears

Starting Location: A cairn at the fogline, spears planted like gravemarkers, as hoofbeats echo in the valley below.

“In Ubral, guest-right is holy, and betrayal calls the storm.”

In... A Warden’s Cairn, a Hearth-Aunt offers guest-right bread. Below, hoofbeats echo in mist. “The Wolf Road wakes,” she says. “And the clans count your steps.”

Regional Motifs Cairn-law, guest-right, fog wars, echoed hoofbeats.

Whispers to Offer “Break guest-right,” “Claim a cairn stone,” “Name a clan taboo.”

External Clocks Threat: “Wolf Road Opens”; Community: “Clan Score”; Anchor: “Cairn Hospitality.”

Complications Bread mold spells a name; hoofbeats answer questions; spears remember owners.

Anchors at Risk A foster niece; a hill-pass refuge.

Escalation Beat The cairn grows a new stone.

Relief Share blood and bread; repay an old raid; lead spirits home along the road.

Extensions (Plug-in)

- **Oath Dial (Honor ↔ Cunning):** Track how the party navigates Ubral norms.
 - *Honor High*: +1 Position when invoking guest-right, keeping truce, or paying wergild promptly; first ambush/raid action each session starts one step worse.
 - *Cunning High*: +1 Effect on raids, evasions, and border tricks; first formal parley or oath-bound request each session starts one step worse.
 - Center the dial by restoring stolen cattle, hosting an enemy well, or submitting to a cairn ruling.
- **Feud Math (fast settlement):** Lay three markers: **Blood, Beasts, Blame**.
 1. Make a single *Parley/Command/Study* roll per side. On a hit, move one marker to your side; great Effect moves two.
 2. Win any two to settle: *Blood* = oath/hostage, *Beasts* = wergild in cattle/coin, *Blame* = public apology/verse.
 3. Miss: mark *Feud-Smoke* [4]. At 4, the losing side names a lawful target (bridge, herd, guide).
- **Guest-Right Procedure (table safety in fiction):**
 - Present a **Guest-Token** (or bread and salt). Host must choose: *Shelter*, *Escort at Dawn*, or *Neutral Meal*.
 - Breaking it creates *Blood-Oath* [6] against the violator; any Ubral ally may spend 1 *totickittwice*.
 - Abiding it clears 1 tick from *Feud-Smoke* and grants +1d to the next social action in that steading.
- **Watchfire Net (ridge signals mini-game):**
 - Two clocks: *Beat the Beacons* vs *Ridge Aflame* (size by highest rank in your seed).
 - Choose a lane each exchange: *Low Fold* (slow, stealth), *Sheepwalk* (tricky, quick), *Road* (fast, obvious).
 - Advantage: Low Fold ▷ Road (conceal), Road ▷ Sheepwalk (speed), Sheepwalk ▷ Low Fold (shortcuts).
 - *False Alarm (1 SB)*: light or douse a misleading brazier; shift one segment between the two clocks.
- **Reiver Ride (mounted chase beats):**
 - Track *Remounts* (3): each push for speed trades 1 remount for +1d or +1 Effect. At 0, gain *Blown Mounts* condition.
 - *Hag-Stone Cut*: pass a known gap (Sheepwalk Ledge, Droppers' Bridge) to force pursuers to roll or fall behind.
- **Khaz-Vurim Protocol (dwarf road playbook):**
 - Present any two: **Pass-Ring, Stamped Load-List, Named Sponsor**. Two = safe passage; one = pay toll + scrutiny; none = delay and search.
 - *Stone-Clause* may override one dwarf law once; afterwards start *Ledger Notice* [3] with the wardens (prices rise, patience falls).
 - *Tally Truth*: you may substitute exact weights/measures for charm or coin to improve Position by one step with dwarves.

- **Bride-Peace Interlude (conflict pause):**
 - Play a **Bride-Charter** to suspend violence at a scene. Everyone sheaths—or earns *Song Shame* [4]. When it fills, a skald memorializes the insult (ongoing -1d with that clan).
- **Start-of-Scene Omens in Ubral (1d6):**
 1. *Clear Ridge*: first signal test gains +1d.
 2. *Lowing Herd*: +1d to tracking or herding; -1d to stealth near cattle.
 3. *Wet Stone*: climbs start one step worse; mending gear is easier (free repair tick).
 4. *Old Verse Remembered*: first oath/plea gains +1d if spoken in rhyme.
 5. *Border Drums*: Viterra patrols near; papers safer, raiding harsher.
 6. *Dwarf Toll Day*: prices firm; any \Diamond tied to roads counts double value at Steps.
- **Plug-in SB Conversions (Ubral flavor):**
 - 1 SB → *Mud and Heather*: footing worsens; next physical action -1d or mark *Winded*.
 - 2 SB → *Kin Arrive*: add a rival cousin/ally who changes the ask or splits the pot.
 - 3+ SB → *Cairn Decrees*: a standing stone “speaks” (witnesses recall the law); swap one held \Diamond for a lesser right until you make amends.
- **Reputation Echoes:**
 - *Guest-Faithful*: once/session downgrade a social backlash inside a steading; next time you refuse hospitality, mark *Feud-Smoke* +1.
 - *Reiver-Favored*: +1 Effect to seize cattle/contraband on the move; city gates start one step worse Position.
 - *Stone-Friend*: +1d with dwarf wardens on roads; any false measure triggers *Ledger Notice* +1.

Boss Hooks (Field Lords & Oathbreakers)

- **The Wolf-Road Captain** (reiver-king on a piebald mare) — *Tells*: horn-calls that echo twice, wolf-skins braided into reins. *Moves*: *Ride-Through* (breaks line and steals a clock segment), *Torch the Fold* (forces a lane change to Road), *Laugh in Rain* (ignores first terrain penalty). *Levers*: **Watch-Code** or **Guide’s Braid** reduces his effect by one step for a scene. *Yield Terms*: safe-conduct home for his sworn, or a night to drive cattle for wergild.
- **The Bride-Thief of Black Broom** (mask of bog-rush, vows like nettles) — *Tells*: will-lights knot into a veil, footprints fill with dark water. *Moves*: *Switch the Bride* (swap targets), *Bog Embrace* (mark *Winded* or lose footing), *Nettle Oath* (binds a PC to inaction for a beat unless they cut a ribbon). *Levers*: play a **Bride-Charter** to freeze blades; a **Well-Blessing** nulls *Bog Embrace* once. *Defeat*: return the true veil, speak the ninth unsaid *without* naming it (cost: 1 tick to *Feud-Smoke*).
- **Stone Auditor of Khaz-Vurim** (dwarf toll-magistrate with ledger-rod) — *Tells*: iron nails tapped to count, road studs hum. *Moves*: *Double the Toll* (swap one held \Diamond for a lesser), *Weigh the Lie* (expose *Sheepwalk* → Road). *Levers*: present two of {**Pass-Ring**, **Stamped Load-List**, **Named Sponsor**} to downgrade his effect. *Yield Terms*: a year-and-a-day of honest weights, or ceding a **Road Commission**.
- **The Oath-Eater Wight** (cairn-bound revenant) — *Tells*: breath frosts verse, stones “answer.” *Moves*: *Take the Word* (erase one social success), *Cold of Cairn* (apply *Chill* condition), *Bind Witness* (NPC cannot lie this scene). *Levers*: **Oath-Bracelet** or speaking a skald’s stanza

over bread and blood cancels *Take the Word* once. *Release*: repay an ancestral wergild or carry its stone to the proper mound.

- **Grey-Tor Hedge-Witch** (heather crown, ash staff) — *Tells*: smoke curls the wrong way, sheep stare. *Moves*: *Weather-Turn* (introduce **Snow-Squall** at half strength), *Hag-Stone Sight* (ignore stealth), *Bind the Gate* (Grey Tor’s **Shelter Writ** won’t open). *Levers*: gift a **Bloom Allotment** or a winter’s salt; a **Council Audience** compels parley. *End*: accept her geas (minor flaw) or uproot the ash and owe the hill (start *Feud-Smoke* [2]).
- **The Three-Fires Provost** (watchfire war-chief) — *Tells*: oil-braided beard, pitch-spattered hands. *Moves*: *Raise the Ridge* (advance *Ridge Aflame*), *Seize the Road* (impose *General Watch* tag), *Beacon Oath* (any lie near a fire costs 1 Fatigue). *Levers*: **Watch-Code** flips one of his moves to yours once; a public *Blame* at moot steals his command die.

Boss Loot & Boons (pick 1 on victory)

- *Wolf’s Horn*: once/arc convert 1 SB into *False Alarm*.
- *Veil of Broom*: ignore *Upland Mist* penalties for one scene.
- *Ledger-Rod*: once/session treat a **Dwarf Toll Hike** as *controlled*.
- *Cairn-Shard*: cash as a one-use **Oath-Bracelet**.
- *Ash Rune*: mark a WARD on a gate; cancels the first *Bridge Dropped*.
- *Pitch Token*: light a signal counted as lawful; gain **Watch-Code** for the scene.

Legendary Sites & Trials

- **Sheepwalk Ledge Trial** — speak one honest lie to pass: on success, set Position one step safer for the next border scene; on failure, start *Kin Arrive*.
- **Wergild Ford Weighing** — cast silver on table-rock: if paid in full, clear 1 *Feud-Smoke*; if short, *Wergild Breach* enters play.
- **Pass of Ashes Vigil** — hold fire through the night storm: success grants **Shelter Writ**; a miss summons the *Oath-Eater Wight* at weak strength.

Bounties & Prestige Tracks

- **Cairn-Marks** (prestige): keep a tally of cairns that “speak” for you. At 3 marks, treat one **Council Audience** as automatic. Lose 1 if you break guest-law publicly.
- **Reiver Tallies** (bounty): each seized herd or foiled raid adds 1; at 3+, reivers pool to field the **Wolf-Road Captain**. Pay down with cattle or a peace-feast.

Cross-Region Boss Entanglements

- *Viterra Provost Warrant*: the **Three-Fires Provost** is deputized; defeating him triggers *Royal Incursion*.
- *Theona Bride-Peace Fracture*: slaying the **Bride-Thief** without rite starts *Green Host Rides* at low strength on neighboring moors.
- *Khaz-Vurim Ledger Chain*: outwitting the **Stone Auditor** begins a quiet *Ledger Notice* [3] that follows you across dwarf roads.

Boss Procedure (quick frame)

1. **Stage the Ground:** choose a lane (Low Fold / Sheepwalk / Road) and 1 ambient *Clubs*.
2. **Show the Lever:** place one relevant \Diamond *withinreach(token, writ, right)*.
2. **Mark the Name:** announce what the hills will remember if the party cheats (start a *Song Shame* or *Blood-Oath* clock at [2]).
3. **Let the Stones Speak:** on any miss, offer an honor bargain (mercy, hostage, cattle) that clears 1 harm/condition if accepted.

1.25 Valewood — “Empire Under Leaves”

Elite (Hazel Queen)

“The forest here remembers empires that crumbled to dust, and its laws are older than your kingdoms. To walk these paths is to enter into covenant with powers that measure time in seasons, not years.”

Commoner (Pathweaver who knots safe routes into cord)

“The woods here got a mind of their own – they’ll lead you where you need to go if you ask right, but they’ll just as soon lose you if you’re carrying ill intent. Best know which is which before you wander off the path.”

Theme & Atmosphere

The Valewood is older than kingdoms, older than the maps that skirt its borders. Beneath its canopy lie the bones of a Lethai empire whose name is forgotten, its towers swallowed by vine and root, its star-roads cracked and phasing between worlds. The air here hums with half-remembered songs of magic, and the ruins bleed their mysteries into root and stream. Fae courts linger in clearings that shift with moonlight, beast-kin patrol moss-choked cairns, and echoes of imperial shades still march patrols on vanished streets. To walk the Valewood is to risk being claimed by it: as guest, prey, heir—or trespasser.

(Phasing Ruin/Star-Road/Living Stone) Star-road shard with pale flagstones that hum when trod in sequence; rooted amphitheatre with moss-seats remembering speeches.

Spades — Places (categories)

2. **Star-Road Shard** — Pale flagstones hum when trod in sequence; path between worlds.
 3. **Rooted Amphitheatre** — Moss-seats remember speeches not yet given; stage for fate.
 4. **Moon-Cistern** — Reflecting sky that isn’t tonight’s; water as mirror of truth.
 5. **Glyphed Bridge** — Across dry stream; glyphs glow when lies pass; truth as toll.
 6. **Glassleaf Gallery** — Boughs grown into panes, dust like constellations; beauty as barrier.
 7. **Hollow Aqueduct** — Water runs uphill if song is right; magic in the melody.
 8. **Calendar Grove** — Standing-trees aligned to solstices; one trunk is stone; time as architecture.
 9. **Unfound Arcade** — Arches appear at dusk, vanish at dawn; reality as schedule.
 10. **Breathing City** — Vine-choked streets shift on the hour; ruin as living thing.
- J **Amber Ziggurat** — Caught mid-construction for thousand years; time as artifact.
- Q **Ivory Observatory** — Brass orrery tracks two lost moons; sky as memory.
- K **Throne-Bower** — Living alder and argent wire; seat of forgotten power.
- A **Valeheart Spire** — Empire’s axle; stairs that end where they began.

(Lethai-ar/Fae/Beast-kin) Pathweaver who knots safe routes into cord; fox-headed courier with promise braided into tail.

Hearts — People & Factions (categories)

2. **Pathweaver** — Lethai-ar guide who knots safe routes into cord; navigation as magic.
3. **Fox-Courier** — Promise braided into tail; messages as living things.
4. **Owl-Sister** — Pupils show yesterday; hands show yours; sight as prophecy.
5. **Antler-Hunter** — Sworn to keep cities sleeping; guardian of rest.
6. **Moss-Scribe** — Writes deeds in lichen, reads stone like vellum; law as growth.
7. **Lark-Keeper** — Caged bird sings warnings strangers can’t hear; danger as song.
8. **Green Neighbor** — Fae courtier wearing borrowed smile and boots; hospitality as trap.
9. **Warden-Coterie** — Beast-kin (badger, stag, lynx); one law: no digging deep.
10. **Echo-Legionary** — Imperial shade bound to patrol that never ends; duty as curse.
- J **Shardwright** — Ancient artisan who wakes star-road with chisel; craft as resurrection.
- Q **Hazel Queen** — Lethai-ar sovereign in leaf and law; wisdom as authority.
- K **Alder King** — Twilit Court sovereign in shadow and debt; power as obligation.
- A **The Huntsman** — Antlers of moonlight; shortcuts owe him; path as price.

(Glamour/Ward-Trap/Imperial Residue) Sweet wind nudges landmarks hedge-width; path reverses—footprints vote to go elsewhere.

Clubs — Complications/Threats (categories)

2. **Sweet Wind** — Nudges landmarks hedge-width—enough to matter; navigation as deception.
3. **Path Reversal** — Footprints vote to go elsewhere; direction as democracy.
4. **Ward-Trap** — Ancient security treats you as yesterday’s invader; past as prison.
5. **Oath-Magnet** — Spoken promises stick and reshape plans; word as binding magic.
6. **Geas Catch** — Careless word triggers task that names itself; speech as summoning.
7. **City Phase** — Streets rotate; exit becomes balcony; space as puzzle.
8. **Name-Theft** — Something learns your true name’s edges; tests begin.
9. **Ring Claim** — Circle names you host; feeding guests becomes law.
10. **Mirror Rain** — Leaf-drips replay choices you didn’t make; past as echo.
- J **Redcaps Abroad** — Hats wet, boots quick, courtesies thin; violence as hospitality.
- Q **Court Tithe** — Truth, song, or memory you’d miss; price as sacrifice.
- K **Muster of Boughs** — Green banners rise; travel becomes trespass.
- A **Empire Wakes** — District aligns; doors open, guardians open farther.

(Charm/Key/Truce-Bough) Way-cord knot points to true next turn; dew-mirror shows thing as is, not as sung.

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (categories)

2. **Way-Cord** — Knot points to true next turn (once); navigation as gift.
3. **Dew-Mirror** — See thing as is, not as sung, for one scene; truth as tool.
4. **Hazel Token** — Lawful crossing of warded hedge without snag; permission as paper.

5. **Honey-Right** — Eat and speak safely at any bee-stone ring; hospitality as law.
 6. **Name-Bead** — Kept promise warms; broken one chills and glows; oath as magic item.
 7. **Wind-Veil** — Mute sweet wind's lies for short walk; truth as protection.
 8. **City-Shard** — Wake one gate or stair in phasing ruin; key as catalyst.
 9. **Truce-Bough** — Hunt, cut, or camp without offense in named copse; peace as branch.
 10. **Oathsap** — Seal pact even echoes respect; promise as binding force.
- J **Shardwright's Favor** — Repair or light length of star-road; craft as power.
- Q **Hazel Audience** — One whisper exits as policy; word as law.
- K **Alder Writ** — Levies defer, wardens guide, scribes stop arguing; authority as writ.
- A **Valeheart Clause** — Temporary exception to any local rule, spoken in leaves.

Quick use notes

- Draw until you have all four suits: Spade = place, Heart = actor, Club = pressure, Diamond = leverage. Highest rank sets the main Clock (2–5 → 4, 6–10 → 6, J/Q/K → 8, A → 10).
- Diamonds are codified outcomes (charms/keys/passers) that change position rather than call for a roll.
- Empire Echo: when a J/Q/K is the highest rank in your seed, add one visible relic-logic (floating stairs, singing locks, patrol-shades).
- Aces: any A means the wood actively rearranges paths or wakes structures; echo that change later so the place feels alive.
- If any A appears, echo **leaf & light** motifs—paths that remember, leaves that whisper, light that moves like water.

Additional Features

- **Forest Claims:** Any oath, bargain, or gift exchanged binds with more weight. Once per session, spoken promise becomes magically enforceable: breaking creates 1d4 SB and echoes through scenes.
- **Ruins Awaken:** If you linger at ancient site, roll/draw to see which mechanism stirs. May grant guidance (lit star-road, memory shown) or danger (patrol shades, collapsing glyphs).
- **Court Interference:** Encounters with fae/beast-kin never neutral. Once per session, GM may convert Diamond into demand for hospitality, tribute, or alliance—shifts expedition tone.

Patronage & Power

In the Valewood, power flows through ancient magic, forgotten oaths, and the delicate balance between guest and host. The Lethai-ar maintain influence through their knowledge of paths and ruins, while fae courts wield power through hospitality and geas. Beast-kin serve as guardians of the deeper mysteries, and the echoes of the empire still patrol their eternal rounds, enforcing laws written in starlight and stone.

For the GM: Patronage in the Valewood revolves around hospitality, knowledge, and the careful navigation of ancient laws. Rewards often take the form of charms, keys, or safe passage that can be leveraged into greater influence. To emphasize this:

- Tie rewards to visible symbols (tokens, mirrors, cords) that can be challenged, stolen, or voided.
- Let rival courts issue conflicting protections, forcing players to choose whose favor matters more.
- Use the ruins, groves, and star-roads as arenas for social contests, where knowledge of ancient customs determines success.

In the Valewood, your word is your world, and your world determines whether you walk as guest or ghost.

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

- **Exposure:** Your actions draw unwanted attention from **wardens** or **fae scouts**.
- **Noise:** Sounds of your actions alert nearby **echo-legionaries** or **beast-kin**.
- **Trace:** Evidence of your passage marks your route for **trackers** or **imperial shades**.
- **Delay:** A brief but meaningful setback costs you **time** or **favorable phase**.
- **Supply Strain:** Mark +1 segment on a relevant **resource clock**.

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

- **Alarm Raised:** **Pathweaver** or **moss-scribe** becomes aware and begins responding.
- **Position Lost:** You lose advantageous ground/cover/stealth due to **path reversal** or **city phase**.
- **Foe Appears:** A **redcap band** or **patrol shade** arrives on scene.
- **Gear Trouble:** A piece of equipment becomes **Compromised/Neglected**.
- **Lock/Barrier:** A simple obstacle now requires a test to overcome.

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

- **Reinforcements:** Additional **fae courtiers**, **beast-kin**, or **imperial echoes** arrive.
- **Key Gear Breaks:** A crucial tool/weapon becomes temporarily unusable.
- **Major Twist:** The situation fundamentally changes - **geas triggers/ruin awakens/court interferes**.
- **Rail Tick:** Advance a relevant campaign/front clock by 1 segment.
- **Condition Applied:** Mark **Fatigue 1/Harm 1/Condition** appropriate to fiction.

Major Turns (4+ SB)

- **Trap Springs:** A prepared danger activates with full effect.
- **Authority Arrival: Hazel Queen, Alder King, or Huntsman** intervenes.
- **Scene Shift:** The environment changes dramatically - **city phases/paths shift/empire wakes.**
- **Patron Omen:** Divine/arcane forces take notice - **omen appears/blessing lost/curse manifests.**
- **Narrative Pivot:** The story takes an unexpected turn that reframes objectives.

Region-Specific SB Options

- **Valewood (Magic Paths):** Routes rearrange without warning, bridges appear mid-step, directions become riddles.
- **Valewood (Fae Law):** Promises bind mid-speech, gifts carry hidden costs, hospitality turns to obligation.
- **Valewood (Imperial Echoes):** Patrols march through walls, ancient mechanisms activate, past and present blur.

Valewood — Empire Under Leaves

Starting Location: A moss-covered amphitheatre where roots crawl through marble benches and owls whisper verdicts to the wind.

“In the Valewood, truth grows wild, and the forest remembers what kingdoms forget.”

In... A Rooted Amphitheatre, an Owl-Sister speaks in riddles. “The Lethai-ar stir,” she says. “And the paths remember your true name.”

Regional Motifs Leaf empires, root theaters, beast parliaments, true-name law.

Whispers to Offer “Speak a name you buried,” “Eat forest bread,” “Follow a path alone.”

External Clocks Threat: “Lethai-ar Council”; Fracture: “Paths Rearrange”; Community: “Village Forgets.”

Complications Owls repeat lies; bark takes fingerprints; trails loop across seasons.

Anchors at Risk A childhood glade; a traveling companion’s memory.

Escalation Beat A tree grows in a room.

Relief Trade a name for safe passage; stage a truth in the amphitheatre; accept a forest-mark.

Extensions (Plug-in)

- **Name Economy (true-name pressure):**
 - Each PC has *Name Facets*: **Called-Name** (common), **Given-Name** (trusted), **True-Edge** (dangerous).
 - When a foe or court learns a deeper facet, mark *Name Leverage* [3]. At 3, they may compel one precise action or forbid one path unless countered by a \Diamond or**Oathsap**.
 - You may trade a shallower facet to erase 1 tick from *Name Leverage* but gain *Rumor Tail* condition until scene end.
- **Hospitality Ledger (guest/host law):**
 - When *Honey-Right* or *Truce-Bough* is invoked, set a 3-step *Table Owed* clock for the host and a 3-step *Courtesy Owed* for the guest.
 - Ticking your clock grants +1d to social tests with that party; overpaying (4+) converts 1 tick into a portable *Favor Twig* (spend for +1 Position later).
 - Breaking either clock spawns *Ring Claim* or *Oath-Magnet* at keeper’s option.
- **Path-Logic Mini-game (finding the true way):**
 - Two opposed clocks per journey: *True Way* vs *Forest Has You* (size by highest rank in seed).
 - Each leg, pick an *Approach*: **Rhyme** (speak pattern), **Count** (steps/time), **Gift** (leave token), **Listen** (ambient omen).
 - Edge: Rhyme→Gift (courtesies bind), Gift→Count (land answers), Count→Listen (timing frames omen), Listen→Rhyme (echo feeds verse).
 - Spend **Way-Cord** to flip a failed leg; spend **Wind-Veil** to ignore **Sweet Wind** once.
- **Truth Mechanics (seeing through glamour):**
 - **Dew-Mirror** reveals one *Unkind Fact* in the scene; naming it aloud gives +1 Effect but ticks *Court Tithe* +1.
 - **Glyphed Bridge** judges the next lie uttered; if you pass speaking-truth, gain *Bridge’s Favor* (+1 Position on crossings hereafter). If you lie, mark *Name-Theft* +1.
- **Star-Road Procedure (phasing traversal):**
 - To wake a segment: meet two of three—*Proper Footfall* (count/pattern), *Shard Key* (city-shard, shardwright help), *Witness* (owl, echo-legionary, or courtier).
 - Success grants *Between-Places*: one safe shortcut and one *Echo Fee* (memory, song, or small timeline bruise chosen by GM).
 - On a miss, spawn **Ward-Trap** or **City Phase**.
- **Court Etiquette (Hazel vs Alder):**
 - **Hazel Audience**: pays in *precision*—exact words, measured gifts. +1d when you cite prior custom or present **Moss-Scribe** ruling.
 - **Alder Writ**: pays in *obligation*—future tasks, debts. +1 Effect when you promise service; tick *Oath-Magnet* +1.
- **Start-of-Scene Omens in Valewood (1d6):**
 1. *Leaf-Whisper*: first Listen/Study gets +1d; first boast draws **Geas Catch**.
 2. *Antler Shadow*: the Huntsman watches—shortcuts improve; hiding worsens.

3. *Mirror Drip*: **Dew-Mirror** free use but **Court Tithe** starts at 1.
 4. *Root Push*: terrain shifts in your favor once; buildings dislike you (locks complicate).
 5. *Bird Parliament*: a rumor arrives true; one plan becomes public knowledge.
 6. *Star-Tingle*: star-road easier (+1d to wake) but every \Diamond *hereafter* risks **Ward-Trap** on 1 – 2.
- **Plug-in SB Conversions (Valewood flavor)**:
 - 1 SB \rightarrow *Sweet Wind Shift*: reposition an approach vector; -1d unless you adjust method (Rhyme/Count/Gift/Listen).
 - 2 SB \rightarrow *Obligate Courtesy*: immediate small gift or truth required; refuse and tick *Name Leverage* +1.
 - 3+ SB \rightarrow *Empire Echo*: add a patrolling **Echo-Legionary** cohort or activate a dormant mechanism that reframes the scene.
 - **Reputation Echoes**:
 - *Guest-Faithful*: once/session, downgrade **Ring Claim** to simple hospitality; next refused invitation spawns **Oath-Magnet**.
 - *Path-Favored*: +1 Position on *Path-Logic* legs; any shortcut taken owes a *token or tale*.
 - *Truth-Bearer*: +1d with Hazel court when presenting facts; -1d with Alder when declining obligation.
 - **Quick Cross-Region Hooks**:
 - *Kahfagia Lanes* \leftrightarrow *Star-Roads*: a **Mirror Warrant** can stand in for **Shard Key** once.
 - *Mistlands Bells* \leftrightarrow *Path-Logic*: paying **Ward-Salt** counts as *Gift* approach with +1d.
 - *Aelinnel Math* \leftrightarrow *Proper Footfall*: *Counting Etiquette* grants +1 Position on **Star-Road Procedure**.

Boss Hooks (Courts, Echoes, & Path-Lords)

- **The Huntsman of Shortcuts** (antlers of moonlight; stride that erases distance) — *Tells*: stag-shadow advances one beat ahead; paths fold behind him. *Moves*: *Owe the Cut* (forces a geas: accept a detour or mark Fatigue), *Step Across* (swap range bands), *Tally the Tread* (names who strayed; that PC loses assist for a beat). *Levers*: **Truce-Bough** halts pursuit once; **Way-Cord** cancels *Step Across* once. *Yield Terms*: gift a true shortcut (reveal a secret path) or agree to carry a name for him.
- **Redcap Captain Rill** (hat never dries; nail-shod boots) — *Tells*: polite bows that end in bruises; blood soaks into moss. *Moves*: *Hospitality Turned* (treats any food/drink as claim; imposes **Ring Claim**), *Knee the Truth* (any lie this round deals Harm 1 as shame), *Boot-Hook* (drag a PC one zone). *Levers*: **Honey-Right** reverses *Hospitality Turned* for one exchange; **Dew-Mirror** exposes his “host right,” downgrading his effect. *Parley Price*: a song with a real regret in it.
- **Echo Centurion of the XIII Star-Road** (bronze mask; voice like marching rain) — *Tells*: dust arranges into ranks; orders arrive from an hour ago. *Moves*: *Reform the Line* (erase one positional gain), *Juridical Recall* (impose ancient curfew; actions outside it start one step worse), *Standard Rekindled* (summon echo cohort at weak strength). *Levers*: **City-Shard** lets you counter-order once; a **Moss-Scribe** ruling (or cited custom) cancels *Juridical Recall*. *Dismissal*: return his cohort’s lost standard or complete their last posted watch.
- **Shardwright Unmended** (glassy chisels; time caught in her hair) — *Tells*: tools refuse

to rust nearby; footprints “edit” themselves. *Moves:* *Cut the Clock* (freeze a PC’s action for one beat), *Wrong Stone* (swap the cost on success: pay in memory instead of gear), *Wake the Segment* (introduce **Ward-Trap**). *Levers:* offer **Oathsap** to bind a repair oath; **Shardwright’s Favor** flips *Wrong Stone* once. *End:* either accept a lingering “timeline bruise” or escort her to the Amber Ziggurat.

- **The Hazel Advocate** (mask of living bark; voice measured in syllables) — *Tells:* vines reorder to proper grammar; birds hush at contradictions. *Moves:* *Measure the Word* (any vague promise becomes binding **Oath-Magnet**), *Prune the Lie* (remove a declared fictional advantage), *Court Silence* (no overlapping speech; group loses a Teamwork option for a beat). *Levers:* **Hazel Token** grants speaking rights; **Oathsap** lets you safely retract one bound clause. *Concession:* present a precise restitution or cede a Name-Bead.
- **Alder Bailiff of Debts** (ledger of favors; smile like dusk) — *Tells:* moths gather on quills; shadows count coin. *Moves:* *Call the Note* (convert any \diamond held into an owed task), *Fine in Kind* (steal 1 assistant + 1 dused against them), *Lien on the Path* (block the next exit unless a price is paid). *Levers:* **Alder Writ** lets you rene-

Boss Loot & Boons (pick 1 on victory)

- *Antler Shortcut:* once/arc, declare a safe mid-scene cut; clear 1 segment on *True Way*.
- *Dry Cap:* ignore one **Ring Claim** this session; next hospitality breach starts at +1 *Court Tithe*.
- *Bronze Tally:* treat an imperial *Juridical Recall* as *controlled* once.
- *Edited Chisel:* swap the cost of a success (gear \leftrightarrow memory) one time.
- *Hazel Seal:* once/session, speak a precise exception; cancel **Oath-Magnet** for a clause.
- *Dusk Ledger Slip:* pay an owed Favor Twig in advance; erase 1 tick of *Name Leverage*.

Legendary Sites & Trials

- **Glyphed Bridge Ordeal** — speak a hard truth to pass dry; lie, and the bridge demands a memory tithe (mark *Name Leverage* +1, gain *Bridge’s Favor* only if confessed).
- **Moon-Cistern Vigil** — watch someone else’s sky until the owl calls; success grants a single **Dew-Mirror** charge, failure spawns **Mirror Rain**.
- **Valeheart Spiral** — climb stairs that return to start; map with verse, gift, count, listen (all four once) to unlock a **Between-Places** shortcut.

Bounties & Prestige Tracks

- **Court Favors** (prestige): keep twigs/marks from Hazel or Alder. At 3 of one court, treat one **Hazel Audience**/**Alder Writ** as automatic; lose 1 if you snub the opposite court publicly.
- **Echo Quietus** (bounty): each laid-to-rest patrol shade adds 1; at 3, the **Echo Centurion** appears to “thank” or test you (GM choice).

Cross-Region Boss Entanglements

- *Kahfagia Signal Leak:* defeating the **Huntsman** by Mirror tricks starts *Light Shift* when you next sail a beacons lane.
- *Mistlands Bell Trespass:* binding the **Hazel Advocate** with bell-law triggers *Rite-Purge* [2] back along the levees.

- *Linn Feud Echo*: slaying **Redcap Captain Rill** on a truce-day begins *Feud Token* [2] with a nearby strand (they liked his “hospitality”).

Boss Procedure (quick frame)

1. **Stage the Place:** pick a site Tag (*Star-Road*, *Court Ring*, or *Living Ruin*) and one ambient **Clubs**.
2. **Offer the Lever:** place an attainable \diamond (*Way – Cord*, *HazelToken*, *City – Shard*).
2. **Name the Cost:** declare what the wood will remember if the party cheats (start *Name Leverage* [2] or *Court Tithe* [2]).
3. **Let the Forest React:** on any miss, the scene may re-path once (swap lanes or approaches per your Path-Logic mini-game).

1.26 Vhasia — “The Fractured Sun”

Elite (Two Crowns)

“The sun may be fractured, but our authority is absolute within our domains. Every coin minted here carries our blessing, and every law written bears our seal – the rest is just politics.”

Commoner (Road warden with dented badge and honest horn)

“I’ve served under three different banners on this same stretch of road, and the only constant is that someone always wants to collect tolls. My horn calls honest warning – best heed it.”

Theme & Atmosphere

Vhasia is a realm of broken coronations and split loyalties. Once a proud province of the Utar empire, the unified Sun-court shattered like its heraldic sunburst, leaving rival dukes, abbesses, and parlements to claim the light. Everywhere, signs of fracture: chipped sun-discs on milestones, worn tabards bearing half a crown, coins minted in rival cities with different suns. In Vhasia, legitimacy is as fragile as a mirror, and every oath risks breaking along the fault lines of politics, faith, and fortune.

(Château/Cathedral/Forest) Wayside shrine with pilgrims tacking petitions to scorched sun-disc; vine-terraced clos above millstream with napping watchmen.

Spades — Places (categories)

2. **Wayside Shrine** — Pilgrims tack petitions to scorched sun-disc; each parchment curls in different winds.
 3. **Vine-Terrace** — Clos above millstream; watchmen nap, halberds traded for bottles.
 4. **Bastide Square** — Neat as canray board; merchants pay homage to different “hours” of Sun.
 5. **Royal Forest** — Antler posts mark laws no king remembers; poachers still hang.
 6. **Pont-du-Tithe** — Toll-bridge flanked by chapels and crossbows; chains blessed by rival bishops.
 7. **Great Fair** — Outside chartered town; counting sheds ring like bells, rumors louder still.
 8. **Salt Pans** — Wind-pumps on estuary; gulls own law, smugglers own night.
 9. **Siege-Château** — Hoardings patched, cistern low, banners cut into ragged suns.
 10. **Cathedral Yard** — Cranes creak, stones fly, scaffolds bristle with rival masons’ marks.
- J **Parlement Hall** — Hung with faded tapestries; sunbursts spliced and re-stitched by claimants.
- Q **Queen’s Causeway** — Mile-long oath paved in quarried stone; half-sunk each spring.
- K **Sun Palace** — Lence shuttered mirrors, brambled gardens; courtiers playing at kingship.
- A **King’s High Road** — Mile-stones chipped of crowns; yet every army still marches it.

(Lord/Court/Company) Road warden with dented badge and honest horn; vintner-guild syndic counting saints’ days as credit terms.

Hearts — People & Factions (categories)

2. **Road Warden** — Dented badge, honest horn; ignored by both crowns but knows the roads.
 3. **Vintner Syndic** — Counts saints' days as credit terms, vintages as treaties; wine as diplomacy.
 4. **Abbess-Chatelaine** — Rules fortress-convent with iron accounts and sharper scripture.
 5. **Routier Captain** — Scarred and mercenary; prefers ransoms to loyalty; coin as conscience.
 6. **Duchy Constable** — Splendid armor, empty coffers, pride swollen as banner; glory over gold.
 7. **Parlement Clerk** — Drowns foes in procedure, fishes them out for fealty; law as weapon.
 8. **Salt-Farmer** — Gabelle lessee with cudgels, writs, river-chart no crown has; tax as tyranny.
 9. **Trouvère** — Scandalous lay about last Sun-king brings knives to tavern doors.
 10. **Marshal-Exile** — Sun-court's hammer; now wielded by whoever pays in silver.
- J **Heretic Perfect** — Preaching peace while tucking hidden daggers into parchment margins.
- Q **Queen-Mother** — Riverside keep; weaves alliances as if they were dowries.
- K **Two Crowns** — Rival dukes, each "crowned" in rival cathedrals, neither whole.
- A **Last Dauphin** — Rumor with birthmark; armies march for whispers alone.

(**Chevauchée/Law/Church**) Chevauchée burning loyalty oaths as well as barns; interdict falls on county; bells silenced, trade stalls.

Clubs — Complications/Threats (categories)

2. **Chevauchée** — Raiders burn loyalty oaths as well as barns; smoke curls like scripture.
 3. **Interdict** — Falls on county; bells silenced, trade stalls, heretics prosper.
 4. **Forest Law** — Venison becomes treason; poachers hang on antler posts.
 5. **River Spate** — Ferries chained, bridges drowned, pilgrims stranded mid-prayer.
 6. **Coin Debasement** — Three mints, three suns, no trust; soldiers demand silver alone.
 7. **Parlement Divided** — Siege laid on parchment before walls; war by paperwork.
 8. **Company Mutiny** — Unless arrears paid—in blood or coin; mercenaries as time bomb.
 9. **Relic Dispute** — Two abbeys claim same saint's bones; mobs answer with stones.
 10. **Harvest Blight** — Bread locked behind pikes; bakers guarded as lords.
- J **Tournament "Accident"** — Hides assassination; your favor now evidence.
- Q **Royalist Restoration** — Sunburst badges painted overnight on doors and graves.
- K **Feudal Levy** — Lords demand levies in days, not months, with three days' bread.
- A **Winter Campaign** — Roads to mud, hooves to ice, armies to ruin.

(**Charter/Patent/Right**) Safe-conduct sealed by duke or abbey; honored only once, on one road; burgess charter for market ward.

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (categories)

2. **Safe-Conduct** — Sealed by duke or abbey; honored only once, on one road.
3. **Burgess Charter** — Market ward; walls, watch, and revenue at your call.

4. **Bridge Farm** — Tolls at Pont-du-Tithe for season, if you can hold it.
 5. **Paréage Charter** — Shared rule with monastery—half justice, half rent, no peace.
 6. **Wardship** — Over minor heir; lands obey you “for now.”
 7. **Gabelle Lease** — Salt-tax rights; lucrative, hated, and dangerous.
 8. **Letters Patent** — Raise free-company under your banner; army as business.
 9. **Remission** — Of feudal dues for village; they’ll march when called.
 10. **Low-Justice** — Grant (stocks, fines, gallows) in troublesome hamlet.
- J **Confiscation Writ** — Against royalist estate—if you can seize it first.
- Q **Queen’s Audience** — Private with Queen-Mother; whisper becomes policy.
- K **Sunburst Warrant** — Of fallen court—most still bow if shown boldly.
- A **General Pardon** — Temporary: rebels absolved if they bend the knee.

Quick use notes

- Draw until you have all four suits: Spade = place, Heart = actor, Club = pressure, Diamond = leverage. Highest rank sets the main Clock (2–5 → 4, 6–10 → 6, J/Q/K → 8, A → 10).
- Diamonds are codified outcomes (charters/patents/rights) that change position rather than call for a roll.
- If any A appears, echo **fractured sun** motif—light that splinters, oaths that crack like glass.

Additional Features

- **Fractured Seals:** When brandishing writ/badge/charter tied to Sun-court claimant, step **Position** up one step for scene’s next interaction at gate/court/checkpoint. Each use advances **Legitimacy (4)** clock linked to claimant; when fills, rivals challenge authority on sight.
- **Parlement Games:** If scene touches petitions/guild disputes/feudal appeals, first **Diamond** played becomes *policy lever*: treat as two Diamonds toward swaying decision/rewriting custom. Afterward, start/advance **Whispered Precedent** clock; when resolves, backlash spreads as other courts cite case against you.
- **Gabelle Knife-Edge:** At bridges/fairs/salt depots, convert **Diamonds** tied to tolls/leases/safe-conducts into immediate passage/tariff relief for company (no roll). Each conversion ticks **Resentment (4)** clock for locale; when completes, expect boycotts/ambush rumors/audit by rival officials.

Patronage & Power

In Vhasia, power flows through the remnants of imperial authority, fractured legitimacy, and the careful manipulation of legal and religious institutions. Former Utar provincial structures still provide framework for governance, but competing claimants to the Sun-court have created a complex web of overlapping jurisdictions and conflicting loyalties. The true power lies with those who can navigate this legal maze and maintain the appearance of legitimate authority. **For the GM:** Patronage in Vhasia revolves around legitimacy, legal documents, and the ability to command respect from institutions that no longer have a clear central authority. Rewards often take the form of charters, writs, and official positions that can be leveraged into greater influence. To emphasize this:

- Tie rewards to visible symbols (seals, badges, writs) that can be challenged, stolen, or voided.
- Let rival claimants issue conflicting authorities, forcing players to choose whose favor matters more.
- Use the parlements, cathedrals, and châteaux as arenas for social contests, where knowledge of law and custom determines success.

In Vhasia, your papers are your power, and your power determines whether you rule or are ruled.

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

- **Exposure:** Your actions draw unwanted attention from **rival officials or court guards**.
- **Noise:** Sounds of your actions alert nearby **parlement clerks or routier patrols**.
- **Trace:** Evidence of your passage marks your route for **trackers or tax collectors**.
- **Delay:** A brief but meaningful setback costs you **time or favorable legal window**.
- **Supply Strain:** Mark +1 segment on a relevant **resource clock**.

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

- **Alarm Raised:** **Duchy constable or abbess-chatelaine** becomes aware and begins responding.
- **Position Lost:** You lose advantageous ground/cover/stealth due to **legal challenge or road closure**.
- **Foe Appears:** A **rival claimant or free-company** arrives on scene.
- **Gear Trouble:** A piece of equipment becomes **Compromised/Neglected**.
- **Lock/Barrier:** A simple obstacle now requires a test to overcome.

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

- **Reinforcements:** Additional **routiers, parlement guards, or rival ducal forces** arrive.
- **Key Gear Breaks:** A crucial tool/weapon becomes temporarily unusable.

- **Major Twist:** The situation fundamentally changes - **writ voided/interdict declared/levy called**.
- **Rail Tick:** Advance a relevant campaign/front clock by 1 segment.
- **Condition Applied:** Mark **Fatigue 1/Harm 1/Condition** appropriate to fiction.

Major Turns (4+ SB)

- **Trap Springs:** A prepared danger activates with full effect.
- **Authority Arrival: Two Crowns, Queen-Mother, or Marshal-Exile** intervenes.
- **Scene Shift:** The environment changes dramatically - **chevauchée hits/river floods/parlement erupts**.
- **Patron Omen:** Divine/arcane forces take notice - **omen appears/blessing lost/curse manifests**.
- **Narrative Pivot:** The story takes an unexpected turn that reframes objectives.

Region-Specific SB Options

- **Vhasia (Fractured Authority):** Seals break mid-signing, legal papers rewrite themselves, badges refuse to be honored.
- **Vhasia (Legal Warfare):** Court decisions reverse without warning, precedents are cited against you, writs expire at crucial moments.
- **Vhasia (Sun Symbolism):** Sun-discs crack underfoot, light splits into contradictory shadows, oaths shatter like glass.

Vhasia — Fractured Sun

Starting Location: The Pont-du-Tithe, its golden arches catching fire in the sunset as pilgrims chant from both banks.

“In Vhasia, faith and empire march together—and both leave ash in their wake.”

In... A Pont-du-Tithe, a Duchy Constable offers letters patent. “The Chevauchée burns,” he says. “And two Crowns march to meet it.”

Regional Motifs Processional bridges, crusade echoes, split sovereignty, tithe-law.

Whispers to Offer “Take both patents,” “Confiscate a relic,” “Call a levy early.”

External Clocks Threat: “Chevauchée”; Community: “Tithe Unrest”; Anchor: “Bridge Peace.”

Complications Relics demand oaths; the bridge groans; pilgrims arm themselves.

Anchors at Risk A parish cook; a field hospital.

Escalation Beat Sunlight burns in the rain.

Relief Unite the Crowns for one march; return relics to neutral ground; tithe from the GM’s favorite NPC purse.

Extended Features

- **Viterran Holdings:** Much like Plantagenet France, Viterra holds extensive lands, castles, and abbeys in northern Vhasia. These estates complicate every allegiance—dukes and abbesses may be Vhasian in name but Viterran in loyalty. Any Diamond tied to land or charter risks being overridden by Viterran claim.
- **Faction Entanglements:** When traveling through Vhasia, allegiance matters. Declaring for a duke, abbey, or parlement modifies *Position* one step in dealings with rivals. Silence may itself be treated as tacit support.
- **Church Corruption:** Echoing a Three Musketeers era, bishops and abbesses play as much at politics as prayer. Relic disputes, indulgence sales, and cathedral building races create complications that rival armies cannot ignore. Any Diamond tied to church authority is a double-edged blade.
- **Trade Goods and Strains:**
 - Vhasian wine is currency of diplomacy: spilled casks advance a *Resentment* clock in rival duchies.
 - Salt leases at Pont-du-Tithe ripple into Ubral and Kahfagia—granting passage but attracting bandits.
 - Stamped coins circulate with rival suns; carrying mixed purses invites suspicion and bribe demands.
- **Diplomatic Currency:** Introduce *Favor of the Sun* as a minor track (like Boons). Earned by resolving conflicts between claimants without bloodshed, it can be spent to ease crossings or dismiss levies. Each use risks sparking a rival *Legitimacy Challenge*.
- **Reputation Echoes:** Gaining reputation with one claimant carries weight in others: rumors precede you across bridges, fairs, and shrines. This grants +1d to engagement rolls where prior deeds are known, but increases SB cost by +1 when foes exploit your divided loyalties.
- **Processions and Parlements:** Add a special draw during travel: one extra card may be pulled to represent a festival, procession, or parlement session. This can invert Complications into Leverage (e.g., a Parlement Divided scene producing a sudden Diamond policy lever).
- **Relic and Rite Pressure:** Any Diamond tied to relics, patents, or charters may be stolen, voided, or challenged in public. Such leverage always risks escalation—treat rival claims as a hidden SB cost the GM may reveal later.

Cross-Regional Connections

- **To Thepyrgos:** Synod indulgences can temporarily suspend Vhasian interdicts, but doing so creates precedent cited in Thepyrgos later (*Whispered Precedent* clock).
- **To Ubral:** Salt leases and bridge tolls turn into feud fuel; clans see them as foreign intrusion, advancing feud clocks when overused.
- **To Kahfagia:** Wine routes and salt flows are lifeblood of coastal trade; a Kahfagian coracle-mark can substitute for Safe-Conduct once, but rivals may brand it smuggling.
- **To Valewood:** Relics from Vhasia sometimes vanish into fae courts; a Diamond spent on relic control may instead draw fae interest.
- **To Viterra:** Viterran dukes, abbots, and condottieri are ever-present; any travel seed through Vhasia may be claimed by Viterran authority. Safe-Conducts are fragile—Viterra treats them as favors, not guarantees.

GM Guidance

- Treat Vhasia as a region of *contested legitimacy*: every writ, token, or badge is both leverage and liability.
- Complications should echo fracture: factions pulling players in opposite directions, symbols splitting under stress, oaths that cannot be held by all sides.
- Rewards should feel conditional: charters, patents, and safe-conducts that are powerful but precarious, always subject to rival interpretation.
- Intrigue should echo musketeer romances: duels in cathedrals, midnight meetings under abbey arches, letters seized at river fords. Every move risks scandal as much as war.

Boss Hooks (Crowns, Courts, & Companies)

- **Cardinal-Regent of the Broken Sun** (scarlet gloves, seal that never quite matches) — *Tells*: candlelight splits into two shadows; choirs fall half a note apart. *Moves*: *Interdict Blade* (silence bells; social actions tied to church begin one step worse), *Seal Both Ways* (any writ played may be read against you), *Confessional Leak* (turns one secret into crowd rumor). *Levers*: **Queen’s Audience** cancels *Interdict Blade* once; **Synod Indulgence** (from Thepyrgos) treats a church check as controlled for one scene. *Concession*: restore a relic to neutral ground or sponsor bread for a fast day.
- **Marshal-Exile, the Sun’s Hammer** (tabard stitched over old loyalties) — *Tells*: hoofbeats keep parade time; pennons fray into sunrays. *Moves*: *Chevauchée Call* (advance **Chevauchée**), *Banner Turn* (flip one mercenary cohort if underpaid), *Lists to War* (convert a **Duel** into battlefield stakes). *Levers*: **Letters Patent** buys one round of obedience; **General Pardon** lets a unit stand down. *Yield Terms*: arrears in hard silver or a public honor at a bastide.
- **Abbess-Chatelaine of Pont-du-Tithe** (ring of keys, ring of scripture) — *Tells*: toll chains hum psalms; river mist smells of incense. *Moves*: *Tithe Tripled* (raise tariffs mid-scene), *Sanctuary or Snare* (declare bridge holy—violence spawns *Royalist Restoration* +1), *Relic Audit* (void a rival’s *unlesspubliclysworn*). *Levers*: **Paréage Charters** split her power for one exchange; **Bridge Farmco**
- **Parlement Spider** (chief clerk; quills like daggers) — *Tells*: writs reorder themselves; sand on ink forms little sunbursts. *Moves*: *Motion to Delay* (freeze a *for one scene*), *Counter-Citation* (increase DV by 1 unless yo
- **Routier King** (mercenary captain of captains; coins bite back) — *Tells*: camp songs use three anthems; dice show suns. *Moves*: *Company Mutiny* (threatens your hirelings), *Pay in Plunder* (reprice a scene—progress costs coin or goods), *Switch the Colors* (your escort turns neutral). *Levers*: **Letters Patent** + **Remission** shifts one company to your side; **Gabelle Lease** buys supply favor but starts *Resentment*. *End*: oath on pay-chest or duel in the ring.
- **Queen-Mother of Lence** (widow’s veil, iron arithmetic) — *Tells*: courtiers speak in dowry weights; gardens prune themselves. *Moves*: *Dowry Gambit* (reassigns an NPC ally by marriage pact), *Nursery Claim* (summon **Last Dauphin** rumor as leverage), *Mirror Progress* (reflect a success as her policy). *Levers*: **Queen’s Audience** lets you set a single term; **Wardship** can counter *Nursery Claim*. *Concession*: secure a neutral marriage or return a hostage.
- **The Two Crowns** (rival dukes; one herald, two trumpets) — *Tells*: sunlight splits; banners double; oaths echo out of sync. *Moves*: *Contradictory Edicts* (any public action risks *Parlement Divided*), *Levy in Hours* (push **Feudal Levy**), *Coin Trial* (force silver only—void mixed purses). *Levers*: **Sunburst Warrant** + public mass unites them for one scene; **General Pardon** calms levy unrest once. *End*: force a joint signature on **Queen’s Causeway**.
- **The Last Dauphin (or Not)** (boy with birthmark; truths disagree) — *Tells*: dogs kneel; saints’

windows tear up. *Moves: Miracle or Mischief* (invert one Complication into Leverage—or vice versa), *Pilgrim Surge* (crowd becomes shield or trap), *Sign of the Sun* (coins of your foes heat to the touch). *Levers: Safe-Conduct* grants private parole; a **Trouvère**’s lay can “prove” either way, stabilizing or exploding the scene. *Exit Price*: choose which crown he blesses—gain a favor, earn an enemy.

Boss Loot & Boons (pick 1 on victory)

- *Broken Sun Seal*: once/arc, treat a rival seal as supporting yours; then tick *Legitimacy* +1 against you.
- *Marshal’s Baton*: command obedience from one free-company for a single order.
- *Tithe Key*: ignore one toll or tax at Pont-du-Tithe per session.
- *Spider’s Docket*: cancel *Motion to Delay* once; afterwards, *Whispered Precedent* advances.
- *Queen-Mother’s Favor*: swap any \diamond tied to land for a superior local right once.
- *Dauphin’s Token*: one crowd counts as *assist dice pool* for a public scene; on use, spawn *Royalist Restoration*.

Trials & Legendary Scenes

- **Tournament Ordeal** (Bastide Square or Sun Palace lists) — Declare *Purse, Patent, or Pardon* as stakes. Win to cash a matching \diamond ; lose and spawn *Tournament “Accident”*.
- **Cathedral Scaffold Assize** — Argue law atop creaking beams; each “good point” moves Position up; each slip marks *Exposure*. A **Paréage Charter** lets you call a recess once.
- **Pont-du-Tithe Vigil** — Keep the bridge peaceful through dusk: clear 3 segments on *Bridge Peace* by feeding pilgrims, quieting relic zeal, and paying one tithe from your purse.

Prestige & Bounties

- **Favor of the Sun** (prestige): at 3, treat one **Safe-Conduct/Sunburst Warrant** as unquestioned; then advance *Legitimacy Challenge* once.
- **Company Letters**: each paid company adds 1; at 3, the **Routier King** arrives to collect “back favors.”
- **Relic Quietus**: each resolved relic dispute adds 1; at 3, the **Cardinal-Regent** intervenes in person.

Cross-Region Boss Entanglements

- *Thepyrgos Synod Leak*: defeating the **Parlement Spider** with ladder-law citations starts *Whispered Precedent* in Thepyrgos.
- *Ubral Feud Echo*: killing the **Routier King** on guest ground spawns *Feud Rekindled* along the border roads.
- *Mistlands Bell Trespass*: using church bells to bind the **Cardinal-Regent** triggers *Rite-Purge* [2] near the levees.
- *Kahfagian Salt War*: cashing **Gabelle Lease** to outbid corsair lanes adds *Market Knives* [4] in Silkstrand or on coastal quays.

Boss Procedure (quick frame)

1. **Stage the Venue:** choose *Parlement*, *Bridge*, or *Procession* tag, plus one ambient **Clubs**.
2. **Offer a Lever:** place a reachable \diamond (*Safe – Conduct*, *LettersPatent*, *SunburstWarrant*).
2. **Name the Legitimacy Cost:** on any public humiliation or forged paper, tick *Legitimacy* [4] or *Resentment* [4].
3. **Let Symbols Fracture:** on a miss, split a boon in two (half-value to two sides) or crack a seal (downgrade a \diamond *untilmended*).

1.27 Vilikari — “Laurels & Longhouses”

Elite (Federate King)

“We are the bridge between empire and wilderness, the marriage of law and custom. Our strength lies not in choosing one path but in walking both with equal surety.”

Commoner (Hearth-Mother who guest-cup and house’s temper)

“The old ways and new laws both have their place at our table. Serve the right mead to the right guest, honor the proper customs, and you’ll find we’re better hosts than most kings.”

Theme & Atmosphere

The Vilikari are the agrarian peoples straddling the frontiers of and , tillers and treaty-makers who balance survival between empire, steppe, and sea. In a three-way war with the and the Black Banners, they live by the cleverness of their diplomacy, the leverage of their markets, and the shifting weight of oaths. Their halls are longhouses raised over ruined forums; their laws carved on both oak and marble; their loyalties braided like the braids of their war-maidens’ hair.

(**March Town/Villa-Fort/Old Road**) Longhouse Quarter tucked into old forum with hearth-smoke under broken eaves; Milefort XVII with earth bank and faded eagle.

Spades — Places (categories)

2. **Longhouse Quarter** — Tucked into old forum; hearth-smoke under broken eaves.
3. **Milefort XVII** — Earth bank, stone gate; faded eagle over fresh knotwork.
4. **Stone Ford** — Plank-palings and customs table at knee-height; border as bureaucracy.
5. **Villa Granary** — Barracks with tile roof; spear racks where olives once slept.
6. **Twin Court** — Mallus ring beneath oak, basilica bench across lane.
7. **Blackwood Road** — Milestones re-carved in runes and Latin both.
8. **Staple Market** — Frontier where Ykrul horses meet Vilikari iron.
9. **Burial Field** — Ship-ridge mounds beside tiled mausolea, both garlanded.
10. **Repaired Bridge** — Arch of stone, Vilikari trestle stitched on; past and present joined.
- J **Hill Amphitheater** — Lord’s hall raised in old arena’s curve; power in architecture.
- Q **New Raivon** — March capital; grid-streets colliding with wandering lanes.
- K **Dux’s Palace** — Purple awnings, wolf-hides, law tablets on wall.
- A **Foedus Stone** — Crossroads; every treaty carved, every hand weighed.

(**Federate/Mixed Court/Diaspora**) Hearth-Mother with guest-cup and wergild chest key; Shield-Brother with oaths braided into hair.

Hearts — People & Factions (categories)

2. **Hearth-Mother** — Guest-cup and wergild chest key; hospitality as power.

3. **Shield-Brother** — Comitatus oaths braided into hair; loyalty as bond.
 4. **March Notary** — Utar-trained; writes three scripts without blinking.
 5. **Horse-Reeve** — Rations pasture between plows and warbands.
 6. **Ykrul Envoy** — Riding under safe-conduct; speaks debts in proverbs.
 7. **Old Legionary** — Drill-master for Vilikari levies; Rome in muscle memory.
 8. **Ecktorian Factor** — Vilikari blood; coins flow where ledger points.
 9. **Kahfagian Pilot** — Lantern-law chit and clan tattoo; sea-law on land.
 10. **Marcher-Lord** — Iron-nail crown, Vilikari law in pocket; frontier king.
- J **War-Maiden** — Oath-braid names dead and owed; vengeance as memory.
- Q **Queen of Marches** — Consort-regent; smiles like precedent.
- K **Federate King** — Rex-Dux sworn to forms, sung by his own.
- A **Elder of Elders** — Thing-council speaker; nod can unmake clan.

(**Two Laws/Two Fronts/Old Grudges**) Annona late—grain stipend misses comitatus; tempers quicken; jurisdiction tangle of mallus vs basilica writ.

Clubs — Complications/Threats (categories)

2. **Annona Late** — Grain stipend misses comitatus; tempers quicken like flint.
 3. **Law Tangle** — Mallus verdict vs basilica writ—whose seal bites?
 4. **Raid Rumor** — Ykrul boyar; levies panic plowlands.
 5. **Bridge Levy** — Doubled for road-works; caravans balk, fists rise.
 6. **Succession Feud** — Wolf-brother claim vs purple-charter heir.
 7. **Foedus Recall** — Prefecture resettlement “requested”; homes bristle.
 8. **Coin Talk** — Debasement; pay demanded in salt, hides, hostages.
 9. **Grave Offense** — Burial field disturbed; omens ride with news.
 10. **Port Clash** — Lantern-law vs street-law; confiscations bloom.
- J **Warband Flip** — Colors mid-pay; hostage protocol snaps shut.
- Q **Restoration Preacher** — Stirs crowds against “barb king in purple.”
- K **General Levy** — March closed; markets freeze into spears.
- A **Spring Melt** — Eats Wolf Road; proofs, plans, armies bog.

(**Charter/Right/Escort**) Foedus Renewal Seal for settlement and stipends; Mallus Bench-Right to hold court under oak.

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (categories)

2. **Foedus Seal** — Settlement and stipends confirmed for season.
3. **Mallus Right** — Hold court under oak and be obeyed.
4. **Stipend Arrears** — Paid in salt and grain; portable, persuasive.
5. **Utaran Patent** — Citizenship-style privilege; doors open, bows deepen.
6. **Stall-Right** — Customs favor on frontier market line.
7. **Hostage Treaty** — Exchange fosters; grudges trade for leverage.

8. **Remount Allotment** — Fresh horses from royal paddocks, no questions.
9. **Wergild Table** — Recognized by both codes; vengeance priced and paid.
10. **Bridge Farm** — Imperial for season; funds and friends accrue.
- J **Purple Warrant** — Wear stripe; officials defer on sight.
- Q **Queen's Audience** — Private; whisper becomes policy.
- K **Dux Commission** — Command mixed unit with pay authority.
- A **Great Law Day** — Proclaim new concord; one temporary exception to old law.

Quick use notes

- Draw until you have all four suits: Spade = place, Heart = actor, Club = pressure, Diamond = leverage. Highest rank sets the main Clock (2–5 → 4, 6–10 → 6, J/Q/K → 8, A → 10).
- Diamonds are codified outcomes (charters/rights/escorts) that change position rather than call for a roll.
- If any A appears, echo **law & bond** motifs—oaths that bind, stones that witness, treaties that remember every hand.

Additional Features

- **Two-Law Balance:** Whenever *jurisdictional conflict* arises (mallus vs basilica, wolf vs eagle), players may step Position up by citing *Foedus Stone* or older precedent—but every use adds tick to **Two-Law (4)** clock. When fills, one side demands exclusive authority.
- **Frontier Diplomacy:** If *Heart* card involves foreign envoy, federate, or mixed-blood courtier, treat first **Diamond** played in scene as doubled leverage. Once per session, deal struck reverberates—advance/start **Border Tension** front.
- **March Markets:** At any *Staple Market*, *Ford*, or *Bridge*, Diamonds tied to rights/escorts may be cashed as currency in lieu of coin, one-for-one. Doing so creates **Ledger Debt** GM may call in later through factions/raiders.

Patronage & Power

In Vilikari society, power flows through the careful balance of multiple legal traditions, the management of frontier diplomacy, and the maintenance of complex oaths and treaties. The Federate King maintains authority through a combination of imperial forms and traditional customs, while local leaders wield influence through their knowledge of both Utaran law and tribal custom. The true power lies with those who can navigate this complex legal and diplomatic landscape while maintaining the loyalty of their people and the respect of their neighbors.

For the GM: Patronage in Vilikari society revolves around legal documents, diplomatic relationships, and the ability to command respect from institutions that operate under multiple legal systems. Rewards often take the form of treaties, charters, and official positions that can be leveraged into greater influence. To emphasize this:

- Tie rewards to visible symbols (seals, writs, treaties) that can be challenged, stolen, or voided.
- Let rival legal systems issue conflicting authorities, forcing players to choose whose favor matters more.
- Use the courts, markets, and frontier posts as arenas for social contests, where knowledge of law and custom determines success.

In Vilikari society, your word is your bond, and your bond determines whether you rule or are ruled.

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

- **Exposure:** Your actions draw unwanted attention from **march officials or tribal elders**.
- **Noise:** Sounds of your actions alert nearby **levy guards or market patrols**.
- **Trace:** Evidence of your passage marks your route for **trackers or treaty keepers**.
- **Delay:** A brief but meaningful setback costs you **time or favorable legal window**.
- **Supply Strain:** Mark +1 segment on a relevant **resource clock**.

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

- **Alarm Raised:** **Horse-Reeve or March Notary** becomes aware and begins responding.
- **Position Lost:** You lose advantageous ground/cover/stealth due to **legal challenge or border closure**.
- **Foe Appears:** A **rival faction or warband** arrives on scene.
- **Gear Trouble:** A piece of equipment becomes **Compromised/Neglected**.
- **Lock/Barrier:** A simple obstacle now requires a test to overcome.

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

- **Reinforcements:** Additional **shield-brothers, levy forces, or foreign troops** arrive.
- **Key Gear Breaks:** A crucial tool/weapon becomes temporarily unusable.

- **Major Twist:** The situation fundamentally changes - **treaty voided/levy called/border dispute erupts.**
- **Rail Tick:** Advance a relevant campaign/front clock by 1 segment.
- **Condition Applied:** Mark **Fatigue 1/Harm 1/Condition** appropriate to fiction.

Major Turns (4+ SB)

- **Trap Springs:** A prepared danger activates with full effect.
- **Authority Arrival: Federate King, Queen of Marches, or Elder of Elders** intervenes.
- **Scene Shift:** The environment changes dramatically - **raid hits/levy called/treaty breaks.**
- **Patron Omen:** Divine/arcane forces take notice - **omen appears/blessing lost/curse manifests.**
- **Narrative Pivot:** The story takes an unexpected turn that reframes objectives.

Region-Specific SB Options

- **Vilikari (Two Laws):** Legal documents contradict each other, courts issue conflicting rulings, oaths bind to different authorities.
- **Vilikari (Frontier Diplomacy):** Treaties expire without warning, foreign envoys demand additional concessions, mixed-blood courtiers shift allegiances.
- **Vilikari (Border Tensions):** Frontier posts close without notice, markets shift locations, safe-conducts are revoked mid-journey.

Vilikari — Laurels and Longhouses

Starting Location: A longhouse hung with laurel garlands and antler trophies, the air thick with mead and judgment.

“In Vilikari, feasts end in trials, and peace lasts only until the cups run dry.”

In... A Longhouse Quarter, a Ykrul Envoy lays a treaty scroll. “The Foedus Stone cracks,” he says. “And the steppe listens.”

Regional Motifs Moot laurels, oath-stones, horse-lords, treaty feasts.

Whispers to Offer “Break bread alone,” “Pocket the treaty seal,” “Name the steppe’s price.”

External Clocks Community: “Feud Rekindled”; Threat: “Envoy’s Trial”; Anchor: “Foedus Stone.”

Complications Longhouse smoke writes terms; horses refuse one PC; the seal sweats brine.

Anchors at Risk A host family; a hearth-blessing.

Escalation Beat The Stone audibly cracks again.

Relief Renew the feast with a difficult apology; ride a night circuit together; bind the seal with hair and oath.

Vilikari — Invisible in Plain Sight

Seen/Unseen Clock (4) When the company leans on Vilikari low profile—switching tongues, wearing the right braid, using local rites—reduce **Exposure** by 1 for a scene. Each time you do, tick **Seen/Unseen**. When it fills, one of these lands:

- **Face in the Crowd:** A local authority assumes you owe duties here; pay (coin, service, or favor) or mark **Position** down.
- **Forgotten Credit:** A past deed is attributed to someone “more official”; lose one stored leverage (GM picks) until publicly reclaimed.
- **Paper Mirror:** Your name appears under a different script; identity challenge triggers a **Law Tangle** at next gate/market.

Clear **Seen/Unseen** by: making a public claim (song, oath, banner) or accepting a small, sticky duty (night watch, tithe escort) for a locale.

Treaty-Feast Procedure To bind a deal over bread and smoke:

1. **Set the Table:** Name 2–3 *terms* (what both sides want) and 1 *taboo* (off-limits).
2. **First Cup (Position):** Roll/social test; success grants +1 die to bargain, failure grants the host 1 SB.
3. **Bread Salt (Offer):** Put *one* leverage on the table (Diamond or oath-promise). Host matches with an obligation (escort, safe-market, or hostage).
4. **Smoke (Test):** GM reveals a Complication tied to *Old Grudges* or *Two Laws*. Resolve or accept a *Rider Clause*.
5. **Knot the Braid:** On success, create a **Feast-Bond (3)** clock that protects both parties from betrayal in that matter while it has segments; on breach, the breaker immediately takes 1–2 SB and the clock flips to **Blood-Owed (3)**.

Cross-Regional Conversions (Vilikari Interfaces)

- **Kahfagia (Lantern-Law):** *Foedus Seal* may stand in for a *Safe-Conduct* along a single beaconed lane once. Doing so ticks **Port Clash**.
- **Ecktoria (Imperial Remnants):** *Roman Patent* counts as *Archive Hour* or *Icon License* in old Utar sites—choose one per session.
- **Vhasia (Fractured Sun):** *Mallus Right* functions as *Low-Justice* in a bastide for a day; first use starts a **Parlement Divided** tick.
- **Viterra (Hedge-Law):** *Wergild Table* can settle a *Quiet Tolls* dispute without duel; convert 1 Club into *Audit Freeze* unless a *Parish Surveyor* is present.
- **Ubral (Stone & Oath):** *Hostage Treaty* counts as *Bride-Escrow* once; if cashed at a Moot, start **Feud Rekindled**.

Region-Specific SB Options (Vilikari Addenda)

- **Invisible Ledger:** A debt you paid “off-book” resurfaces; pay again or name the fixer (create a fragile ally).
- **Twin Court Whiplash:** Basilican clerk and mallus elder arrive together; arguments must be made in *both* forms or lose **Effect**.

- **Forum Bones Stir:** Old mausolea “voice” an imperial claim; papers & oaths suffer disadvantage until rites are observed.

Geography & Borders

The Vilikari marches do *not* touch Vhasia, Thepyrgos, Ubral, or the Valewood. They are land-bordering **Kahfagia** to the southwest, with the **Ecktoria** prefectures to the northwest, the **Aelerian Mountains** along the southern rim, and the **Direwood** pressing from the east. Beyond the northern steppe lie the Ykrul raiders and Linn clans.

“The marches sit between the beaconed lanes of Kahfagia and the paper-forts of Ecktoria, with dwarf-kept passes in the Aelerian spurs and the Direwood’s breath forever clawing at their borders.”

Cross-Regional Conversions

- **Kahfagia (Lantern-Law):** A *Foedus Seal* may stand in for a *Safe-Conduct* once on a beaconed lane. Doing so starts *Port Clash* [2] in the next harbor touched.
- **Ecktoria (Imperial Remnants):** An *Utaran Patent* counts as either *Archive Hour* (scholars open doors) or *Icon License* (display symbols) in Ecktorial sites—choose once per session.
- **Aelerian Mountains (Pass & Toll):** A *Pass-Ring* grants priority at dwarf switchbacks. Cashing it to bypass inspection spawns *Ledger Notice* [3]. A *Guide’s Braid* improves Position on any high-pass travel.
- **Direwood (Breath & Bells):** Spending *Stipend Arrears* for levee labor converts one Direwood Clubs draw into a *Ward-Salt* Diamond for a scene, then begins *Names Disputed* [3] with bell-wardens.

Cross-Region Boss Entanglements

- *Kahfagian Lane War:* Outmaneuvering a **Port-Captain of Lantern-Law** by citing a *Foedus Seal* converts one *Port Clash* into *Stall-Right* for a scene, then ticks *Port Clash* +1 later.
- *Ecktoria’s Paper Teeth:* Defeating the **March Notary** with precedent spawns *Whispered Precedent* [4] in New Raivon’s basilica benches.
- *Aelerian Toll Storm:* Using a **Purple Warrant** to force dwarf passage downgrades one *Bridge Levy* now, but adds *Dwarf Toll Hike* at the next mountain seed.
- *Direwood Breath-Debt:* Ransoming captives from a **Ykrul Storm-Rider** with a foster’s *Name Facet* ticks *Name Leverage* [1], later claimable by Direwood spirits.

Region-Specific SB Options

- **Beacon Audit (Kahfagia):** Lantern-law requires a bonded pilot; lose 1 Effect on smuggling or pay a fee (convert 1 Diamond into a temporary *Pilot Bond*).
- **Prefect’s Recall (Ecktoria):** An Ecktorial clerk “recovers” a settler cohort; your next *Hostage Treaty* is treated as *Foedus Recall* unless countered by *Mallus Right*.
- **Stone Tithe (Aelerian):** Dwarf wardens demand exact weights; failing to provide spawns *Law Tangle* (weights vs. words).
- **Breath on the Wind (Direwood):** A ridge-signal carries a name you meant to keep hidden; mark *Exposure* +1 or pay *Wergild Table* to buy silence.

Map Notes (GM Facing)

- **Southwest:** Kahfagia’s beaconed lanes and river-law bleed inland to staple markets.
- **Northwest:** Ecktoria’s prefectures—paper strong, coffers weak—still field clerks and patents.
- **South:** Aelerian spurs with dwarf switchbacks, toll-stones, and storms that own the high road.
- **East:** The Direwood’s breath; names carry, bells toll, and salt buys only time.

1.28 Viterra — “The Hedge-Law Realm”

Elite (Warrior Queen)

“Every hedge here marks not just a boundary but a principle – the careful balance between order and freedom, justice and mercy. Our law grows like the hedges themselves, tended with precision and patience.”

Commoner (Fen reeve with tally-rod speaking for dike guilds)

“The dikes hold back more than water – they hold back chaos. Every rod measured, every stone placed, keeps the flood from washing away not just our fields but our very way of life.”

Theme & Atmosphere

Viterra breathes with the careful rhythm of precedent and petition. Once a proud kingdom before foreign conquest, now reborn under a Warrior Queen who rules by legal precision as much as military might. The realm’s true sinews lie not in steel but in writs, charters, and the ancient rights that bind lord to tenant, crown to county, and church to common. Every hedge-row, every parish stone, every ferry crossing carries the weight of custom older than memory. Here, a well-placed document can open doors that armies cannot breach, and a single forged seal may topple houses greater than dukes. The Queen maintains her throne through the careful application of law, the manipulation of ancient rights, and the delicate balance between imperial legacy and reclaimed sovereignty.

But law in Viterra is not merely governance—it is warfare. Legal documents are weapons, courtrooms are battlefields, and the pen cuts as deep as any blade.

(Court/Law/Border) Court gossip in Valora’s law quarter; writ-runners queue at dawn; border sheriffs argue over a hay-cart’s toll rights; dueling advocates prepare legal challenges like generals planning campaigns.

Spades — Places (categories)

2. **Fen Causeway** — Stile with toll-rod and eel carts queueing; each reeve claims right to collect under different charter. Dueling advocates argue cases on makeshift platforms.
3. **Hedgerow Green** — In Dales; bows strung under apple trees where justices of the peace hold court beneath makeshift arbors. Court duels permitted for matters of honor.
4. **Beacon Hill** — Above Highlands; fire-grate still warm from last winter’s levy call, signal tower with semaphore arms for legal dispatches and military alerts.
5. **Belworth Stairs** — Ferry ledgers gone damp with river-mist; three manors claim toll rights, writs in three different hands. Legal challenges fought in boats while waiting.
6. **Bloom Quarry** — Old iron-bloom turned drill yard; hammer echoes carry, forge-reeve holds tally of crown contracts. Military contracts awarded through legal bidding wars.
7. **Parish Maze** — Stone maze where three maps disagree; hedge-priest’s vote decides who pays tithe and who holds freehold. Legal disputes settled by navigating the maze correctly.
8. **Fairport Works** — Tideworks at Dolmis mouth; customs writs in three languages flutter, inspectors with magnifying glasses examine every cargo manifest. Maritime law enforcement

includes boarding actions.

9. **Law Quarter** — Valora archives, oath-rooms, Hall of Dawning where precedent birthed in ink and sealed with wax. Adjacent training grounds for legal advocates.
10. **Counting Fields** — Tarlington beside muster ground; wagons load, ledgers mis-sum, auditors with quill-pens and suspicious eyes. Military mustering follows strict legal procedures with armed oversight.
- J **Dike Crown** — Ring of turf and timber; brotherhood bells warn of flood—and spies who move like water through the fen. Legal sanctuary for those fleeing court judgments.
- Q **Progress Camp** — Queen’s canvas palisade, banners stiff, whispering old courtiers plot advancement through legal maneuver and sanctioned duels.
- K **Tilt-Yard** — Hall of Dawning at first light; Dawn-knights drill clean, loyalties in contracts signed with careful pen. Legal challenges often end in trial by combat.
- A **Highway Stone** — Queen’s milestone above Dolmis road; three sheriffs post seals over hers, each claiming different jurisdiction. Territory disputes resolved through armed arbitration.

(Reeve/Guild/Knight/Legal Advocate) Fen reeve with tally-rod speaking for dike guilds; river-carter syndic moving grain faster than rumor; justices of the peace settling disputes with careful pen; master advocates who duel with words and swords.

Hearts — People & Factions (categories)

2. **Fen Reeve** — Tally-rod; speaks for dike guilds, remembers every flood-year’s debts and the charters that govern them. Authorized to call local levies for legal disputes.
3. **River Syndic** — Moves grain faster than rumor; knows which writs matter and which customs officials can be... persuaded. Maintains armed merchant guards.
4. **Parish Surveyor** — Three maps, one opinion; hedge-walks settle more disputes than courts, measures boundaries with careful chain. Expert witness in property disputes.
5. **Dawn Quartermaster** — Ledgers sharper than tongue; logistics before lances, counts every farthing spent in the Queen’s name. Legal authority over military supplies.
6. **Levy Serjeant** — Dales bow calm, cider breath, memory keen for every loophole in the mustering laws. Commands armed civilians in legal enforcement actions.
7. **Cleric-Pair** — Light preacher vs. Everflame canon lawyer; debates decide tithe law, one for the spirit, one for the letter. Religious law carries weight in secular courts.
8. **Fairport Shipwright** — Dolmis cousins; skiff carries more secrets than cargo, knows which manifests to forge and which to honor. Expert in maritime law and naval combat.
9. **Fenwood Comptroller** — Conjures wagons with signature, silence with seal, counts the Queen’s coin and tracks every debt owed to the crown. Legal authority over taxation.
10. **Queen’s Justiciar** — Law on road, polite as noose; bearing three kings’ judgments and a purse full of pardons for the right price. Authorized to conduct trial by combat.
- J **Border Routier** — Reads ledgers as ambushes; serves two crowns, collects from both, knows which border posts take bribes in what coin. Expert in frontier law enforcement.
- Q **Warrior Queen** — Crown on helm, sword at side, patient sums behind gaze; rules by law’s sharp edge and knows every precedent that supports her claim. Final arbiter in legal duels.
- K **Crown Council** — Fenwood dukes, guild envoys, abbots; weighing grain against glory, charters against coin, precedent against practicality. Legal battles fought through proxy

advocates.

- A **Master Advocate Halric** — Silver-tongued legal warrior who settles disputes through verbal duels that can end in physical combat. Keeper of the legal combat traditions.

(Writ/Charter/Duel/Legal Challenge) Dike breach in black-rain; wrong reeve claims credit while wagons drown; feast-day clash of Light vs. Everflame processions; secret meetings in counting houses; legal duels fought in courtyards.

Clubs — Complications/Threats (categories)

2. **Dike Breach** — Black-rain; wrong reeve claims credit while wagons drown, insurance claims and liability writs fly like autumn leaves. Legal liability may require armed enforcement.
 3. **Feast Clash** — Light vs. Everflame processions collide; shutters slam, writs fly, justices of the peace called to settle which holy day takes precedence. Honor disputes may require legal duels.
 4. **Quiet Tolls** — Sprout on Queen's Highway; escorts sniff traps, sheriffs argue rights, customs officials demand duties no one knew existed. Territorial disputes resolved through armed arbitration.
 5. **Audit Freeze** — Counting-house freezes cargo; Queen's seal vs. old writs, auditors with suspicious eyes and quill-pens sharp as daggers. Legal challenges may escalate to physical confrontation.
 6. **Border Snarl** — Three courts arrest same hay-cart; whose hay is it? Which lord's charter takes precedence? Bribes flow like wine. Frontier justice often involves armed standoffs.
 7. **Isle Refusal** — Theona withholds levy; quays choke on rumor, ships idle while lawyers debate maritime law and ancient treaties. Naval blockades become legal enforcement actions.
 8. **Delta Spat** — Fairport vs. Marcott customs; barges stack three deep, merchants pick sides, inspectors with magnifying glasses examine every manifest. Trade disputes fought with merchant guards.
 9. **Routier Arrears** — Free-company flips unless someone pays; your name on ledger, debt owed to men who know the price of blood. Legal debts enforced through hired swords.
 10. **Salt Pinch** — Import spikes, bakers barricade; Queen's promise tastes like thin gruel, merchants hoard salt like gold, riots brew in back alleys. Economic warfare becomes physical conflict.
- J **Dawn Recall** — Escort pulled to flood-struck parish; writ argues with river, justices demand inquiry into who neglected the dikes. Military enforcement of legal judgments.
- Q **Aberielist Intrigue** — Royalist seals in wrong hands; Queen's patience thins, conspirators plot in counting houses, whispers of rebellion. Treason charges carry death penalty in legal duels.
- K **Levy Call-Up** — Dalesmen mustered; your wagons seized "for the realm," conscription writs signed with careful pen, families left to tend fields alone. Legal authority backed by armed force.
- A **Legal Duel Challenge** — Master Advocate Halric issues formal challenge; refuse and lose legal standing, accept and risk life and fortune in court-yard combat. The ultimate legal weapon.

(**Bribe/Seal/Writ/Duel Warrant**) Ferry priority at Belworth crossing; dike-work allotment with brotherhood labor granted; market license sealed with proper wax; sanctioned duel to settle property dispute.

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (categories)

2. **Ferry Priority** — Belworth crossing (once); horn answers, though perhaps wrong ferry, customs officials look the other way for the right coin. Legal right of way backed by armed escort.
 3. **Dike Allotment** — Brotherhood labor granted if three clerks convinced and proper bribes distributed among the right hands. Work performed under legal contract with military oversight.
 4. **Market License** — Valora’s square; guild nod still needed, but the right seal on the right parchment opens many doors. Legal protection from merchant guild enforcement.
 5. **Dawn Escort** — Four lances at dawn; loyalty waxes and wanes with pay, but their presence keeps lesser men from troubling you. Legal authority to enforce your writs.
 6. **River Charter** — Guaranteed haul on grain artery—weather permitting and proper duties paid to the right officials. Legal right protected by river patrol.
 7. **Map Correction** — Hedge moves, borders shift, lawsuits bloom; a new survey can make or break a man’s fortune overnight. Legal survey backed by armed surveyors.
 8. **Customs Seal** — Fairport for Dolmis cargo; honored today, disputed tomorrow, but tonight it clears the way for what needs moving. Legal immunity from customs enforcement.
 9. **Thing Ruling** — Sharp local bite, but appeals run swifter than oaths; justice swift but not always just, depending on which purse feeds the judge. Court decisions enforceable by local levy.
 10. **Salt Allotment** — Winter depot; Queen’s writ opens, old hands still count sacks, but the right connections ensure the best salt reaches the right tables. Legal monopoly backed by military force.
- J **Wardship** — Minor fen-keep; men-at-arms “for now,” tutor has plans, but the right guardian can be found for the right price. Legal guardianship with military authority.
- Q **Queen’s Audience** — Private; her questions strike like thrusts, but her favors can elevate a man from nothing to something overnight. Royal decree carries immediate enforcement power.
- K **Ducal Warrant** — Fenwood to enforce customs; old power bows, new power watches, but the parchment carries weight in any court. Legal authority backed by noble house military.
- A **Duel Sanction** — Right to challenge in legal combat; Queen’s seal makes it official, Dawn-knights serve as seconds, winner takes all legally. Ultimate legal enforcement mechanism.

Quick use notes

- Draw until you have all four suits: Spade = place, Heart = actor, Club = pressure, Diamond = leverage. Highest rank sets the main Clock (2–5 → 4, 6–10 → 6, J/Q/K → 8, A → 10).
- Diamonds are codified outcomes (writs/charters/priority) that change position rather than call for a roll.
- If any A appears, echo **hedge-law** motif—boundaries blur, charters contradict, precedent splinters, and the careful web of legal authority shows its cracks. Legal warfare escalates to

physical conflict.

Additional Features

- **Hedge-Law Momentum:** When valid *writ*, *charter*, or *warrant* presented in proper parish, step **Position** up one category on social/logistical actions in locale for scene. First contradiction starts **Border-Lace (4)** clock; advance each time competing papers invoked.
- **Beacon & Bell Chain:** If two adjacent *beacons* or *brotherhood bells* under your influence, convert one **Club** draw into travel delay for *others* while party proceeds with improved **Effect** for movement/logistics. Signal draws scrutiny; GM may bank 1 SB tied to local authority.
- **River-Right Window:** At ferry, tidework, or customs stair, play any **Diamond** tied to crossings/seals to open short *window of lawful passage*: one convoy passes uninspected, or one cargo clears at priority. Window closes immediately if storm, audit, or levy card revealed.
- **Legal Duel Protocol:** When legal disputes cannot be resolved through argument, parties may challenge to duel. Winner's position becomes legally binding. Requires proper sanction and seconds.

Patronage & Power

In Viterra, power flows through the careful application of law, the management of ancient rights, and the delicate balance between imperial legacy and reclaimed sovereignty. The Warrior Queen maintains authority through a combination of military might and legal precision, while the old duchies and local officials wield influence through their knowledge of traditional customs and hedge-law. The true power lies with those who can navigate this complex legal landscape and maintain the appearance of legitimate authority while building genuine support.

But remember—in Viterra, law is warfare. Every document is a weapon, every courtroom a battlefield, and every advocate a soldier. The pen cuts as deep as any blade, and legal victory can be as decisive as military conquest.

For the GM: Patronage in Viterra revolves around legal documents, local rights, and the ability to command respect from institutions that are still finding their post-imperial identity. Rewards often take the form of writs, charters, and official positions that can be leveraged into greater influence. To emphasize this:

- Tie rewards to visible symbols (seals, writs, charters) that can be challenged, stolen, or voided.
- Let rival duchies issue conflicting authorities, forcing players to choose whose favor matters more.
- Use the courts, parishes, and muster grounds as arenas for social contests, where knowledge of law and custom determines success.
- When legal conflicts escalate beyond words, transition naturally to physical confrontation with appropriate stakes.

In Viterra, your papers are your power, and your power determines whether you rule or are ruled. But when words fail, steel speaks—and the law says both are valid.

Legal Combat System

Dueling Advocates

When legal disputes cannot be resolved through negotiation, parties may engage in formal legal duels. These combine verbal sparring with physical combat:

Phase 1: Pleadings

- Each advocate presents their case (Wits + Sway vs. DV 3)
- Success grants +1 die to next phase
- Failure creates 1 SB that opponent can spend

Phase 2: Cross-Examination

- Attack opponent’s arguments (Wits + Insight vs. DV 3)
- Success inflicts Fatigue 1 on opponent
- Critical success (6+ dice showing 6) forces opponent to answer truthfully

Phase 3: Trial by Combat (if unresolved)

- Physical combat with legal stakes
- Winner’s position becomes legally binding
- Loser suffers legal consequences plus physical harm

Courtroom Combat

Legal proceedings can become physical when tempers flare:

Position Modifiers:

- **Dominant:** Prepared arguments, proper documentation (+1 die)
- **Controlled:** Interrupted proceedings, missing evidence (standard)
- **Desperate:** Outnumbered advocates, hostile crowd (-1 die)

Legal Weapons:

- **Precedent:** Cite relevant case law (+1 Effect)
- **Witnesses:** Call expert testimony (+1 die)
- **Evidence:** Present damning documents (+2 dice, but may create SB)
- **Rhetoric:** Inspire crowd support (+1 Position)

Escalation to Violence: When courtroom combat fails to resolve disputes:

- **Challenge to Arms:** Formal duel with legal sanction
- **Court Riot:** Mob violence with unpredictable consequences
- **Military Intervention:** Dawn-knights enforce legal judgments
- **Appeal to Higher Authority:** Escalate to Crown Council or Queen herself

Economic Warfare Mechanics

Trade War Clock [6]

When economic disputes arise, track the escalating conflict:

- 1-2: Price manipulation, rumor spreading

- 3-4: Boycotts, supply disruption
- 5-6: Merchant guard conflicts, property damage
- Filled: Open warfare between merchant houses

Market Manipulation

Players can engage in economic warfare through legal means:

- **Guild Sanctions:** Legal exclusion from markets
- **Customs Interference:** Legal delays and inspections
- **Contract Sabotage:** Forged or broken business agreements
- **Reputation Attacks:** Legal defamation campaigns

Religious Legal Integration

Canon Law Conflicts

Religious authority carries legal weight in Viterra:

- **Light Preacher:** Civil law takes precedence, but religious oaths carry weight
- **Everflame Canon Lawyer:** Religious law supersedes civil in spiritual matters
- **Mixed Tribunals:** Joint religious-civil courts for moral crimes
- **Excommunication:** Legal disability in addition to spiritual consequences

Regional Legal Variations

Fen Law

- Water rights take precedence over land rights
- Dike maintenance is community responsibility
- Flood liability determined by ancient customs

Highland Law

- Property boundaries determined by beacon lines
- Military service obligations tied to land holdings
- Frontier justice allows for immediate enforcement

Coastal Law

- Maritime law supersedes land law within sight of shore
- Salvage rights carefully defined and contested
- Foreign vessel treatment governed by treaty law

Viterra — Hedge-Law on the March

Starting Location: The Hall of Dawning tilt-yard at first light, where advocates rehearse arguments as Dawn-knights rehearse cuts.

“In Viterra, a seal is a sword you carry in your pocket.”

In... The Law Quarter, a Queen’s Justiciar slides a parchment across an oaken rail. “Three charters, one road,” they say. “Carry the Queen’s writ to Belworth, break the Quiet Tolls, and make the sheriffs agree—by clause or by cut.”

Regional Motifs Hedge-bounds, beacon chains, writ-runners, duel warrants, parish maps that don’t agree.

Whispers to Offer “Forge the second seal,” “Call a dawn duel,” “Re-survey the hedge and move the world.”

External Clocks Threat: *Border-Lace Snarls*; Community: *Tax Riot at Fairport*; Anchor: *Dawn-Order Prestige*; (optional) Fracture: *Three Laws, One Road*.

Complications Beacons mis-signal; two sheriffs post rival notices; a guild clerk “finds” an older clause.

Anchors at Risk A parish reeve who signed for you; a ferryman family at Belworth; a Dawn-knight second with your reputation in their mouth.

Escalation Beat A bell peals the wrong hour and every warrant dated this morning becomes “yesterday.”

Relief Produce a superior map (Map Correction) to reset *Border-Lace* by 1; host a hedge-moot to swap oaths (spend 2 to downgrade a riot); submit to a sanctioned legal duel to collapse a three-way claim into one enforceable ruling.

Region-Specific SB Options (Viterra)

- **Hedge-Law Tangles:** Boundary stones “walk,” parish lines disagree aloud, clerks insist your seal’s wax is the wrong shade.
- **Beacon Precedent:** A signal tower cites case-law; lights encode rulings; your opponent argues by mirror until dawn.
- **Queenspeace Clause:** Any brawl on a milestone becomes court; weapons sheathed or pay treble fines in public.

Cross-Regional Entanglements

- **Into Ubral:** *Ducal Warrant* acts as *Guest-Token* once at a clan hearth, but starts a *Feud Rekindled* tick if you collect tolls twice in a tenday.
- **Into Theona:** *Ferry Priority* overrides a local taboo once; if the Ninth custom is in play, the writ “forgets” one clause on use (GM banks 1 SB).
- **Into Vhasia:** *Duel Sanction* is recognized on the Pont-du-Tithe—but a rival abbey can convert it into *Parlement Divided* on a Club draw.

Quick Hook: If any **A** appears in Viterra, echo **hedge-law**: boundary stones contradict maps, beacons cite precedent, and a single clause rearranges a road’s authority for a scene.

Conspiracy Flourishes (keep it close, keep it quiet)

- **Hedge-Moots at Dusk:** Parish elders “trim hedges” while trading sealed whispers.
- **Cipher Roses:** Folded writs stamped with thorn-petals; one petal missing marks a false clause.
- **Mirror Hours:** Beacons flash lawful signals—reversed for those who know the counter-code.
- **Eel-Letters:** Oiled parchment smuggled in eel-baskets; ink runs in water, truth does not.
- **Quiet Steel, Quieter Quills:** Dawn-knights duel at first light; advocates settle three duels before breakfast with ink alone.
- **Progress Masks:** Courtiers wear legal devices as masque motifs (seal, chain, beacon) to signal faction at a glance.
- **Bell Penance:** A single off-hour peal grants amnesty to those who confess a clause before the twelfth echo.

Boss Hooks (three faces of the hedge)

The Violet Clerk (Master of Counter-Seals) *Face:* Mild, ink-stained, never without a candle-box. *Wants:* To prove the Queen’s title by destroying every rival document—without touching a sword. *Moves:* Produces “earlier” patents; splits a single writ into two contradictory copies; declares a *Seal Fast* (paper cannot change hands for a scene). *Mechanic—Seal Pressure [4]:* Each time you flash leverage (Diamond), tick *Seal Pressure*. At 4, one held Diamond is ruled *void unless defended* (treat a social as Desperate but +1 Effect if you cite precedent).

The Thorn Captain (Queen’s Quiet Hand) *Face:* Dawn-cloak, bare helm, oath on the tongue. *Wants:* To keep the Queen alive by pruning conspiracies at the root. *Moves:* Names a *Queenspace Zone* (weapons sheathed or fines triple), calls a sanctioned *Duel Warrant*, swaps the field—court becomes tilt-yard. *Mechanic—Peace or Point:* When the Captain appears, party must choose: *Peace* (improve Position, but GM banks 1 SB) or *Point* (enter a 3-exchange duel; winning sets a binding ruling for this scene).

The Saffron Abbess (Keeper of Bell-Law) *Face:* Ember eyes, quiet hands, ledger of souls and ships. *Wants:* To bind river, parish, and beacon to one holy timetable. *Moves:* Rings a *Wrong Hour* (dates slide a day), blesses or damns a seal, invokes mixed tribunal on the spot. *Mechanic—Bell-Ledger [3]:* Each scene under her gaze, mark 1 if you profit by clause or tide. At 3, she claims *tithe in truth*: reveal one hidden fact or lose 1 Effect until confessed.

Micro-Mechanics (plug-and-play)

Mask & Measure Dial (Public Loyalty ↔ Private Fealty) Track the party’s posture during intrigue. *Public High:* +1 Position when acting under open writ or beacon. First covert act each session starts one step worse. *Private High:* +1 Effect on clandestine bargains/forgeries. First public petition or duel starts one step worse. *Center:* Host a hedge-moot, surrender a forged clause, or escort a rival safely through a parish.

Clause Gambits (1/scene if fiction fits)

- *Ink Substitution*: Downgrade a hostile **Club** to *Audit Freeze* but start *Border-Lace* +1.
- *Beacon Appeal*: Treat one social as if backed by a *Bellmark* (once); next beacon scene begins one step worse.
- *Hedge Survey*: Swap Place for Pressure: convert a muddled location into a crisp legal obstacle (Lock/Barrier appears, but +1 die to crack it).

Conspiracy Tick (table safety switch) Any time the party lies with a seal, bribes a clerk, or dodges levy by clause, tick *Conspiracy* [4]. At 2: an ally gains leverage over you (minor blackmail). At 4: a faction forces a choice—burn a contact or face *Legal Duel Challenge*.

Start-of-Scene Rumors (1d6, low-noise)

1. *Wrong Wax*: your rival’s seals softened; +1d to forgeries this scene.
2. *Empty Beacon*: tower unmanned; travel faster, scrutiny harsher.
3. *Dawn-Lane Cleared*: first convoy action gains +1 Position.
4. *Clerk’s Wedding*: filings delayed; first petition ignores *Audit Freeze*.
5. *Fen High Water*: ferries slow; river-charters count double value.
6. *Mask at Progress*: someone at court uses your name; +1d to social opens, +1 SB banked by GM.

Quick Seeds

- **Three Charters, One Road**: Deliver the Queen’s writ before the Abbess rings the Wrong Hour.
- **Seal of Eels**: An eel-basket ledger names a traitor—prove it without drawing steel.
- **Mirror on Beacon Hill**: A rival signals treason in code; decode or duel by dawn.

1.29 The Ways Between — “Spiritways & Veilways”

Elite (The Wayfinder)

“I exist only in the moment of choice, the breath between one path and another. To guide here is to understand that every way leads somewhere, but only the wise know which somethings are worth the journey.”

Commoner (Lost Pilgrim who thinks they’re going home but forgot where)

“The paths here don’t care where you think you’re going – they care where you need to be. Best walk softly and listen to what the waystones whisper when you pass.”

Theme & Atmosphere

Between Death and Dreams lies a country of crossings. Roads remember promises; milestones remember names you never spoke. The Ways Between do not measure miles—they measure choices. Walk softly, pay what the path asks, and mind which version of you arrives.

(Path/Crossing/Threshold) Mist-shrouded ford where water runs uphill; footsteps echo backwards; bone-lit corridor where shadows walk walls.

Spades — Places (categories)

2. **Mist-Ford** — Water runs uphill; footsteps echo backwards through time.
3. **Bone Corridor** — Shadows walk walls but never touch floor; light as memory.
4. **Threshold Arch** — Shows reflection as someone you might have been; past as mirror.
5. **Spiral Path** — Ascends but returns to same stone marker; journey as meditation.
6. **Promise Bridge** — Cross with vow and it remembers your debt; oath as toll.
7. **Crossroads** — All four paths lead to same destination, different tomorrows.
8. **Stone Circle** — Marks where village used to be; houses now constellations.
9. **Memory Tunnel** — Hear thoughts of those who passed here; past as echo.
10. **Fossil Stairs** — Each step is eye that watches ascent; climb as scrutiny.
- J **Waystation** — Keeper trades in unfinished conversations; words as currency.
- Q **Junction** — Paths physically collide; choose which reality to follow.
- K **Long Mile** — Road stretches differently for each traveler; distance as perception.
- A **Thirteenth Stone** — Where path reveals its true destination; truth as revelation.

(Wayfarer/Spirit/Dream-walker) Lost pilgrim who thinks they’re going home but forgot where; toll-taker accepting payment in forgotten memories.

Hearts — Travelers & Guides (categories)

2. **Lost Pilgrim** — Thinks going home but forgot where; destination as memory.
3. **Toll-Taker** — Accepts payment in memories you didn’t know you had.
4. **Wayward Guide** — Directions technically correct, morally questionable.

5. **Dream-Merchant** — Sack of nightmares, one perfect dream for sale.
6. **Child-Ghost** — Knows shortcuts but charges in riddles; wisdom as puzzle.
7. **Wounded Walker** — Bleeding metaphor; pain grows thorns along path.
8. **Map-Merchant** — Selling maps to places that don’t exist yet; future as commodity.
9. **Guide-Dog** — Shadow and starlight; follows those who walk with purpose.
10. **Backwards Pilgrim** — Moving through time; steps erase what just happened.
 - J **Soul-Ferryman** — Carries luggage of living; burden as service.
 - Q **Road’s Child** — Born where paths crossed, raised by waymarks; navigation as instinct.
 - K **Dead-Road Keeper** — Ensures proper passage for those who shouldn’t walk.
 - A **The Wayfinder** — Exists only in moment choice is made; decision as entity.

(**Veil-Thin/Dream-Bleed/Wayward**) Path loops back to show your funeral preparations; reality thins—you see dreams of sleeping travelers.

Clubs — Complications/Threats (categories)

2. **Funeral Loop** — Path shows your funeral preparations; death as destination.
3. **Reality Thins** — See dreams of sleeping travelers; boundary as veil.
4. **Waymark Lies** — Points wrong; trust leads to places that never were.
5. **Dream-Bleed** — Waking memories become someone else’s nightmares.
6. **Toll Demanded** — Currency you didn’t know you carried; payment as revelation.
7. **Path Split** — Each version remembers you differently; identity as choice.
8. **Gravity Shifts** — Emotional weight grows physically heavy; burden as physics.
9. **Time-Sickness** — Arrive before you left; paradox shadows follow.
10. **Truth Payment** — Road remembers your lies and demands truth-payment.
 - J **Crossroads Judgment** — Path chosen judges ones you didn’t; decision as karma.
 - Q **Memory-Thief** — Rest stop keeper pays in counterfeit recollections.
 - K **Forbidden Path** — Opens only for those already lost; loss as key.
 - A **Convergence** — All travelers arrive together, none recall how; arrival as mystery.

(**True Name/Safe Passage/Waywisdom**) Waymark that always points toward next important choice; token of passage road recognizes you as belonging.

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (categories)

2. **Choice Compass** — Always points toward your next important choice.
3. **Passage Token** — Road recognizes you as one who belongs.
4. **Dream-Catcher** — Filters nightmares from your rest; sleep as sanctuary.
5. **Truth-Compass** — Points to what you most need to know, not want.
6. **Memory-Anchor** — Keeps you from losing yourself in deeper paths.
7. **Safe Haven** — Guaranteed rest stop without complication.
8. **Guide-Light** — Burns color of your truest intention; purpose as beacon.
9. **Path-Cutter** — Cuts distance through metaphor, not space.

10. **Debt-Clearing** — Road forgives one obligation you thought you owed.

J **Crossroads Boon** — Choose among three paths, each exactly where you need.

Q **Way-Wisdom** — Understand language of paths and signs for one journey.

K **Grace Passage** — Walk safely through any dangerous crossing for one night.

A **Road's Name** — Call path by true name and command its nature.

Quick use notes

- Draw until you have all four suits: Spade = place, Heart = actor, Club = pressure, Diamond = leverage. Highest rank sets the main Clock (2–5 → 4, 6–10 → 6, J/Q/K → 8, A → 10).
- Diamonds are codified outcomes (true names/safe passages/waywisdom) that change position rather than call for a roll.
- If any A appears, echo **dream-road** motifs—reflections that lie, paths that judge, destinations that choose traveler.

Additional Features

- **Dream-Logic Navigation:** Any Ace introduces metaphysical requirement (sacrifice, taboo, exchange) that must be satisfied to pass. Name it at table; road will enforce it.
- **Reflection Points:** Face cards show alternate selves or unlived choices. Treat as temporary NPCs or scene tags that can help, hinder, or tempt.
- **Memory Currency:** Diamonds may be traded for knowledge or safe passage as if they were memories. Describe memory paid; path (or keeper) pays in kind.

Patronage & Power

In the Ways Between, power flows through understanding the metaphysical nature of paths, the ability to navigate dream-logic, and the careful management of obligations and truths. The true authorities are those who know the True Names of paths, can mediate between alternate versions of travelers, and understand the currency of memory and choice. Power here is not about commanding others, but about understanding the fundamental nature of journey and destination.

For the GM: Patronage in the Ways Between revolves around guidance, safe passage, and the ability to navigate metaphysical requirements. Rewards often take the form of waymarks, tokens, and knowledge that can be leveraged into greater understanding. To emphasize this:

- Tie rewards to visible symbols (tokens, compasses, lights) that can be challenged, stolen, or voided.
- Let rival guides issue conflicting directions, forcing players to choose whose favor matters more.
- Use the crossroads, waystations, and thresholds as arenas for social contests, where knowledge of path-logic determines success.

In the Ways Between, your understanding is your power, and your power determines whether you walk or are walked.

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

- **Exposure:** Your actions draw unwanted attention from **path keepers** or **wayward spirits**.
- **Noise:** Sounds of your actions alert nearby **travelers** or **memory echoes**.
- **Trace:** Evidence of your passage marks your route for **trackers** or **reflection points**.
- **Delay:** A brief but meaningful setback costs you **time** or **favorable path alignment**.
- **Supply Strain:** Mark +1 segment on a relevant **resource clock**.

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

- **Alarm Raised:** **Toll-taker** or **wayward guide** becomes aware and begins responding.
- **Position Lost:** You lose advantageous ground/cover/stealth due to **path shift** or **reality thinning**.
- **Foe Appears:** A **memory-thief** or **forbidden path entity** arrives on scene.
- **Gear Trouble:** A piece of equipment becomes **Compromised/Neglected**.
- **Lock/Barrier:** A simple obstacle now requires a test to overcome.

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

- **Reinforcements:** Additional **wayward spirits**, **path entities**, or **alternate selves** arrive.
- **Key Gear Breaks:** A crucial tool/weapon becomes temporarily unusable.
- **Major Twist:** The situation fundamentally changes - **path loops/time shifts/reality fractures**.
- **Rail Tick:** Advance a relevant campaign/front clock by 1 segment.
- **Condition Applied:** Mark **Fatigue 1/Harm 1/Condition** appropriate to fiction.

Major Turns (4+ SB)

- **Trap Springs:** A prepared danger activates with full effect.
- **Authority Arrival:** **The Wayfinder**, **Dead-Road Keeper**, or **Road’s Child** intervenes.
- **Scene Shift:** The environment changes dramatically - **reality thins/paths converge/time loops**.
- **Patron Omen:** Divine/arcane forces take notice - **omen appears/blessing lost/curse manifests**.
- **Narrative Pivot:** The story takes an unexpected turn that reframes objectives.

Region-Specific SB Options

- **Ways Between (Dream-Logic):** Paths rearrange without warning, reflections speak unbidden, destinations shift mid-journey.
- **Ways Between (Memory Currency):** Memories become tangible, forgotten knowledge resurfaces, past and present blur.
- **Ways Between (Choice Consequences):** Decisions echo forward, alternate selves appear, paths judge moral weight.

Ways Between — Spiritways and Veilways

Starting Location: A crossroad shrine of black glass stones, where travelers meet their reflections coming the other way.

“In the Ways Between, direction is prayer, and memory the toll you pay to arrive.”

In... A Crossroads, a Backwards Pilgrim walks toward them. “The Thirteenth Stone speaks,” they say. “But the path chooses who arrives.”

Regional Motifs Reverse time, directional law, pilgrim riddles, stone tongues.

Whispers to Offer “Turn around,” “Step off the path,” “Answer the stone’s question with a lie.”

External Clocks Fracture: “Paths Decide”; Threat: “Pilgrim Reckoning”; Anchor: “Wayhouse Refuge.”

Complications Footprints arrive before feet; milestones hum; maps eat corners.

Anchors at Risk A wayhouse keeper; a holy token.

Escalation Beat The road passes through the party.

Relief Walk the path backward together; speak the truth you avoid; leave a cherished thing at the Stone.

Path-Moves & Procedures

Weighing of Steps (Travel Move) When the company enters a liminal path (Mist-Ford, Bone Corridor, etc.), choose one:

- **Pay the Toll:** Each PC names a small truth or a fond memory (GM: 1 SB banked, +1 Position on navigation).
- **Refuse the Toll:** +1d on Speed, but start a **Way-Debt (4)** clock.
- **Bargain the Toll:** Trade a *Diamond* reward as if it were a memory (see Memory Exchange, below); cancel one imminent *Club* card in this scene.

When **Way-Debt** fills, trigger *Crossroads Judgment* at the next junction.

Reflection Duel (Social/Moral Test) When confronted by an alternate self or *Reflection Point*, state what that self wants from you and roll your best social action.

- **Success:** Gain a *Guide-Light* tag for the scene and clear 1 tick from **Paths Decide**.
- **Mixed:** Trade places for one exchange or take a **Condition: Disoriented**.
- **Miss:** The reflection walks away with one of your *Diamonds* (GM picks the most narratively apt).

Way-Sanctuary (Making Camp) If you can name a waystone’s title (e.g., “Mourner’s Mile,” “Bridge of First Promises”), you may establish a **Safe Haven**:

- Spend 1 *Diamond* or 1 vivid memory (see table) to lock out *Clubs* until dawn.
- Anyone who sleeps here must either *forget* a minor slight or *remember* a painful truth; mark **Paths Decide** down by 1 tick.

Memory Exchange (Rates & Risks)

Memory Offered	Buys You	Side Effect
A childhood smell, a nickname	+1 Position on one crossing	A familiar place feels strange for a scene
A first failure or small betrayal	Cancel one minor Complication	You gain a <i>tell</i> (the Ways recognize you)
A true fear you’ve never said	<i>Guide-Light</i> or <i>Way-Cord</i> -like effect	A dream pursues you for 1–3 nights
A kept promise’s details	<i>Safe Passage</i> for the party	NPC tied to that promise misremembers you
The meaning of a scar	Convert one <i>Club</i> into <i>Trace</i> only	Scar “moves” (cosmetic) until next dawn
A perfect day (all details)	Treat next <i>Heart</i> face as an ally	Start Dream-Bleed (3) on the map

Exchange Rule: If you pay the same *kind* of memory twice in a journey, start **Hollowing (4)**. When it fills, you gain the *Backwards Pilgrim* tag until you reclaim what was lost.

Way-Keys & Taboos (d6)

1. **Speak Last:** Only the final word said at a gate is true; others are “practice.” First speakers take -1d on next test.
2. **Step Odd:** Crossings require odd-numbered steps; even counts loop you one scene.
3. **Name Nothing:** True names wake *Name-Theft*; use titles or lose a *Diamond*.
4. **Wet Iron:** A drop of water on iron cancels one glamour once per scene.
5. **Back Gift:** Leave something behind to go forward; refuse and tick **Way-Debt**.
6. **Answer Bent:** Answer a stone’s question with a metaphor, not fact, or trigger *Truth Payment*.

Omens & Atmospherics (d8)

1. Footprints precede the party by three paces, then vanish.
2. Milestones hum in harmony with a PC’s heartbeat.
3. Shadows detach to point at a different path.
4. A map eats its corner and reveals a new legend mark.
5. Wind smells like a long-forgotten room.
6. A bell rings where there is no bell; time skips one breath.
7. You meet someone you haven’t decided to be yet.
8. A coin lands on its edge and stays that way until the next choice.

Cross-Regional Conversions (Using Diamonds Across the Map)

- **Valewood:** *Road's Name* may count as a *Valeheart Clause* once if spoken under leaves; doing so creates **Court Tithe (2)**.
- **Mistlands:** *Grace Passage* functions as *Pall Indulgence* over one levee crown at night; ring a bell after or start **Witchlight Count**.
- **Vhasia:** *Way-Wisdom* can be presented as “pilgrim right” to bypass one *Interdict* barrier; begin **Parlement Divided** tick.
- **Viterr:** *Passage Token* can be notarized into a temporary *Ferry Priority*; on use, advance **Border-Lace**.
- **Ubral:** *Memory-Anchor* counts as *Guest-Token* at one hearth if you recount a family road-tale.
- **Silkstrand:** *Path-Cutter* doubles as a night-boat route once; spend 1 favor with a smuggler or trigger *Seal Counterfeit*.
- **Linn:** *Choice Compass* acts as a *Pilot's Token* in reed-maze if you pay a name to the water.
- **Theona:** *Crossroads Boon* allows counting “eight-and-one” to cross an *Uncounted Bridge* safely once.

Region-Specific SB Addenda (Ways Between)

- **Forked Proof:** Evidence splits: one version exonerates, one condemns. Choose which survives into waking.
- **Promise Echo:** An oath you overheard... was yours. Honor it or mark **Way-Debt +2**.
- **Borrowed Dawn:** You arrive at sunrise you did not earn; take -1d until you “return” evening with a deed.

NPC Templates (Quick-Slot)

Waystation Keeper (Words-Monger) *Wants:* To complete a conversation they died before finishing. *Sells:* Missing lines of arguments, last pages of letters. *Cost:* One unsent message or a truth about why you never sent it.

Dead-Road Beadle *Wants:* Proper order: living to inns, dead to ferries. *Sells:* Escorts, obol accounting, corpse-rights. *Cost:* A coin that mattered (keepsake, not currency).

Road's Child *Wants:* To see a crossroads they've never met. *Gives:* +1 Position if you follow their game rules. *Twist:* They can't cross consecrated thresholds.

Escalation Clocks

Paths Decide (6) 1–2: Waymarks contradict gently. 3–4: An alternate self appears with a better plan. 5: Route demands a sacrifice named by the GM. 6: The Wayfinder arrives; accept their chosen destination or pay *Road's Name* to defy it.

Pilgrim Reckoning (4) 1: You are recognized by a procession that hasn't started. 2–3: Their destination is yours now. 4: Your *Safe Haven* is requisitioned as a shrine.

Way-Debt (4) 1: Prices rise (memories cost one step higher). 2–3: A *Toll-Taker* marks you with chalk only spirits can see. 4: *Forbidden Path* opens; refusing it imposes -1 Position until dawn.

Encounter Seeds (1–3 sentences)

- **The Promise Bridge’s Receipt:** An old vow you never spoke was logged here; to cross, define when you would have sworn it and to whom.
- **Thirteenth Stone Auction:** The stone sells three possible endings; each buyer is you from a different failure.
- **Bone Corridor Choir:** Shadows sing a name wrong by one letter; correct it and gain *Truth-Compass*, ignore it and start **Name-Theft**.

Designer Hooks (Optional)

True-Name Craft Once per journey, a PC may *forg* a minor way-name (e.g., “Courier’s Cut”) by binding a shared memory to a short route:

- Spend 1–2 *Diamonds* and narrate the founding memory.
- Gain +1 Effect on travel using that name.
- Each public use adds 1 tick to **Convergence** as others learn it.

Convergence Event (When Filled) All travelers you’ve intersected with arrive at once; resolve three debts (owed, unowed, mistaken) before the junction dissolves.

Liminal Flourishes (low-noise, high vibe)

- **Chalk Whispers:** Waystones sprout faint chalk notes that only answer if you erase one first.
- **Coin on Edge:** Any tossed coin that lands upright marks a *True Choice* nearby.
- **Borrowed Footsteps:** Your echo belongs to someone else; following it grants +1 Position once.
- **Sleeper’s Draft:** Dew beading on mile-markers is drinkable: 1 sip = remember one forgotten detail, but the path remembers *you*.
- **Veil Static:** Hair lifts in still air; that’s two realities brushing. Passing through grants brief *double-sight* (ask one question about the “other” leg).

Boss Hooks (three keepers of crossing)

The Archivist of Unmade Roads *Face:* Cloak stitched from surveyor’s cords, quills like thorns. *Wants:* To file every path choice you *didn’t* take. *Moves:* Produces *Receipts of Refusal* (paper truths that make alternatives real), files a *Stay of Journey* (travel pauses until a memory is surrendered). *Clock—Unfiled Options [4]:* Tick when you bypass a detour. At 4, one *Place* redraws as its “unmade” twin for a scene (GM picks).

The Toll-Matriarch Beneath the Bridge *Face:* Many hands, one voice like wet stone. *Wants:* Payment in *untaken apologies* and *unsent letters*. *Moves:* Demands *Truth Payment*, grants *Debt-Clearing*—but swaps your burden to a stranger-you. *Clock—Balance Due [3]:* Each refused toll ticks +1. At 3, she opens a *Forbidden Path* keyed to your worst rationalization.

The Wayfinder’s Shadow (Counter-Guide) *Face:* Your silhouette, two steps ahead, never quite yours. *Wants:* Choices made quickly, not well. *Moves:* Calls *Crossroads Judgment* early; offers *Guide-Light* that points to the *easiest* ending. *Clock—Haste Mark [4]:* Tick whenever you skip a ritual/taboo. At 4, the Shadow chooses for you once (resolve as if an Ace dictated the cost).

Flourishes

Choice Dial (Resolve ↔ Drift) Track the party’s footing between firm intent and wandering.

- *Resolve High:* +1 Position on *Path Split* tests; first *Dream-Bleed* each session hits harder (start at 2).
- *Drift High:* +1 Effect when bargaining with way-entities; first *Truth Payment* each session costs a cherished *detail*.
- *Center the Dial:* Name aloud the next choice *and* why you might refuse it; clear 1 from **Way-Debt**.

Counter-Seal (1/scene, if justified) Break a single metaphysical instruction (taboo, key, or omen) by presenting a memory in symbol (a token, letter, sketch). Gain +1d on that crossing; GM banks 1 SB *Marked Consequence* to spend when reflections return.

Start-of-Scene Murmurs (d6)

1. *Second Sunrise:* light arrives twice; your first miss on navigation becomes mixed.
2. *Name Draft:* the air steals a syllable; your next lie sounds true once.
3. *Echo Debt:* your footprints owe a step—skip a square or tick **Way-Debt** +1.
4. *Pale Bell:* time hiccups; first *Club* can be delayed to end of scene.
5. *Traveler’s Chorus:* distant voices agree with you; +1d on appeals to path entities.
6. *Hollow Weather:* rain that doesn’t wet; conditions look dire but impose no penalties this scene.

Quick Seeds

- **Receipt of Refusal:** The Archivist delivers a stamped paper proving you almost betrayed a friend. To proceed, decide whether that “almost” happened in another you—and pay or tear the receipt.
- **Bridge of Apologies:** The Toll-Matriarch offers *Grace Passage* if each PC speaks an apology never given. One apology is answered—from the wrong voice.
- **Shadow’s Shortcut:** The Wayfinder’s Shadow opens a one-turn *Path-Cutter*; take it and skip a *Club* now, but the skipped scene returns at journey’s end—harder.

Cross-Threshold Entanglements

- **Into Valewood:** A *Choice Compass* can be “planted” as a *Truce-Bough* once; doing so starts *Oath-Magnet* +1.
- **Into Viterra:** *Passage Token* notarized becomes a one-use *Ferry Priority*; upon use, a clerk misfiles your name (treat first social as if facing *Audit Freeze*).
- **Into Ubral:** *Memory-Anchor* traded for guest-bread counts as *Guest-Token*, but a cairn remembers the *truth* you gave up (GM banks leverage).

1.30 The Wilds — “Roads, Ruins, and Weather”

Elite (Claimant Chief)

“These lands answer not to charters but to those who can read their signs and respect their moods. Authority here is earned one campfire at a time, by proving you understand the difference between claiming and belonging.”

Commoner (Forager child with truer maps than yours)

“The wilds don’t need your roads or your rules – they got their own ways of keeping score. Follow the cairns if you want to live, and always leave something behind to thank the land for letting you pass.”

Theme & Atmosphere

Between towns and treaties lies the patience of the land. Old roads remember armies; cairns remember names no book keeps. In the Wilds, law thins to trail-marks and favors, and the weather keeps its own counsel. Walk soft, read the wind, and bargain with whatever still listens.

(Crossing/Lookout/Old Road) Crossing point with ford/ice-span/stepping logs; lookout knoll with wind-carved marker; old road trace with cairns half-eaten by terrain.

Spades — Places (categories)

2. **Crossing Point** — Ford/ice-span/stepping logs/dune saddle/reef shelf.
3. **Lookout Knoll** — Tor/cliff/dune/ridge with wind-carved marker.
4. **Old Road** — Trace with cairns and switchbacks half-eaten by terrain.
5. **Shelter Hollow** — Overhang/cave/root-cellar; soot says “used lately.”
6. **Water Source** — Spring/seep/fog net/snow pan, guarded by thorns or stone.
7. **Windbreak** — Rock ribs/lee of pines/reedwall berm.
8. **Ruined Outpost** — Watchstack/wayside shrine/marker pile.
9. **Bad Ground** — Sinkhole/bog crust/crevasse/loess slump.
10. **Gate Gully** — Pinch point between bluffs, dunes, or ice hummocks.
- J **Boundary Row** — Totems/standing stones/prayer flags bent by weather.
- Q **Worksite** — Abandoned mine/quarry/logging camp/salt pan.
- K **Signal Height** — Old fire-pit or mirror stand; smoke stains linger.
- A **Trail Nexus** — Migratory/pack/contraband paths knot here.

(Guide/Warden/Caravan) Forager child with truer maps than yours; guide with three routes and one price (changes daily).

Hearts — People & Factions (categories)

2. **Forager Child** — Goat-herd/berry-picker with truer maps than yours.
3. **Guide** — Three routes and one price (changes daily); navigation as negotiation.

4. **Warden Patrol** — Local badges, local laws, local patience; order as familiarity.
5. **Caravan Crew** — Drovers/porters/yam post hands trading speed for coin.
6. **Pilgrims** — Bound for tucked-away shrine or stone; faith as destination.
7. **Poachers** — Know every snare and shortcut; survival as expertise.
8. **Hermit-Healer** — Dogs/geese and opinions about weather; wisdom as isolation.
9. **Prospectors** — Salt/amber/iron/fungus; chasing rumors and glint.
10. **War-Band** — Reavers or “escorts,” depending on your purse; violence as commerce.
- J **Monster-Hunter** — Rite-keeper wearing yesterday’s trophies; death as livelihood.
- Q **Quartermaster** — Ledgers first, hospitality second; supply as authority.
- K **Claimant Chief** — Papers and spears to match; legitimacy as force.
- A **The Stranger** — Spirit-touched nomad/emissary; rules bend near them.

(**Weather/Doubleback/Prowlers**) Weather turn with heat snap/cold snap/fog/dust; double-back with tracks that loop; prowlers shadow with wolves/jackals/ghouls.

Clubs — Complications/Threats (categories)

2. **Weather Turn** — Heat snap/cold snap/fog/dust; plans sag like wet leather.
3. **Doubleback** — Tracks loop; navigator swears land moved underfoot.
4. **Prowlers Shadow** — Wolves/jackals/ghouls/seals/ravens by night; hunt as company.
5. **Route Blocked** — Deadfall/rockfall/dune shift/ice heave; path as obstacle.
6. **Quarantine Sign** — Camp fever; wardens sniff your packs for death.
7. **Territorial Beast** — Charge, stampede, or swarm; your choice is wrong.
8. **Elemental Front** — Grassfire/peat-burn/canopy flare/blowing spindrift.
9. **Paper vs Spear** — Jurisdiction fight in wilds stalls your day; law as argument.
10. **Supply Pinch** — Water/fuel/feed low; pick what starves first.
- J **Pursuit** — Hunters/avengers follow; signs say “close.”
- Q **Bad Omen** — Will-lights, taboo day, saint bells silent; locals refuse.
- K **General Alarm** — Levy/muster/evacuation; all tracks become checkpoints.
- A **Catastrophe** — Flood/whiteout/sandstorm/lahar; clocks jump like frightened deer.

(**Cache/Pass/Favor**) Cache token for hidden food/fuel stash; right-of-way pass recognized by named trail; warden’s favor with escort letter.

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (categories)

2. **Cache Token** — Key to hidden food/fuel stash (once); preparation as power.
3. **Right-of-Pass** — Recognized marker for named trail or crossing.
4. **Warden’s Favor** — Escort letter; “they’re with us” as shield.
5. **Weather Window** — Good forecast and narrow gate to use it.
6. **Water Deed** — Lawful draw at scarce source; necessity as right.
7. **Route Song** — Map scrap that actually works; knowledge as navigation.
8. **Remount Hire** — Fresh legs or hulls waiting at post; speed as service.

- 9. **Truce Cord** — Taboo exemption at site (one scene); peace as thread.
- 10. **Toll Waiver** — Ferry/bridge/reef gate honors this chit; passage as paper.
 - J **Rescue Debt** — Locals owe you (or you them); trade for labor or intel.
 - Q **Private Audience** — Keeper/shrine-warden/spirit of place hears you alone.
 - K **Road Commission** — Temporary authority over stretch of wilds.
 - A **Earth's Exception** — One temporary rule-bend (cross during storm, pass uncounted, beasts ignore you).

Quick use notes

- Draw until you have all four suits: Spade = place, Heart = actor, Club = pressure, Diamond = leverage. Highest rank sets the main Clock (2–5 → 4, 6–10 → 6, J/Q/K → 8, A → 10).
- Diamonds are codified outcomes (cache/pass/favor) that change position rather than call for a roll.
- If any A appears, add lingering omen of land (smell on wind, sound that carries too far, tracks that shift) you can echo in later scenes.

Additional Features

- **Trail Rights:** Some paths older than borders. Display right token (knot, bead, bark-sigil) turns strangers into neighbors for one camp's length; break custom and road forgets you.
- **Weather-Lore:** Winds carry messages: resin-scent before lightning, hush before spindrift, birdsong that stops at once. Read aloud at table to bias Position before roll.
- **Road Spirits:** Shrines at cairns and waystones prefer small courtesies: water poured, pebble placed, name spoken. Keep them and land is kinder; slight them and land remembers.

Patronage & Power

In the Wilds, power flows through knowledge of the land, the ability to navigate without formal authority, and the careful cultivation of local relationships. True authority comes from understanding weather patterns, reading tracks, and maintaining the favor of both human inhabitants and the spirits of place. Those who can provide safe passage, find water in dry times, or mediate between conflicting claims hold the most influence.

For the GM: Patronage in the Wilds revolves around practical knowledge, local customs, and the ability to provide essential services like navigation, shelter, and supply. Rewards often take the form of tokens, passes, and local knowledge that can be leveraged into greater safety and efficiency. To emphasize this:

- Tie rewards to visible symbols (tokens, knots, passes) that can be challenged, stolen, or voided.
- Let rival guides or claimants issue conflicting directions, forcing players to choose whose favor matters more.
- Use the trails, shelters, and crossings as arenas for social contests, where knowledge of local custom determines success.

In the Wilds, your skill is your standing, and your standing determines whether you survive or perish.

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

- **Exposure:** Your actions draw unwanted attention from **wardens or local hunters**.
- **Noise:** Sounds of your actions alert nearby **prowlers or caravan guards**.
- **Trace:** Evidence of your passage marks your route for **trackers or claimants**.
- **Delay:** A brief but meaningful setback costs you **time or favorable weather**.
- **Supply Strain:** Mark +1 segment on a relevant **resource clock**.

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

- **Alarm Raised:** **Guide or warden patrol** becomes aware and begins responding.
- **Position Lost:** You lose advantageous ground/cover/stealth due to **weather shift or route blockage**.
- **Foe Appears:** A **war-band or territorial beast** arrives on scene.
- **Gear Trouble:** A piece of equipment becomes **Compromised/Neglected**.
- **Lock/Barrier:** A simple obstacle now requires a test to overcome.

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

- **Reinforcements:** Additional **wardens, war-bands, or prowlers** arrive.
- **Key Gear Breaks:** A crucial tool/weapon becomes temporarily unusable.
- **Major Twist:** The situation fundamentally changes - **weather turns/catastrophe strikes/quarantine declared**.
- **Rail Tick:** Advance a relevant campaign/front clock by 1 segment.
- **Condition Applied:** Mark **Fatigue 1/Harm 1/Condition** appropriate to fiction.

Major Turns (4+ SB)

- **Trap Springs:** A prepared danger activates with full effect.
- **Authority Arrival:** **Claimant chief, quartermaster, or The Stranger** intervenes.
- **Scene Shift:** The environment changes dramatically - **weather shifts/blockage clears/catastrophe hits**.
- **Patron Omen:** Divine/arcane forces take notice - **omen appears/blessing lost/curse manifests**.
- **Narrative Pivot:** The story takes an unexpected turn that reframes objectives.

Region-Specific SB Options

- **Wilds (Weather):** Conditions shift without warning, storms arrive early, calm turns to chaos.
- **Wilds (Navigation):** Trails reroute mid-journey, landmarks disappear, guides demand additional payment.
- **Wilds (Local Customs):** Spirits demand tribute, territorial beasts become aggressive, local laws change with terrain.

Fast reskin palette**Forest**

swap dunes→deadfall, spindrift→canopy flare, prowlers→boar/wolves; water = spring/stream.

Desert

swap bog→salt pan, fog→dust, shelter = overhang/wadi; water = seep/fog net.

Tundra/Ice

swap dune shift→ice heave, fire→spindrift, boats→sleds; prowlers = bears/wolves.

Coast/Isles

crossings = reef shelves, prowlers = seals/raiders, alarms = harbor booms; fuel = driftwood.

Swamp/Fen

crossings = corduroy/log causeways, bad ground = peat crust, prowlers = gators/leeches.

Highlands

crossings = cols and scree traverses, alarms = beacon chains, prowlers = cats/eagles.

Wilds — Roads and Ruins

Starting Location: A shelter hollow carved into a fallen giant’s ribcage, moss glowing faintly under starlight.

“In the Wilds, the land walks when you don’t watch it, and the roads remember who bled on them.”

In... A Shelter Hollow, a Forager Child offers a route-song. “The Bad Ground shifts,” they say. “And the weather walks behind it.”

Regional Motifs Ruin ivy, singing paths, weather as creature, stone memories.

Whispers to Offer “Cut through the Bad Ground,” “Take the relic,” “Leave the guide.”

External Clocks Threat: “Weather Wakes”; Fracture: “Roads Move”; Community: “Foragers Vanish.”

Complications Ruins reassemble; rain falls upward; the child knows tomorrow.

Anchors at Risk A caravan; a family relic.

Escalation Beat The song changes key.

Relief Sing in harmony; mark a safe path with blood and story; abandon the relic to drop Threat by one.

Travel Procedures (Fast Play)

Route Intent (declare before you draw) Pick *two*: **Speed, Stealth, Safety, Survey**. Each grants +1 Position on one appropriate action this leg; the neglected ones are -1 Position if tested.

March Structure Name: **Pathfinder, Rear Watch, Quartermaster, Envoy**. Each can cover one miss per leg by marking a minor cost (supply, time, favor, fatigue).

Leg Resolution (one “day” of travel)

1. **Read Weather:** Roll on Weather Engine (below). Apply tags.
2. **Waycheck:** One check to *Keep the Old Road* or *Cut a New Line*. Success avoids *Doubleback*. Mixed = *Delay*. Miss = *Route Blocked*.
3. **Encounter Pull:** If any *Clubs* were drawn to frame this leg, resolve now (prowlers, wardens, alarm).
4. **Make Camp or Push:** Camp (see Camps & Watches) or push on (mark 1 *Fatigue* each; if pushing under a *Weather Turn*, mark 2).

Weather Engine

d12	State	Tags / Effects
1	Glass-Clear	+Survey; mirage/long sight; smoke seen for miles
2	Haze	-Survey; scents carry; <i>Prowlers Shadow</i> +1 die
3	Trickle Rain	Tracks muddle; <i>Bad Ground</i> more likely
4	Downpour	Paths sluice; +Delay on all exposed tasks
5	Thunderhead	First metal test risks shock; morale checks -1
6	Cold Snap	Brittle gear; +1 cost to swim/ford tests
7	Heat Snap	Water usage doubled; Exhaustion clocks advance
8	Ground Fog	+Stealth/-Speed; signals/archery downgraded
9	Spindrift / Dust	Ranged beyond close is risky; eyes/filters matter
10	Shifting Wind	Smoke betrays; scent trails reverse mid-leg
11	Front Line	Choose: detour (Delay) or face <i>Elemental Front</i>
12	Catspaw Omen	GM may bank 1 SB to twist weather next leg

Supply & Forage

Rations Track Each PC holds **3** marks of food/water abstractly. A leg consumes 1; *Heat/Cold Snap* consumes +1. At 0, mark **Supply Pinch**: -1 die to Strenuous actions; predators test at +1.

Forage/Harvest (once per leg) Pick a biome tag (Forest/Desert/Tundra/Coast/Swamp/Highland). On success: +1d3 rations; mixed: +1 with a hitch (quarantine sign, spoor); miss: find nothing and trigger a minor Complication.

Cache Tokens Spending *Cache Token* refills 1d3 party rations plus one of: fuel, arrows, spare tack.

Hazards & Terrain (d8 each)

Bad Ground (what it is) 1 sink crust 2 hidden crease 3 old culvert 4 rotten bridge 5 talus ribbon 6 reed-raft rot 7 thaw-pocket 8 dune slip

Why it bites (on a mixed/miss) 1 pack animals balk 2 axle snaps 3 someone sinks to hip
4 detour adds a leg 5 noise carries 6 gear lost 7 trail erases 8 local claims fee

Fix at hand (quirky mitigations) 1 brush fascines 2 snow shoes 3 driftwood crib 4 rope
ferry 5 sled/drag 6 wait a bell 7 lighten loads 8 bribe the warden

Social in the Wilds

Trail Rights (custom) Show a right-token (knot/bead/bark-sigil) and recite the road-blessing:

- **Success:** Treat strangers as neighbors for one camp; *Paper vs Spear* downgrades one step.
- **Mixed:** Hospitality but with a debt. Mark **Rescue Debt (2)**.
- **Miss:** *Claimant Chief* or *Warden Patrol* contests your right; stakes escalate.

Wardens' Ledger If you offer *Route Song*, local escort negates one *Prowlers Shadow* this leg. Refuse a reasonable toll? Start **Local Resentment (4)**; when it fills, checkpoints bloom.

Camps & Watches

Make Camp Pick one boon and one risk:

- **Boon (choose 1):** mend gear; clear 1 Fatigue total; scout tomorrow's *Weather Window*; parley with road spirits (see below).
- **Risk (choose 1):** thin shelter; smoky fire; exposed approach; hungry neighbors.

Road Spirits (small courtesies) Pour water, place pebble, speak a name. Success: bank *Truce Cord* for tomorrow. Miss: *Bad Omen* flags this camp.

Chase & Pursuit (three beats)

1. **Gap** (terrain claim): runners set advantage via *Lookout Knoll/Gate Gully/Old Road*.
2. **Pressure** (weather claim): winner of *Weather Engine* narration shifts Position.
3. **Break** (resource claim): spend *Remount Hire/Route Song/Warden's Favor* to end it; otherwise test *Pursuit*.

On miss at any beat, mark 1 harm or drop 1 load (*your choice*).

Clocks & Escalations

Roads Move (6) 1–2: Landmarks drift. 3–4: Old Road reroutes through *Gate Gully*. 5: Map contradicts guide. 6: Trail nexus re-knots; choose who benefits.

Weather Wakes (6) 1–2: Predictable fronts arrive early. 3–4: Elementals ride the line. 5: Two weathers at once. 6: *Catastrophe*; clocks jump.

Local Resentment (4) 1: Tolls “adjust.” 2–3: Wardens frisk; smugglers sniff profit. 4: *General Alarm*—every track a checkpoint.

Cross-Regional Conversions

- **Mistlands:** *Weather Window* may count as a *Lantern Writ* on levee crowns if you ring a bell after dark; doing so risks *Witchlight Count*.
- **Valewood:** *Route Song* functions as a minor *Way-Cord*; on use, start **Oath-Magnet (2)**.
- **Ubral:** *Warden's Favor* can be honored as *Guide's Braid* on sheepwalks if a cairn-offering is made.
- **Viterra:** *Toll Waiver* notarized in Valora acts as a one-leg *Ferry Priority*; tick **Border-Lace**.
- **Vhasia:** *Road Commission* is recognized as *Low-Justice* on King's High Road until the next levy call.
- **Silkstrand:** *Right-of-Pass* doubles as a dawn *Bridge Token* if stamped by a bridge bailiff.
- **Theona:** *Truce Cord* permits "eight-and-one" crossing on an *Uncounted Bridge*, once.
- **Vilikari:** *Water Deed* may be cited as *Wergild Table* credit at a *Mallus Right* court during drought disputes.

Omens & Sign (d8 each)

Sky Signs 1 sun-dog 2 mare's tails 3 anvil cloud faces the wrong way 4 silent birds 5 far thunder without storm 6 moon with halo 7 ash scent on clear air 8 stars "shiver"

Ground Signs 1 cairn with new pebble 2 boot prints that end at rock 3 butchered game left neat 4 snapped twig at head height 5 ash under wet moss 6 ward-knot cut 7 trail beads on shrub 8 a single coin on a stone

Quick NPC Templates

Forager Child (Truth Map) *Wants:* To trade a route-song for a story. *Leverage:* Knows which *Shelter Hollow* is "safe tonight." *Cost:* Promise to return a trinket to a Boundary Row (start a tiny quest).

Hermit-Healer (Weather Eye) *Wants:* Someone to fetch a wind-bell from a Signal Height. *Leverage:* Turns one *Weather Turn* into a *Weather Window*. *Cost:* Accept their foul cordial (mark "Queasy" until dawn).

Quartermaster (Ledger Lord) *Wants:* Proof a rival skimmed. *Leverage:* *Remount Hire* or *Cache Token* on the spot. *Cost:* Put your name on the ledger (start **Rescue Debt** at 1).

Terrain / Trail Dressing (roll 1–2 per leg)

- **Ruins Speak:** Old mile-stone hums a date from a forgotten war; +1 die to history, -1 to stealth this leg.
- **Beast Parliament:** Ravens, fox, and a boar seem to "confer" at Water Source; approach buys rumor or chase.
- **Ghost Cart Ruts:** Ruts glow at dusk and shave time—if you accept a *Supply Pinch* tomorrow.
- **Prayer Flags:** Boundary Row flags in the wrong colors; locals may read you as allied or enemy.

Encounter Seeds

- **Fire on the Height:** A fresh coal at *Signal Height*; lighting it calls help—or enemy levy. Your choice sets which *Clubs* show next scene.
- **Gate Gully Tithe:** Two claimants, one pinch-point. They’ll honor *Truce Cord*—if you arbitrate a water deed on the spot.
- **Shelter Debt:** The soot in *Shelter Hollow* spells a name you know; leaving a meal clears a future *Supply Pinch*.

Designer Hooks (Optional)

Route-Song Craft Spend a scene and 1 *Route Song* scrap to compose a *Songline*: once per journey, skip *Doubleback*. Singing it in public adds 1 tick to **Local Resentment** (others want it).

Weather-Witchery (Low Magic) Offer a token to road spirits during a *Front Line*; on a hit, trade today’s weather for tomorrow’s. On a miss, both happen now at half strength.

Homage Sites & Lairs (drop-in Terrain)

- **Border Keep of Candle-Gate** — Stockade on a bluff above twin gullies; cellars link to smugglers’ bolt-holes where ledgers argue with knives.
- **The Bone King’s Barrow** — Hill split by lightning; whispering chute to a throne of antlers where oaths bind the living to the dead.
- **Serpent-Cairns of the Wind Steppe** — Rings of stacked shale; wind plays bone flutes; scale-runes name a forgotten tax on breath.
- **The Blue Glass Tower** — Fallen mage-spire sunk in a fen; panes show tomorrows you can’t reach; water stairs lead to a clockwork aviary.
- **Isle of Thunder-Lizards** — Reef shelf at low tide; drums in the cliffs; eggs warm under black sand that hisses with static.
- **The Amber Idol Dig** — Abandoned worksite with tar pits; half-freed idol drinks lantern-light; foreman’s diary ends mid-apology.
- **Hall of the Stone-Chiefs** — Terrace of toppled colossi; each face wears a different season; a living boulder judges trespass by weight.
- **Salt-Vein Labyrinth** — Collapsed mine whose walls sweat brine; maps dissolve; a blind choir keeps time with pick-hafts.
- **Shrine of the Four Storm Doors** — Weather turns on hinges; choose which door to open and pay its toll in breath, heat, chill, or silence.
- **The Black Lantern Monastery** — Ruin above a fall; lanterns that never burn out reveal tracks made tomorrow; ascetics wrote their sins on river mist.

Wilderness Bestiary (palette)

- **Earth-Sharks** — Burrow beneath loess and tundra; dorsal ridges like plowshares. *Signs:* furrows that breathe; pebbles rattle. *Hook:* lure with drumbeats or goat bells.
- **Phase Panthers** — Shadow-striped cats that step between gusts. *Signs:* pawprints offset from themselves. *Hook:* mirrored water or bell-silver disrupts the blink.

- **Rust Moths** — Swarms that taste iron memory. *Signs:* lacework mail; pitted nails. *Hook:* feed them old keys; they ignore fresh steel.
- **Lichen-Bears** — Moss-matted ursines with rock-teeth. *Signs:* clawed bark with green scabs. *Hook:* smoke of juniper calms; salt enrages.
- **Wind Drakes** — Rib-thin sky-serpents that ride fronts. *Signs:* shed vanes; feathers like glass. *Hook:* whistle back the storm to ground them.
- **Ooze-Remnants** — Alchemical slough from an old field lab. *Signs:* boot-holes rounded smooth. *Hook:* wood ash firms them; vinegar makes them sprint.
- **Fell Harts** — Antlered shades that herd the living toward cliffs. *Signs:* hoofprints that don't compress soil. *Hook:* speak a hunter's apology while walking backward.
- **Cairn-Wights** — Stone-stack custodians; patient as frost. *Signs:* pebbles rearranged around your fire. *Hook:* rebuild the stack correctly; they serve until dawn.
- **Thundertusks** — Boars that store lightning in tusk-veins. *Signs:* fused sand beads; singed roots. *Hook:* ground your spear; throw shadow to draw the strike.
- **Lantern-Eyes** — Floating orbs of watchlight rumor; jealous of secrets. *Signs:* daylight in ravines at midnight. *Hook:* offer a whispered truth; they part like reeds.
- **Grave-Eels** — Burrow through barrow loam; taste names. *Signs:* sinking turf over old wars. *Hook:* sing lineage or throw false names to mislead.
- **Bramble Knights** — Empty helms grown through with thorn; patrol old borders. *Signs:* briar in boot-grease. *Hook:* present a hedge-blessing; they escort instead of impale.

Terrain Stock (d20 quick)

- 1 Fresh ash on an old fire ring; prints circle *around* it.
- 2 Boundary totems toppled but re-stack themselves if watched politely.
- 3 Broken wagon with salt-vein crystals growing through spokes.
- 4 Singing culvert; echo names the boldest listener wrongly.
- 5 Weather bell hung in a pine; tolling swaps rain and wind.
- 6 Cairn with a copper coin balanced on edge; don't breathe hard.
- 7 Fence of antlers pointing uphill; follow and skip one *Bad Ground*.
- 8 Mummified pack-beast wearing a courier's braid; letter hums.
- 9 Pebble mosaic of an old levy call; stepping it summons wardens.
- 10 Fossil rib arch; shelter under it and dream of tomorrow's route.
- 11 Abandoned hunter's cache; choice of food or rumor, not both.
- 12 Mirror-puddle; shows last night's sky whatever the hour.
- 13 Rope bridge made of prayer knots; one is freshly cut.
- 14 Scare-stakes dressed in saltcloth; something big respects them.
- 15 Stone with bite-marks; taste iron and remember a shortcut.
- 16 Old road mile-post defaced into a saint; offerings still fresh.
- 17 Thistle patch buzzing with coin-flies; feed them copper for safe passage.
- 18 Fallen giant's footprint now a pond; frogs chant a route-song.
- 19 Soot writing on cliff: *Storm at Second Bell*. It's right.
- 20 Hollow tree full of carved names; the newest is yours.

Lair Seeds (d12 one-page crawls)

1. **Fen Clockworks** — Bog-gears turn under peat; each tooth a drowned oath.
2. **Dry River Gallery** — Petroglyphs re-arrange at dusk; wrong reading summons bramble knights.
3. **Ice-Well Vault** — Stairs drilled through permafrost; breath blooms frost-runes that answer questions badly.
4. **Sunken Forum** — Pillars knee-deep in silt; rust moths nest in the rostrum.
5. **Pilgrim Kilns** — Charcoal mounds hike on stilt roots at night; a hermit-healer bargains weather for charcoal.
6. **Hanging Salt Chapel** — White stalactites ring like bells; grave-eels coil in the font.
7. **Thorn Maze Mill** — Waterwheel turns without water; phase panthers pace the sluice.
8. **Brewer’s Hollow** — Barrels of wind; decant a gale or drink a calm.
9. **Antler Archive** — Ledger carved on horn; theft awakens the cairn-wights’ accountant.
10. **Black Lantern Mines** — Lantern-eyes nest like bats; light buys silence, darkness buys passage.
11. **Stormbone Spire** — Vertebrae tower; earth-sharks circle beneath like sharks in sand.
12. **Amber Orchard** — Trees fossilized mid-sway; trapped thunderflies grant *Weather Window* when freed.

Boss Hooks (road crowns)

- **The Stone-Chief of Seven Hills** — Walking dolmen with a court of cairn-wights; taxes are measured in footprints. *Leverage:* rebuild a boundary row to earn audience.
- **Mist Abbess of Black Lantern** — Keeper of ever-lights and secrets; trades *Weather Window* for names spoken under waterfalls.
- **Blue Glass Magus** — Last pane-worker; hunts thunder-lizard hearts to power mirrors. *Clock: Mirror Wakes [4]*—when full, maps start lying *beautifully*.
- **Amber Idol’s Choir** — Faceless diggers who hum in tar-time; their song softens steel and will.
- **Thundertusk Matriarch** — Scarred sow crowned in fused sand; charges any banner that won’t bow.

Relic & Find Table (d10)

- 1 Route-stones that warm near true north.
- 2 Weather-bell clapper that tolls only for lightning.
- 3 Trail-right knot dyed in berry law; locals honor it once.
- 4 Salt-vein pick that cuts oozes like cloth.
- 5 Glass feather; break to call a wind drake for one pass.
- 6 Ledger leaf waterproofed with eel-fat; ink never runs, words drift.
- 7 Thorn sigil that bramble knights read as parley.
- 8 Coin-fly cocoon; hatch it for one honest guide to the nearest water.
- 9 Bone flute that calls earth-sharks to circle elsewhere.
- 10 Lantern-eye husk; squeeze for daylight the length of a camp prayer.

Wilderness Complication Twists (d8)

1. *Weather Turn* reveals a buried mile-post; following it skips one leg but triggers *Local Resentment*.
2. *Route Blocked* is a trap set by rust moth tenders; pay in scrap or fight a cloud.
3. *Prowlers Shadow* are bramble knights escorting pilgrims—until a hedge-blessing is misread.
4. *Doubleback* because the land moved: wind drakes braided the grass.
5. *Quarantine Sign* enforced by lantern-eyes; confess a secret to pass.
6. *Territorial Beast* guards an honest cache; take half without omen, all with a curse.
7. *Paper vs Spear* becomes *Song vs Drum*: trail rights must be sung while marching.
8. *Catastrophe* arrives as a walking stormbone; pull the right vertebra and calm it—or ride it.

Mini-Procedures (quick play)

Old Road Wake When you march on an *Old Road* and speak a route-song, choose one:

- Arrive early; start *Roads Move* +1.
- Meet wardens first; downgrade next *Paper vs Spear*.
- Wake a mile-post spirit; ask one honest question, owe one honest task.

Beast Parliament If beasts gather at a *Water Source*, lay out food or rumor:

- Food buys safe passage and one clue.
- Rumor scatters them; reveals a hidden approach, attracts a rival.

Adventure Seeds

- **Keep the Lanterns** — The Black Lantern Monastery's ever-lights are dimming; carry a lightning jar across the Isle of Thunder-Lizards before the next tide.
- **Seven Hills Tax** — The Stone-Chief demands a footprint levy; find the stolen boundary bead before bramble knights collect *in kind*.
- **Blue Pane Hunt** — The Blue Glass Tower wants thunder-lizard heartglass; poachers have already baited the herd near Gate Gully.
- **Amber Choir** — Tar pits sing; diggers vanish; the Idol wants witnesses, or the weather will.

1.31 Ykrul (Orc) — “Wolf Standards, Winter Camps”

Elite (Khatun of Ring)

“The steppe remembers every oath sworn beneath its endless sky, and the wolf-standards carry the honor of clans that have outlasted empires. To lead here is to keep the old ways sharp as winter steel.”

Commoner (Herd-scout with three ponies and six opinions)

“The horses know the weather before it comes, and the wolves know the thoughts in a man’s heart. Best speak true and ride steady – the steppe don’t forgive lies or clumsy hands on the reins.”

Theme & Atmosphere

The Ykrul ride the endless steppe where horizon meets sky and law rides in saddlebags. Hosts gather by the thousand, yet break into fragments at a word; one night you share their fires, the next they test your bonds. Their banners are wolves’ teeth, their treaties braided strings, their memory longer than the rivers that cross their roads.

(Steppe Road/Winter Ring/Ford) Wolf Road milepost of stacked stones with wind whining through eye-holes; winter camp ring with felt tents in horseshoe facing wind.

Spades — Places (categories)

2. **Wolf Milepost** — Stacked stones; wind whines through eye-holes.
3. **Remount Station** — Low corral with stamped snow and tether-posts.
4. **Birch Windbreak** — Above black-earth tracks; old offerings in bark.
5. **Salt Pan** — Crusted white; hoof-prints like stars across void.
6. **Reed Ford** — River braids; poles mark yesterday’s safe line.
7. **Trading Palisade** — Way-post with wolf-skull pennons snapping.
8. **Winter Camp** — Felt tents in horseshoe facing the wind.
9. **Kurgan Field** — Low barrows; horse-bones bead the grass like prayer beads.
10. **Watch Kopje** — Lonely tor with signal fire-scar; eye of the steppe.
- J **Pontoon Crossing** — Laced hides creak; current speaks fast and hungry.
- Q **Council Hollow** — Standards planted; ground tamped like war-drum.
- K **Khagan’s Station** — Broad ger on timber platform; guards in silence.
- A **Sky Steppe** — Open, wind like voice; tracks keep pace beside you.

(Host/Envoy/Rider) Herd-scout with three ponies and six opinions; camp-mother who chooses where fires live.

Hearts — People & Factions (categories)

2. **Herd-Scout** — Three ponies and six opinions; horizon as map.
3. **Camp-Mother** — Chooses where fires live; hospitality is law.

4. **Banner Youth** — Minding wolves' tooth standard; pride as duty.
5. **Salt-Broker** — Weighs promises like grain; trade as precision.
6. **Remount Keeper** — String-master with book of brands; horses as currency.
7. **Bone-Singer** — Knows kurgans' proper names; death as memory.
8. **Road-Judge** — Tümen scribe with seals and patient ear.
9. **Noyan Envoy** — Silver paiza, iron smile; diplomacy as blade.
10. **Host Captain** — Tent-wall is map; strategy in every fold.
- J **Falcon Courier** — Leather gauntlets, answers sooner than asked.
- Q **Khatun of Ring** — Keeper of camp-law and hostage strings.
- K **Khagan's Kin** — Nephew/niece sent to bind foedus with look.
- A **Sky-Speaker** — Shaman of storms; shortcuts owe them price.

(**Law/Weather/Feud**) White squall with dry snow, lost horizons; rasputitsa turning road to porridge; feud spark from name spoken wrong.

Clubs — Complications/Threats (categories)

2. **White Squall** — Dry snow, lost horizons; navigation by instinct alone.
3. **Rasputitsa** — Road becomes porridge; wheels are lies on earth.
4. **Remount Sickness** — Cough in string; swaps get awkward, trust thinner.
5. **Salt Shortage** — Meat spoils; tempers thin like winter air.
6. **Hostage Call** — Protocol invoked; someone must sit the tent.
7. **Feud Spark** — Name spoken wrong reopens old cut; blood remembers.
8. **Grassfire** — Runs with wind faster than horses; escape as prayer.
9. **Foedus Recall** — Treaty terms re-read; your papers disagree.
10. **River Break** — Ice goes; ferries don't; crossing becomes gamble.
- J **Raid Shadow** — Another banner follows at patient distance.
- Q **Kurultai Call** — Camps converge; travel becomes politics.
- K **Wolf Muster** — Levy raised; every road a checkpoint, every rider judge.
- A **Sky Omen** — Three suns or none; routes rewrite themselves.

(**Pass/Remount/Truce**) Camp token for one night's lawful fire and fodder; salt allotment from named store without quarrel.

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (categories)

2. **Camp Token** — One night's lawful fire and fodder; hospitality as right.
3. **Salt Allotment** — Draw from named store without quarrel.
4. **Ford-Right** — Cross named braid at lawful depth.
5. **Remount Chit** — Swap two tired mounts for fresh.
6. **Escort Braid** — Two riders see you through bad stretch.
7. **Safe-Hostage** — Place or take token-kin for truce.
8. **Paiza Tablet** — Priority on Wolf Road and at posts.

- 9. **Foedus Seal** — Treaty clause that trumps petty order.
- 10. **Market-Green** — Trade under banner; weapons sheathed.
- J **Standard Guard** — Travel under wolf-tooth; raiders defer.
- Q **Ring Audience** — Khatun hears you alone; precedent sticks.
- K **Khagan’s Writ** — Doors open, mouths close across steppe.
- A **Sky’s Exception** — Once, weather ignores you (storm, whiteout, dust).

Quick use notes

- Draw until you have all four suits: Spade = place, Heart = actor, Club = pressure, Diamond = leverage. Highest rank sets the main Clock (2–5 → 4, 6–10 → 6, J/Q/K → 8, A → 10).
- Diamonds are codified outcomes (passes/remounts/truces) that change position rather than call for a roll.
- If any A appears, echo **steppe & sky** motifs—wind that speaks, horses that remember, and treaties that bind across generations.

Additional Features

- **Hostage Strings:** Every oath secured with **hostage string**—token kin, retainer, sworn ally left in other camp. If deal broken, hostage’s fate becomes story’s next beat.
- **Steppe Law:** Travelers bound by **steppe law**: hospitality lasts three nights, insults last three generations. Keeper may demand 1 SB when either law broken.
- **Sky Omens:** When sky shows strange signs—mock-suns, green fire, thunder without storm—steppe itself speaks. Players may once per scene treat omen as Diamond, shifting position without roll.

Patronage & Power

In Ykrul society, power flows through the careful management of hospitality, the binding of oaths with hostages, and the ability to navigate the complex web of tribal relationships. The Khagan maintains authority through the loyalty of noyans and the respect of khatuns, while local leaders wield influence through their control of resources like salt, remounts, and safe passage. The true power lies with those who understand the ancient customs and can maintain the delicate balance between hospitality and honor.

For the GM: Patronage in Ykrul society revolves around hospitality, hostage exchanges, and the ability to command respect from hosts and courts. Rewards often take the form of tokens, treaties, and official positions that can be leveraged into greater influence. To emphasize this:

- Tie rewards to visible symbols (tokens, braids, standards) that can be challenged, stolen, or voided.
- Let rival hosts issue conflicting protections, forcing players to choose whose favor matters more.
- Use the camps, councils, and crossings as arenas for social contests, where knowledge of custom and honor determines success.

In Ykrul society, your word is your bond, and your bond determines whether you ride as guest or ghost.

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

- **Exposure:** Your actions draw unwanted attention from **camp guards or herd-scouts**.
- **Noise:** Sounds of your actions alert nearby **riders or wolf-standards**.
- **Trace:** Evidence of your passage marks your route for **trackers or bone-singers**.
- **Delay:** A brief but meaningful setback costs you **time or favorable weather**.
- **Supply Strain:** Mark +1 segment on a relevant **resource clock**.

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

- **Alarm Raised:** **Camp-mother or road-judge** becomes aware and begins responding.
- **Position Lost:** You lose advantageous ground/cover/stealth due to **weather shift or ford closure**.
- **Foe Appears:** A **rival host or raiding party** arrives on scene.
- **Gear Trouble:** A piece of equipment becomes **Compromised/Neglected**.
- **Lock/Barrier:** A simple obstacle now requires a test to overcome.

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

- **Reinforcements:** Additional **wolf-riders, host members, or noyan guards** arrive.
- **Key Gear Breaks:** A crucial tool/weapon becomes temporarily unusable.
- **Major Twist:** The situation fundamentally changes - **feud declared/treaty broken/omen appears**.

- **Rail Tick:** Advance a relevant campaign/front clock by 1 segment.
- **Condition Applied:** Mark **Fatigue 1/Harm 1/Condition** appropriate to fiction.

Major Turns (4+ SB)

- **Trap Springs:** A prepared danger activates with full effect.
- **Authority Arrival: Khatun, Khagan’s Kin, or Sky-Speaker** intervenes.
- **Scene Shift:** The environment changes dramatically - **storm hits/camps converge/river breaks**.
- **Patron Omen:** Divine/arcane forces take notice - **omen appears/blessing lost/curse manifests**.
- **Narrative Pivot:** The story takes an unexpected turn that reframes objectives.

Region-Specific SB Options

- **Ykrul (Steppe Law):** Hospitality expires without warning, insults carry forward through generations, treaties are reinterpreted mid-conversation.
- **Ykrul (Horse Culture):** Mounts refuse to obey, remount stations are empty, riding skills become unreliable.
- **Ykrul (Sky Omens):** Weather patterns shift unpredictably, celestial signs contradict each other, navigation becomes mystical.

Ykrul — Wolf Standards

Starting Location: A winter camp on the steppe edge, banners snapping in frost-bright wind as the Khagan’s fires burn in the east.

“In Ykrul, the wind carries the pack’s oath, and mercy is left to thaw.”

In... A Winter Camp, a Khatun of Ring offers salt-allotment. “The Khagan’s kin ride,” she says. “And the sky omens bleed east.”

Regional Motifs Hearth-ring law, wolf totems, bone-lot omens, steppe trials.

Whispers to Offer “Eat salt without being invited,” “Ride a sacred mount,” “Claim an omen for yourself.”

External Clocks Community: “Ring Divided”; Threat: “Kin Raid”; Anchor: “Salt Peace.”

Complications Wolves refuse shadow; lots stain hands; riders circle dreams.

Anchors at Risk A hearth-mother; a winter store.

Escalation Beat The sky opens a red seam.

Relief Share salt and story; win the trial without blood; send the omen back with a song.

Mobility & Logistics (Fast Play)

Host Posture (declare before a leg) Pick *two*: **Speed, Screen, Spare Mounts, Scavenge**. Each grants +1 Position on one relevant action this leg; neglected ones are -1 Position if tested.

String Roles Name: **Point-Scout, Remount-Keeper, Salt-Warden, Banner-Talker**. Each can cover one miss per leg by marking a minor cost (a pony, salt, time, favor).

Remount Rhythm A rider with **2+ fresh mounts** may *double-march* once per day (mark *Fatigue 1*). Spending a *Remount Chit* clears that *Fatigue* for one rider and negates *Pursuit* once.

Steppe Weather & Ground (d12)

d12	State	Tags / Effects
1	Blue Vault	+Survey; long sight cuts both ways
2	River Breath	Low fog in hollows; -Speed off-road, +Stealth in reeds
3	Dry Snow	Tracks show, hooves sure; cold bites fingers (gear tests -1)
4	Black Ice	Fords become coin flips; carts lie
5	Rasputitsa	Earth to porridge; wheels -2 Effect; sleds +1
6	Dust Devil	Ranged beyond close is risky; eyes sting
7	North Knife	Wind shear; tents fight, words don't carry
8	Heat Shimmer	Mirage bands; long shots misjudge distance
9	Grassfire Smell	Any spark can turn Club into <i>Elemental Front</i>
10	Star-Hard Night	Camp mends are brittle; sleep restores less
11	Wolf Moon	Animals keen; omens cheap but sticky (see Sky Omens)
12	Three Suns	Omen; GM may bank 1 SB to twist weather next leg

Hostage Strings (Custom Subsystem)

Make a String Name the **token-kin** (page, foster, sworn hand) and knot a *Hostage String*. While the string stands:

- Parties treat each other as *Camp Token* guests on sight.
- First betrayal converts one **Diamond** to *Safe-Hostage* instead of breaking truce.

Cut a String When a string is cut (ritual, flight, or knife), trigger one:

- **Blood Call:** Immediate *Feud Spark*.
- **Salt Call:** A council demands wergild in *Salt Allotment* or stock.
- **Road Call:** The *Road-Judge* schedules a trial-ride (race, bout, riddle).

Camp & Council Procedures

Three-Fire Camp Ykrul hospitality lasts **three nights**. Each night, pick one boon and accept one cost:

- **Boons:** mend tack; swap mounts (-1 Fatigue for one rider); hear a *Bone-Song* (ask one question of the dead of this land); secure *Escort Braid*.
- **Costs:** sit watch; tell a true story; gift salt or steel; accept a minor geas (don't ride east at dawn, etc.).

Council Hollow (kurultai mini-game) Frame three *beats*: **Salt, String, Standard**. Win two to carry the vote.

- **Salt (economy):** Offer stores, routes, or *Market-Green*. Failure births *Salt Shortage*.
- **String (kin):** Place/accept *Safe-Hostage*, cite adoption, foster, marriage-feast.
- **Standard (prestige):** Gift wolf-tooth, recount raid, pledge riders; victory grants *Standard Guard*.

Trade & Tribute

Steppe Staples

- **Salt & Fat:** Currency and winter life. Spend *Salt Allotment* to cancel *Supply Strain* for a week or bribe a *Remount Keeper*.
- **Horses:** Money that moves. A *Remount Chit* equals one serious favor at *Trading Palisade*.
- **Stories:** Soft currency. A true raid-tale can stand in for coin once per council.

Palisade Rates (d6) 1 fair trade 2 short scales 3 hidden tithe 4 hostage asked 5 rival claim 6 market under *Market-Green* today

Feud & Reconciliation

What starts a Feud (d6) 1 insult at fire 2 horse swapped sick 3 string cut 4 grave ridden over 5 name spoken wrong 6 salt denied

How to end it (pick two)

- **Wergild:** Pay in *Salt Allotment*, mounts, or labor.
- **Trial-Ride:** Outrun, outshoot, or outstand the winter. Winner declares terms.
- **Bone-Song:** Ask the kurgan; accept the dead's price.
- **Marriage-Fire:** Feast that binds hosts; costs you a *Safe-Hostage*.

Hit-and-Run Warfare (Three Beats)

1. **Screen:** Scouts contest vision with dust, snow, reeds. Win: choose engagement range; loss: ambushed (Position -1).
2. **Shock:** Loose, loose, loose—then crash. Spend *Standard Guard* to ignore first rout check or *Escort Braid* to peel a unit free.
3. **Break-off:** A clean ride beats a clean kill. Spend *Remount Chit* or test under *Rasputitsa/Black Ice*.

On a miss at any beat, mark *Stragglers*: you leave someone or something behind.

Sky Omens (d8)

1 wolves howl at noon 2 aurora like braids 3 three suns 4 moon with teeth 5 thunder without storm 6 stars “follow” riders 7 dust column stands still 8 hawk falls asleep mid-flight

Reading an omen creates a one-scene tag you can cash as a **Diamond** or force as a **Club**; doing so changes someone’s mind about the omen’s meaning.

Clocks & Escalations

Ring Divided (6) 1–2: Standards drift. 3–4: Camps split routes. 5: A string is cut. 6: Winter ring becomes two hosts.

Wolf Road Tightens (6) 1–2: Posts check brands. 3–4: Papers challenged. 5: *Foedus Recall*. 6: *Wolf Muster*—road becomes checkpoints.

Salt Peace (4) 1: Stores counted publicly. 2–3: Sharing enforced by Khatun. 4: Feast; next *Salt Shortage* is ignored once.

NPC Templates

Camp-Mother (Fire-Chosen) *Wants*: No famine this winter. *Leverage*: Can bless/deny *Camp Token*. *Cost*: Speak a hard truth by second firelight.

Road-Judge (Seal-Patient) *Wants*: A treaty rewritten for sense. *Leverage*: Upgrades one paper to *Paiza Tablet* for a day. *Cost*: Accept that their ruling stands—even if it cuts you.

Remount Keeper (String-Math) *Wants*: A rival’s book of brands. *Leverage*: Two fresh ponies at dawn. *Cost*: Return them better than you found them—or owe a foal.

Names, Bands, & Titles

Titles *Khagan* (over-king), *Khatun* (camp-law), *Noyan* (banner-lord), *Tümen-Scribe* (road-judge), *String-Mother* (hostage keeper).

Band Styles (d4) 1 Red Reeds (river tacticians) 2 Salt Wolves (logistics first) 3 Moon Spurs (night riders) 4 Bone Chorus (kurgan loyalists)

Given Names (mix two) Bor-, Tem-, Sar-, Uru-, Kha-, Asha-, Yen-, Dor- + -tai, -mur, -gan, -khi, -jin, -mar, -sai, -lok

Cross-Regional Conversions

- **Vilikari**: *Paiza Tablet* reads as *Purple Warrant* at *Milefort*; tick **Two-Law** once.
- **Vhasia**: *Standard Guard* counts as *Safe-Conduct* on *King’s High Road* until next *Chevauchée*.
- **Theona**: *Safe-Hostage* may stand in for a *Bride-Charter* (peace for a season) if bells ring eight and not nine.
- **Valewood**: A *Bone-Song* grants a one-scene *Dew-Mirror* if sung at a *Barrow Field* grove.

Encounter Seeds

- **Kurgan Debt:** A *Bone-Singer* bids you return a stolen bridle; success earns *Ring Audience*, delay wakes an *Echo-Legionary*... from under grass.
- **Salt for Strings:** The *Trading Palisade* is out of salt; only your *Market-Green* can open stores—if you place a *Safe-Hostage*.
- **Wolf on the Road:** A wolf with a torn banner in its mouth paces your camp; follow to a lost *Pontoon Crossing* before the river breaks.

Designer Hooks (Optional)

Banner-Deeds Record one daring ride as a *Deed*. Once per session, flash the Deed to step Position up on rally/negotiation with riders who honor that style.

Storm-Borrow Offer a steel gift to the *Sky-Speaker* during *Three Suns*; on a hit, bank *Sky's Exception*. On a miss, weather splits—half on you, half on your friends.

Steppe Homage Sites & Lairs (drop-in hexes)

- **Wolf-Teeth Palisade** — Trading yard ringed with jawbone pickets; scales hang from rawhide cords that only balance for fair deals.
- **Sky-Drum Kopje** — Wind hollows beat like hooves at dusk; a buried drum answers only to the Khagan's cadence.
- **Salt-Wheel Flats** — Crust pans etched with cart runes; turning the sun-bleached axle calls remounts from mirage distance.
- **Nine-Kurgan String** — Barrows aligned to winter stars; a bone-singer can “pluck” omens like notes to sway a council.
- **Frost-Bitten Forum** — Utaran milestone half-swallowed by loess; steppe law carved *over* imperial script decides ford rights.
- **Sable-Creek Corrals** — Hides stretch on willow frames; a ghost ledger tallies every foal traded, never wrong, never kind.
- **Black Hoof Monastery** — Rock hermitage with hoofprints set in basalt; novices test honesty against a hoof-bell that rings for lies.
- **Storm-Bone Causeway** — Vertebrae bridge across a reed-gorge; crossing at a gallop wakes the bones to judge riders' courage.

Steppe Bestiary (palette)

- **Steppe Manticores** — Lionine torsos, porcupine tails of bone quills. *Signs:* quills in fence-posts; ponies refuse to drink. *Hook:* play a raid-song backward; they circle to listen.
- **Dust Hulks** — Wind-packed silhouettes that rise from dunes. *Signs:* dunes “breathe”; grit sifts upward. *Hook:* spill water on their shadow; they settle for a watch.
- **Bone Kites** — Carrion birds with rune-etched pinions. *Signs:* spiral flights over kurgans. *Hook:* offer a name-stake (twig with hair) to barter silence.
- **Frost Wargs** — Blue-pelt wolves that steam cold. *Signs:* rime on tracks; breath that crackles. *Hook:* warm milk poured on ice buys one unchallenged crossing.

- **Reed Stalkers** — Long-necked marsh hunters, gait like stilts. *Signs:* pole-pocks where no ferryman walks. *Hook:* carry reeds in your mouth; they read it as truce.
- **Salt Screamers** — Pale eels in dry pans; voices like flutes. *Signs:* fissures crusted with salt frost. *Hook:* scatter ash; they coil to sing and forget to bite.

Terrain Stock (d20 quick)

- 1 Wolf milepost with fresh red thread; someone retied the law.
- 2 Reed ford poles lying on bank; current whispers a different depth.
- 3 Fallen standard tooth used as a chopping block; grooves still warm.
- 4 Circle of pony skulls facing east; one blinks when the wind shifts.
- 5 Snow trench with cudgel steps; no prints leave it.
- 6 Copper salt-scale hung from a birch; pans balance only under oath.
- 7 Hoof-bells threaded on hair; ringing calls riders—or storms.
- 8 Abandoned paiza shard wedged in a milestone; edges bite skin.
- 9 Kurgan capstone chalked with a name misspelled; feud waiting.
- 10 Flint knapper's tarp half-buried; a perfect arrowhead points north.
- 11 Blue-fledged signal arrow stuck in frost; message in the vane.
- 12 Camp-sweep marks: three rings—last night was a council.
- 13 Wheel rut frozen like glass; a face looks up from inside.
- 14 Salt-brined jerky hanging from a tripod; untouched by birds.
- 15 River ice singing in thirds; ferryman's pole wedged under.
- 16 Pony hobble-rope knotted in hostage-string pattern.
- 17 Cold forge dug into loess; tools wrapped in wolfskin.
- 18 Child's braid-bead dropped in snow; still warm to the tongue.
- 19 Thorn-tether scratched with clan brands; two over-scratched.
- 20 Bone flute lodged in a cairn; playing it summons a road-judge.

Lair Seeds (d12 one-page rides)

1. **Ger of Echoes** — Empty felt walls repeat anything uttered in the Khagan's voice once per night.
2. **Salt-Pit Shrine** — Rope winch to brine caverns; offerings are tears and horsehair.
3. **Remount Vault** — Subterranean stables under reed mats; mounts won't leave without a tale.
4. **Kite-Maker's Bluff** — Bone kites pinned on racks; their shadows scout for raiders.
5. **Storm-Rider's Stone** — Pillar that hums to hooves; racing round it sets weather wagers.
6. **Frozen Court** — Ice dais in a dry riverbed; law held here counts triple until thaw.
7. **Banner Grave** — Flags planted like trees; each knows the battle it died in.
8. **String-Mother's Yard** — Web of hostage cords; cutting one opens a secret but starts a feud.
9. **Fire-Under-Snow** — Warm vent where foals winter; spirits ask for salt-song.
10. **Quiet Palisade** — Trading post where voices fail; deals done in gesture and cut meat.
11. **Ashen Trident** — Three lightning-split birches; tie a braid to choose a road's luck.

12. **Grey Ger** — Moves at night; inside, a camp-mother tests your hospitality the other way around.

Boss Hooks (banner crowns)

- **The String-Mother of Nine Kurgans** — Matriarch who holds more hostage cords than any noyan; her nod ties wars into weddings.
- **The Dust Prince** — Raider who rides the wind’s lee, never seen from the front; offers *Escort Braid* for a secret standard.
- **Storm-Singer Urum** — Sky-speaker who sells weather on credit; his bills come due during *Wolf Moon*.
- **The Ledger Khan** — Road-judge turned warlord; his seals move hosts like abacus beads.

Relics & Finds (d10)

- 1 Wolf-tooth standard tip; planted, it demands silence for parley.
- 2 Bronze paiza half; merchants honor it as full once—then talk.
- 3 Salt-needle that points to the nearest brine store.
- 4 Frost-bitten stirrup: mount that wears it ignores ice once.
- 5 Braid-bead of hostage glass; melts when a string is cut nearby.
- 6 River-depth rod carved with safe counts for three fords.
- 7 Iron hoof-bell that rings for liars at council.
- 8 Bone-lot cup; roll it to name which feud clause applies.
- 9 Wind-wrung scarf; pass it round to share breath in a white squall.
- 10 Wolf-road tablet scrap; reads as *Foedus Seal* to one clerk.

Complication Twists (d8)

1. *White Squall* reveals a remount vault’s smoke hole; entering angers reed stalkers.
2. *Rasputitsa* exposes kurgan stones; riding around them starts a name-claim.
3. *Feud Spark* was staged by a salt-broker; paying in *Salt Allotment* unmasks them.
4. *Hostage Call* is for a *Safe-Hostage* you already carry—by another name.
5. *Grassfire* runs uphill toward a council hollow; smoke votes before riders do.
6. *Foedus Recall* cites a river you crossed yesterday—now it flows the other way.
7. *Raid Shadow* is your own tracks, mirrored by sky omens; choose which you admit.
8. *Kurultai Call* stacks councils; words spoken in one bind you in the other.

Mini-Procedures (quick steppe play)

Wolf Road Etiquette When you arrive at a *Trading Palisade* or *Remount Station*, choose one and pay its price:

- **Salt First:** Spend *Salt Allotment* to gain *Market-Green* for the scene.
- **String First:** Place a *Safe-Hostage* to bank +1 Position in all parleys here.
- **Story First:** Recount a true raid; cancel one *Paper vs Spear* style objection.

Trial-Ride (three beats) *Mark, Loose, Hold.* Win two beats (navigation shot, archery shot, nerve test) to claim verdict; each failed beat marks 1 Fatigue or 1 honor cost (your pick).

Adventure Seeds

- **Strings in Winter** — Three hostage cords go missing from the String-Mother's yard; each is tied to a different treaty you need.
- **Storm on Credit** — Storm-Singer Urum sells you *Sky's Exception*; someone else already owes the same storm.
- **Ledger of the Road** — A road-judge's seal-book was buried in a dust hulk; opening it retitles the Wolf Mileposts for a day.
- **Feast of Two Standards** — A kurultai invites rival banners to dine under one ring; the first to eat salt owes the first blood—or peace.

1.32 Zakov — “Salt & Serpent”

Elite (Salt Prince)

“The tide here keeps better ledgers than any scribe, and the reefs remember every secret whispered above their depths. Power flows like the currents – those who understand them rule the waves.”

Commoner (Dock-rat pickpocket with map tattoo and no fear)

“The sewers and the sea both carry what folks want to forget, but they also remember everything. Best keep your business above water and your enemies guessing which dock you’ll use next.”

Theme & Atmosphere

Zakov is the pirate-city of the Dolmis coast, where tides trade secrets and knives settle debts. Its streets are piers, its courts are taverns, and its rulers are whoever the Syndicates fear most this season. The Salt Prince claims the throne, but the real power ebbs and flows with the tide—and the tide remembers everything.

(Harbor/Bolt-hole/Black Market) Salt-cracked wharf where tide brings back what law forgets; Bone-yard beach with wrecks and corpses in kelp; Smuggler’s Gate behind Fish Market.

Spades — Places (categories)

2. **Salt Wharf** — Cracked and crumbling; tide brings back what law forgets.
3. **Bone-Yard Beach** — Wrecks and corpses tangled in kelp and rope.
4. **Smuggler’s Gate** — Alley behind Fish Market; always unlocked, always watched.
5. **The Shallows** — Reef-ridden cut only locals dare; navigation as survival.
6. **Dregs Quarter** — Shanties on stilts; boats tied to doorframes like pets.
7. **Iron Pier** — Gangplank to *Red Wake*, corsair flagship; power as vessel.
8. **Crow’s Roost** — Tavern built into hull of beached galleon; past as present.
9. **Black Bazaar** — Tents under tarps; goods that scream if you listen.
10. **Salt Maze** — Marsh paths only the lost know; confusion as protection.
- J **Sunken Quarter** — Half city underwater at high tide; wealth as depth.
- Q **Crimson Docks** — Contracts signed in blood; commerce as violence.
- K **Anchorhead** — Floating fortress of Pirate Syndicate; law as anchor.
- A **Serpent’s Spine** — Reef pass to city’s secret heart; danger as gateway.

(Syndicate/Corsair/Fence) Dock-rat pickpocket with map tattoo and no fear; fence dealing in stolen names and secondhand loyalties.

Hearts — People & Factions (categories)

2. **Dock-Rat** — Pickpocket with map tattoo and no fear; street as education.
3. **Fence** — Deals in stolen names and secondhand loyalties; trust as currency.
4. **Tavern-Keeper** — Remembers every face—and sells the list; hospitality as trap.

5. **Corsair Lt.** — Letter of marque signed in blood; authority as paper.
6. **Dock-Master** — “Loses” ships that owe Syndicate; bureaucracy as weapon.
7. **Smuggler Cap.** — False manifest and quicker blade; honesty as liability.
8. **Poison-Tongue** — Trades secrets like coin; words as blades.
9. **Exiled Admiral** — Running black-market shipyard; rank as resource.
10. **Pirate Queen** — Rules Shallows with charm and cutlass; beauty as power.
- J **Silent Synd.** — No names, just favors and faces; anonymity as strength.
- Q **Kraken’s Tongue** — Oracle who speaks in riddles and tides; future as mystery.
- K **Salt Prince** — Nominal ruler; real power in shadows; crown as mask.
- A **Drowned Admiral** — Legend says still gives orders from deep; death as command.

(**Betrayal/Storm/Syndicate Feud**) Tide turns early—your ship now ashore wrong side; rival syndicate burns warehouse with your goods.

Clubs — Complications/Threats (categories)

2. **Tide Shift** — Turns early; your ship now ashore on wrong side.
3. **Warehouse Fire** — Rival syndicate burns it; your goods inside.
4. **Cursed Cargo** — Something in hold is *watching*; cargo as curse.
5. **Storm Warning** — Ships flee, prices soar, lawmen vanish.
6. **Double-Cross** — Holding fake shipment and real enemies.
7. **Prince’s Levy** — Every ship pays tithe or gets sunk; tax as threat.
8. **Plague Ship** — Quarantine flags ignored; sickness spreads.
9. **Blood Feud** — Erupts between pirate crews; collateral damage.
10. **Kraken Rising** — Reefs shift, ships vanish, sailors scream.
- J **Voided Contract** — Your protection means nothing now.
- Q **Syndicate Split** — Zakov becomes warzone overnight.
- K **Naval Blockade** — No ships in or out without fight.
- A **Tide Forgets** — Half city cut off, drowning in secrets.

(**Pass/Contract/Stolen Goods**) Smuggler’s token to pass checkpoint unseen; forged manifest making cargo “clean.”

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (categories)

2. **Smuggler’s Token** — Pass one checkpoint unseen; stealth as paper.
3. **Forged Manifest** — Your cargo is now “clean”; truth as forgery.
4. **Safe Berth** — Bone-yard; no questions, no law; sanctuary as wreck.
5. **Corsair’s Charter** — Raid with impunity for one moon; violence as license.
6. **Prince’s Writ** — Levies can’t touch you (yet); authority as delay.
7. **Black Ledger** — Names, debts, and where they sleep; knowledge as power.
8. **Salvage Rights** — Named wreck; first claim, no questions.
9. **Lighthouse Key** — Stolen; redirect ships where you will.

10. **Debt-Marker** — Syndicate owes you favor; obligation as asset.
 J **Queen’s Blessing** — Safe passage through Shallows; charm as protection.
 Q **Kraken’s Favor** — Tides part for your ship, once; nature as ally.
 K **Prince’s Coin** — Bribe any official, silence any witness.
 A **Serpent’s Mark** — Reef itself will guide you home; danger as guide.

Quick use notes

- Draw until you have all four suits: Spade = place, Heart = actor, Club = pressure, Diamond = leverage. Highest rank sets the main Clock (2–5 → 4, 6–10 → 6, J/Q/K → 8, A → 10).
- Diamonds are codified outcomes (passes/contracts/goods) that change position rather than call for a roll.
- If any A appears, echo **salt & serpent** motifs—tides that remember, reefs that shift, deep that listens.

Additional Features

- **Tide Clock:** Scenes run on four-segment **Tide Clock**. Each advance shifts Position: *Low tide* reveals hidden wrecks/bolt-holes, *Flood tide* drowns streets/seals doors. When Clock turns, Keeper may demand 1 SB tied to waters.
- **Syndicate Debt:** Every deal leaves mark. Track single **Debt** value (0–3). At 3, Syndicate calls it in: betrayal, levy, unwanted escort. Clear 1 Debt by paying Diamond or sacrificing useful contact.
- **Whispers Deep:** Rumors carry teeth. When characters openly boast/bargain/betray, roll 1d6: 1–3: Whispers spread, increasing SB generation. 4–6: Whispers favor PCs, lowering suspicion until tide turns.

Patronage & Power

In Zakov, power flows through the control of smuggling routes, the management of syndicate debts, and the ability to navigate the complex web of pirate politics. The Salt Prince maintains nominal authority, but real power lies with those who control the tides, the reefs, and the flow of information through the city's taverns and black markets. The true authorities are those who can provide safe passage, protect cargoes, and mediate between competing syndicates.

For the GM: Patronage in Zakov revolves around smuggling rights, safe harbors, and the ability to provide protection from both legal and illegal authorities. Rewards often take the form of tokens, charters, and safe passage that can be leveraged into greater influence. To emphasize this:

- Tie rewards to visible symbols (tokens, manifests, keys) that can be challenged, stolen, or voided.
- Let rival syndicates issue conflicting protections, forcing players to choose whose favor matters more.
- Use the docks, taverns, and smuggling routes as arenas for social contests, where knowledge of custom and connections determine success.

In Zakov, your reputation is your wealth, and your wealth determines whether you rule the waves or feed the fishes.

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

- **Exposure:** Your actions draw unwanted attention from **syndicate enforcers or dock guards**.
- **Noise:** Sounds of your actions alert nearby **pirates or tavern patrons**.
- **Trace:** Evidence of your passage marks your route for **trackers or fence networks**.
- **Delay:** A brief but meaningful setback costs you **time or favorable tide**.
- **Supply Strain:** Mark +1 segment on a relevant **resource clock**.

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

- **Alarm Raised:** **Dock-master or corsair lieutenant** becomes aware and begins responding.
- **Position Lost:** You lose advantageous ground/cover/stealth due to **tide shift or syndicate patrol**.
- **Foe Appears:** A **rival syndicate or pirate crew** arrives on scene.
- **Gear Trouble:** A piece of equipment becomes **Compromised/Neglected**.
- **Lock/Barrier:** A simple obstacle now requires a test to overcome.

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

- **Reinforcements:** Additional **syndicate enforcers, pirate crews, or naval forces** arrive.
- **Key Gear Breaks:** A crucial tool/weapon becomes temporarily unusable.

- **Major Twist:** The situation fundamentally changes - **contract voided/storm hits/syndicate splits**.
- **Rail Tick:** Advance a relevant campaign/front clock by 1 segment.
- **Condition Applied:** Mark **Fatigue 1/Harm 1/Condition** appropriate to fiction.

Major Turns (4+ SB)

- **Trap Springs:** A prepared danger activates with full effect.
- **Authority Arrival:** **Salt Prince, Pirate Queen, or Drowned Admiral** intervenes.
- **Scene Shift:** The environment changes dramatically - **tide shifts/storm hits/blockade imposed**.
- **Patron Omen:** Divine/arcane forces take notice - **omen appears/blessing lost/curse manifests**.
- **Narrative Pivot:** The story takes an unexpected turn that reframes objectives.

Region-Specific SB Options

- **Zakov (Tide Power):** Water levels change without warning, ships become stranded or flooded, tidal currents shift direction.
- **Zakov (Syndicate Politics):** Protection money demands increase, rival factions make conflicting demands, contracts are voided mid-deal.
- **Zakov (Pirate Culture):** Ships are commandeered, crews mutiny, pirate codes are enforced with violence.

Zakov — Salt and Serpent

Starting Location: A smuggler’s gate built into the seawall, its iron mouth crusted with barnacles and secrets.

“In Zakov, the sea remembers its debts, and every tide drags a name to pay.”

In... A Smuggler’s Gate, a Fence offers a forged manifest. “The Salt Prince’s levy rises,” they say. “And the tide forgets who paid.”

Regional Motifs Salt levies, river smugglers, eel cults, threshold markets.

Whispers to Offer “Take a bribe,” “Change the manifest,” “Drown the witness.”

External Clocks Threat: “Levy Teeth”; Community: “Smuggler War”; Anchor: “Gate Truce.”

Complications Eels spell names; brine coins multiply; gates open to water.

Anchors at Risk A dockside aunt; a tide-warden.

Escalation Beat The manifest adds the party’s cargo.

Relief Pay the levy in kind; throw the coin-chain back; swear the Gate to a new keeper.

City Operating System (Fast Play)

Tide-State (4) Track a **Tide Clock** (Low → Flood → Slack → Ebb). At each shift:

- change **Position**: Low (+Infiltration), Flood (-Mobility), Slack (+Deals), Ebb (+Getaway).
- Keeper may bank 1 SB tied to *water, rot, or rumor*.

Heat & Debt Track **Heat** (0–4) and **Debt** (0–3) citywide.

- *Heat* rises on noisy jobs; at 4, a *Syndicate Split* tick or *Naval Blockade* rumor triggers.
- *Debt* rises when you stiff a faction; at 3, a creditor picks the next scene’s complication.

Crew Playbooks (pick one tag) *Cutters* (+Effect on coercion at Crimson Docks); *Ghosts* (ignore first Tide penalty each job); *Lighters* (cargo swaps create 1 **Forged Manifest** per session); *Lanterns* (fae bargains count as Diamonds once/session).

Signal, Cipher, & Circuitry

Harbor Flash (d6 quick comms) 1 one-lantern (safe) 2 two-lantern (watch) 3 red rag (fire) 4 black gull (hit) 5 three knocks (meet) 6 eel-twine (fae eyes)

Dock Cant (micro-phrases) “wet ledger” = bribe; “green rope” = cursed cargo; “white rain” = blockade rumor; “dead wake” = tail on you.

Shadow-Net Each *Crow’s Roost*/tavern can host one **Cache**: 3 rumors total; *spend* 1 rumor to bump Position on info-gathering. When emptied, add +1 **Heat**.

The Fae Leak

Saltbound Rules Fae cannot *enter* a circle salted with **tidewater salt**, but can *bargain* across it. Breaking circle = 1 SB and a personal *Mark*.

Eel Court Wharf-spirits (eel-hooded) adjudicate vows “where water hears.” Presenting a **Serpent’s Mark** lets you reroute a single clause in a contract once.

Drowned Names Names thrown from *Bone-Yard Beach* return as *Echo Debtors*. Cash one to erase 1 **Debt**—but the name occasionally speaks from your mouth.

Heist Skeletons (Plug & Play)

The Manifest Swap (3 beats) **Beat 1:** *Entry* (Smuggler’s Gate or Sunken Quarter); on miss, *Tide Shift*. **Beat 2:** *Edit* (swap bill at Dock-Master); spend **Forged Manifest** to auto-pass. **Beat 3:** *Exit* (Shallows); fail = *Cursed Cargo* wakes.

Anchorhead Skim (4 beats) **Case** a ledger → **Turn** a clerk → **Lift** a page → **Ghost** on the Iron Pier. Any alarm = *Prince’s Levy* this scene.

Syndicate Play (Mini-Game)

Stacks & Faces Pick a patron *Stack* each arc: **Red Wake** (muscle), **Silent Syndicate** (intel), **Salt Prince** (papers). During downtime, exchange *Faces* (favors) for one of: reduce **Heat** by 1; clear 1 **Debt**; mint one **Black Ledger** page (one-use leverage on any named).

War Track (0–6) Each conflicting job advances **War**; at 3, *Blood Feud*; at 6, *Syndicate Split*. Reset if PCs deliver a **Queen’s Blessing** or sacrifice a crew asset.

Urban Terrain & Glitches

Glitch Table (fae-punk fuzz, d8) 1 door opens to water 2 lantern whispers your alias 3 rope grows kelp 4 coin tastes like brine and lies 5 footprints go opposite 6 eel writes your name 7 reef sound indoors 8 tide remembers a promise you didn’t make

Zones (quick tags) *Dregs*: +Stealth, -Status; *Crimson*: +Force, -Subtle; *Sunken*: +Weird, -Mobility; *Salt Maze*: +Escape, -Clarity.

NPC Templates

Kraken’s Tongue (Oracle) *Wants*: Tribute in secrets. *Leverage*: once/session convert a **Club** to a **Diamond**. *Cost*: forget a friend’s face for a night.

Dock-Master Briga *Wants*: A rival’s ledger singe. *Leverage*: “lose” any hull for a day. *Cost*: your real name in her book.

Pirate Queen Mael *Wants*: A tide-warden compromised. *Leverage*: **Queen’s Blessing**. *Cost*: carry her mark where it shows.

Contraband & Curses

Hot List (d6) 1 saint-glass (screams when lied to) 2 eel-ink (writes back) 3 tide-bell (rings at wrong hour) 4 serpent charts (reef moves for bearer) 5 name-wine (drink a memory) 6 drowned coins (buy help, cost breath)

Tagging Cargo Each illicit lot has 1 *Tag*: **Watching, Hungry, Bound, Cold**. Tag can be “disarmed” by the right shrine/fee/contact.

Cross-Region Conversions

- **Theona**: *Smuggler’s Token* counts as *Hawthorn Pass* if bells play eight; a ninth sound voids both.
- **Viterra**: *Prince’s Writ* can masquerade as *Customs Seal* for one audit before *Audit Freeze* ticks.
- **Ubral**: *Black Ledger* page buys one night of *Guest-Token*—if read aloud at Wergild Ford.
- **Vhasia**: *Lighthouse Key* spoofs a beacon on *Beacon Crown*/King’s High Road ferries once.
- **Valewood**: *Serpent’s Mark* = one-scene *Way-Cord* if dipped in Moon-Cistern.
- **Ways Between**: A complete *Forged Manifest* recited at a *Threshold Arch* becomes a *Passage Token*.

Clocks & Pressures

Levy Teeth (6) 1–2: Quayside “inspections” 3–4: Tithe brigades 5: Fire at the wrong warehouse 6: Floating gallows at Anchorhead.

Smuggler War (6) 1–2: Protection doubled 3–4: Routes trapped 5: Crews defect 6: Open water gunwales—everyone draws steel.

Gate Truce (4) 1: Coins tied on rope 2–3: Gate stays “neutral” 4: New Keeper named; reroute *Tide Clock* once/session.

Score Seeds

- **The Eel That Spoke:** A *Cursed Cargo* eel whispers court gossip from Thepyrgos; bottle it before *Syndicate Split*.
- **Red Wake’s Shadow:** Lift a *Black Ledger* page naming the Salt Prince’s heir; payment is *Prince’s Coin*—and a knife in the dark.
- **Lighthouse Down:** Swap the *Lighthouse Key* during a storm; success grants *Kraken’s Favor*, fail triggers *Naval Blockade*.

Designer Hooks (Optional)

Reefburn When you voluntarily take *Heat* to make a daring move, mark *Reefburn*. Once per session, spend *Reefburn* to treat the *Serpent’s Spine* as a safe exit regardless of tide—something else pays the price later.

Name-Mask Craft a single-scene alias with eel-ink; while worn, your **Heat** ticks to the mask, not you. If the mask “dies,” transfer 1 **Debt** to the faction who owned the name you stole.

Harbor Homage Sites & Lairs (drop-in districts)

- **Chain-Gate Teeth** — Twin boom-chains scarred by ramming hulks; oiled winches sing secrets if fed brine coins.
- **Gallows’ Net** — Web of rigging strung over a tide-pool court; verdicts lowered on block-and-tackle.
- **Coinsink Stairs** — Weed-slick steps to a shrine that only counts offerings thrown blind.
- **Red Wake’s Cradle** — Drydock carved into a wreck’s ribs; timbers remember mutinies and whisper them back at night.
- **Keelhouse Scriptorium** — Sailmakers who stitch clauses into canvas; a mainsail can carry a contract farther than a courier.
- **Eel-Bell Court** — Tide-bells toll wrong hours; each clang grants sanctuary until the next wave touches your boots.
- **Smokespine** — Stack-maze where tar-fires never die; a breath of it makes lies taste like rope.
- **Seven-Anchor Yard** — Museum of seized anchors; the biggest still drags in storms, pulling rumors with it.

Urban Bestiary (palette)

- **Brine Wraiths** — Drowned debtors that cling like wet canvas. *Signs:* coins stack themselves; ropes unknot. *Hook:* return a name to Bone-Yard and they carry one whisper for you.
- **Reef Serpents** — Kelp-maned constrictors nesting in pilings. *Signs:* barnacles spell spirals; gulls won’t land. *Hook:* beat a net like a drum; they follow the rhythm, not the blood.
- **Tar Gulls** — Oil-dripped scavengers that trade trinkets for shine. *Signs:* black feathers on white foam. *Hook:* flash a mirror; they’ll fetch what you picture—once.
- **Ledger Crabs** — Carapaces etched with accounts; they rearrange ledgers in their sleep. *Hook:* feed them wormwood; they “forget” one debt for a tide.
- **Knot-Hags** — Wharf spirits that live in snarls; they tangle plans and lines equally. *Hook:* cut a sacrificial coil; they unknot one problem and braid another.
- **Lampfishers** — Tall, mask-eyed things seen under grates in Slack; they love secrets heavier than gold.

Dock Stock (d20 quick)

- 1 Tar bucket still warm; prints lead both directions.
- 2 Three-lantern code lit wrong; fourth is a watcher.
- 3 Rope with twelve splices; one is a message in sailor’s braid.
- 4 Crate labeled “salt”—full of sand and a single black coin.
- 5 Rust-red wake stain; no ship left that color.
- 6 Drift altar of bottle-glass; one bottle whispers back.
- 7 Bilge-water map sketched in mildew; only visible at ebb.
- 8 Hook with wedding ring; bent outward.
- 9 Ledger page soggy but legible; last line adds your cargo.
- 10 Eel skin pennon; points to the Serpent’s Spine when wet.
- 11 Tar handprint too large for any sailor; points toward Smuggler’s Gate.
- 12 Splinters arranged like teeth; bite if pocketed.
- 13 Tide-clock with missing hand; still keeps perfect Slack.
- 14 Harbour rat wearing a thread collar with a sigil bead.
- 15 Net weights stacked as a little gallows.
- 16 Driftwood idol with a knife in it; blood’s fresh, wood is dry.
- 17 Copper nail stamped with a crown you don’t recognize.
- 18 Coil of rope tied in a noose-knot that won’t tighten on liars.
- 19 Shells arranged as a charter seal; one is a listening ear.
- 20 Barnacle rosary; counting it makes footsteps pass you by.

Lair Seeds (d12 one-night jobs)

1. **The Net-Queen’s Loft** — A rigging den where favors are measured in fathoms.
2. **Ink-Cellar** — Eel-ink vats below a printshop; the walls remember every name printed.
3. **Deadwake Chapel** — Floods on Slack; boatmen marry their knives here.
4. **Chainman’s Hostel** — Beds locked with anchor chain; rent is paid in confessions.

5. **Serpent Choir** — Reef tunnel; the surf sings clauses backwards.
6. **Gull-Tower** — Pigeon roost gone feral; messages shredded unless fed offal.
7. **Copperbone Yard** — Scrapyard ships with copper ribs; sparks start rumors.
8. **Salt-Judge's Dock** — A retired warden tries cases for fishers at dawn bell.
9. **Mask Market** — One aisle where faces are rented for a tide.
10. **Weeping Winch** — Cranes that leak brine on liars; useful, hated.
11. **The Quiet Slip** — Sound dies; perfect for handoffs, bad for warnings.
12. **Eel-Kiln** — Smokehouse that preserves more than fish; memories steep in brine.

Relics & Finds (d10)

- 1 Tide-compass that points to Slack, not north.
- 2 Reef tooth key; opens any lighthouse once.
- 3 Brine-ink quill; contracts signed with it cannot be read aloud.
- 4 Salt prince's cufflink; bribes one guard, insults one captain.
- 5 Gaff with a prayer cut along the shaft; lifts curses, scars users.
- 6 Tarred ledger strap; binding a book with it hides one page from audits.
- 7 Barnacle brooch; pins a lie to someone else for a scene.
- 8 Foghorn reed; blown softly, turns footsteps to surf-noise.
- 9 Sea-glass seal; impresses a *Forged Manifest* as genuine once.
- 10 Eel-scale veil; wear it to be unseen by anything reflected in water.

Complication Twists (d8)

1. *Tide Shift* reveals a smugglers' stair *and* floods the only exit behind you.
2. *Warehouse Fire* was lit with rain; flames don't spread—smoke writes names.
3. *Double-Cross* includes your own counterfeit mark; someone sold your alias.
4. *Prince's Levy* is collected by a syndicate impostor; paying sparks a *Blood Feud*.
5. *Plague Ship* flies false flags; the plague is in the cargo, not the crew.
6. *Voided Contract* cites a clause only the *Kraken's Tongue* would know.
7. *Naval Blockade* uses fae buoys; they drift toward *Forged Manifest* holders.
8. *Tide Forgets* empties a canal and exposes a gallows with a still-kicking shadow.

Mini-Procedures (quick harbor play)

Cut a Wake When you need a clean exit through the Shallows, choose two and pay their costs:

- **Speed:** spend 1 *Remount Hire* equivalent (oars/crew) or mark *Heat*+1.
- **Silence:** leave a *Cache* rumor at a tavern; GM banks 1 SB.
- **Cover:** light a false beacon; start *Levy Teeth*+1.

Rope Court To settle a dispute without steel, each party knots a clause in one rope. Roll off; winner keeps their clause, loser's knot is cut and their stake is forfeit. Spending **Serpent's Mark** lets you retie one knot mid-judgment.

Boss Hooks (harbor crowns)

- **Mist-Baroness** — Controls the fog-candles; sells Slack on credit, calls it in on flood.
- **Anchor Virtue** — Exiled admiral preaching a stricter pirate code; her crews don’t drink on duty and never drown a debtor.
- **The Red Notary** — Tattoos charters into skin; burn him and an entire fleet loses papers.
- **Lord of Eels** — Fae broker in a salt circle; offers memory-for-manifest swaps at moonrise.

Extra Score Seeds

- **The Rope Court Heist** — Replace a clause-knot before dawn judgment; success flips *Prince’s Levy* to your rival.
- **Fog-Candle Run** — Steal three fog-candles from the Mist-Baroness; each lit scene rerolls the *Tide Clock*.
- **Drowned Name Auction** — Bid at Bone-Yard for a name that erases *Debt*; every bidder speaks from someone else’s mouth.