

Fate's Edge

Comprehensive Resource Guide

Narrative-First Roleplaying System

Version 1.0

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0.1 Reviewer's Guide: Understanding Fate's Edge

This will be removed in Production

0.1.1 Reframing the Evaluation

Fate's Edge is not a traditional tabletop RPG to be evaluated by comprehensive rule mastery. Instead, it is a **narrative partnership** designed to evolve with your table's storytelling sophistication. Approach this review through the lens of **progressive storytelling enhancement** rather than static mechanical complexity.

0.1.2 Key Evaluation Framework

Start Simple, Discover Naturally

- **Session 1:** Core mechanic + 1-2 regional generators = complete playable experience
- **Session 5:** Comfortable integration of multiple subsystems
- **Session 20:** Intuitive mastery where mechanics become invisible

The Partnership Model

Rather than "learning a game," players develop a "storytelling partnership" where:

- Rules serve narrative consequences, not simulation accuracy
- Complexity emerges from interaction, not individual component sophistication
- Prep burden shifts from authoring content to facilitating discovery

0.1.3 Common Misunderstandings to Address

Content Volume vs. Discovery Process

Misconception: "Too much content to master" **Reality:** Content is designed for gradual discovery through play

Reviewer Guidance:

"Imagine a library where you only need to know about the books relevant to today's story. The rest exist to be discovered when narrative ambition demands them."

Prep-Light vs. Prep-Free

Misconception: "No prep means unstructured play" **Reality:** Prep is embedded in the constraint lattice

Reviewer Guidance:

"The system replaces authored prep with guided storytelling. Every card draw is improvisation with guardrails."

Mechanical Simplicity vs. Narrative Sophistication

Misconception: "Simple mechanics = shallow stories" **Reality:** Sophistication emerges from constraint interaction

Reviewer Guidance:

"Like jazz with a vast repertoire, the same simple rules that handle Session 1 magic effortlessly scale to manage Session 50 world-changing consequences."

0.1.4 Evaluation Methodology

Progressive Complexity Assessment

1. **Tier I Play** (30-40 XP): Evaluate session-to-session narrative flow with minimal subsystems
2. **Tier III Play** (90-150 XP): Assess how character growth naturally expands storytelling scope
3. **Tier V Play** (220+ XP): Examine how simple rules handle complex, multi-threaded narratives

Mastery Curve Analysis

Key Metric: Mastery effort should decrease as narrative complexity increases

Success Indicators:

- Session 1: Clear, engaging storytelling with minimal reference
- Session 10: Comfortable integration of multiple subsystems
- Session 30: Mechanics become invisible; focus entirely on narrative

0.1.5 What to Look For

Narrative-First Design

- Every mechanical element should serve story consequences
- Player agency should manifest through narrative choices, not optimization
- GM authority should prioritize "what happens" over "what are the rules"

Constraint-Based Creativity

- Random elements should create coherent, not chaotic, storytelling
- Regional generators should maintain thematic consistency while enabling variety
- Mechanical constraints should inspire creativity, not limit options

Scalable Sophistication

- Same core mechanics should handle intimate scenes and epic narratives
- Character progression should expand narrative possibilities, not mechanical options
- World complexity should emerge from player actions, not pre-authored content

0.1.6 Red Flags vs. Design Features

Actual Red Flags

- Mechanics that require constant reference during play
- Subsystems that don't integrate naturally with core philosophy
- Progression that adds mechanical burden rather than narrative freedom

Misinterpreted Design Features

- **High content volume** = Creative resource library, not mastery burden
- **Multiple magic paths** = Narrative vocabulary expansion, not mechanical complexity
- **Regional generators** = Inspiration engines, not reference requirements

0.1.7 Recommended Review Approach

Session 1-3 Evaluation

Focus on:

- How quickly engaging stories emerge
- Clarity of core mechanical principles
- Integration of generated content into coherent narratives

Session 10+ Evaluation

Assess:

- How naturally complexity emerges from player choices
- Integration of multiple subsystems without mechanical overhead
- Evolution from "using rules" to "telling stories"

Long-term Assessment

Consider:

- Whether the system grows with narrative ambition
- If mastery effort genuinely decreases over time
- How world complexity emerges organically from play

0.1.8 The Core Truth

Fate's Edge succeeds not by being simple, but by being **designed for simplicity to emerge naturally from complex storytelling**. Evaluate it not as a comprehensive system to master, but as a storytelling partnership that grows in sophistication at exactly the same rate your table develops narrative ambition.

This isn't a game you learn - it's a storytelling evolution you grow into.

Chapter 1

Core Principles

1.1 The Central Question

At its heart, Fate's Edge asks:

What are you willing to risk, and what are you willing to pay, to reshape the world around you?

This question is both philosophical and mechanical. Players gamble with fate every time they act, and the consequences—good or ill—become the foundation of their legend.

1.2 Key Concepts

1.2.1 Narrative Time

Time in Fate's Edge is measured by story weight, not by clocks. Actions are framed in four narrative scales:

A Moment

A heartbeat, a glance, a single strike or word.

Some Time

A few minutes, enough for a skirmish, a careful lockpick, or a short negotiation.

Significant Time

Hours, long enough to travel between locations, work a ritual, or endure a siege.

Days

Large-scale endeavors: marches across a countryside, training a cadre, or recovering from wounds.

1.2.2 Story Beats

Whenever a player rolls dice, each result of 1 generates a Story Beat (SB). These are not mere penalties—they are narrative fuel. The GM spends them to introduce twists:

- Escalation — drawing more enemies, raising the stakes.
- Exhaustion — draining time, resources, or positioning.
- Exposure — revealing hidden actions, alerting foes.
- Collateral — harm or danger spilling over onto allies, innocents, or surroundings.

1.2.3 Affinity

Races and cultures in Fate's Edge do not define characters through numbers alone. Instead, each provides an Affinity: a narrative edge or metaphysical bond. Affinities make certain Arts, skills, or actions more reliable, weaving identity into mechanics.

1.2.4 Prestige Abilities

Prestige Abilities are high-level talents unlocked by mastering cultural arts or philosophies. They are narrative milestones as much as mechanical ones.

1.2.5 On-Screen vs. Off-Screen

Fate's Edge distinguishes between resources you see at the table and those that shape the world in the background:

On-Screen Resources

are companions, hirelings, or allies who stand beside you in danger. They add dice pools and flavor, but they can falter, be taken, or die.

Off-Screen Resources

are taverns, estates, titles, or networks of informants. They never swing a blade in combat, but they shape the story between sessions, turning XP into narrative leverage.

1.3 Design Philosophy

1.3.1 Core Principles

1. **Narrative Primacy:** Mechanics serve story, not replace it.
2. **Risk as Drama:** Every roll carries potential for triumph + complication.
3. **Meaningful Growth:** XP investment creates lasting character/world change.
4. **Consequence Weight:** Choices ripple outward, nothing is free.

1.3.2 Mechanical Constraints

- **ASSIST MAX:** +3 dice total per roll, regardless of helpers. Exception: The "Exceptional Coordination" Talent allows one follower to provide +4 assist dice.
- **BOON MAX:** 5 total, 2→1 XP conversion once/session (max 2 XP via conversion per session).
- **INITIATIVE:** 1 Follower Action per scene party-wide.
- **OVER-STACK:** 2+ structural advantages = start rails +1 OR GM banks +1 SB.
- **POSITION:** Controlled | Risky | Desperate (affects success/failure texture).

Chapter 2

Core Mechanics

2.1 Core Mechanic: The Art of Consequence

All significant actions in **Fate's Edge** follow a three-step process that emphasizes narrative consequences and player agency.

1. **Approach** — The player states intent and method, defining the primary Skill and clarifying the fictional positioning.
2. **Execution** — Build a dice pool equal to **Attribute + Skill** and roll that many d10s. Each die showing **6+** counts as a success. Each **1** rolled generates **1 Story Beat (SB)** for the GM.
3. **Outcome** — The GM compares total successes to the task's Difficulty Value (DV) and then spends SB to weave setbacks, collateral costs, or escalating danger.

2.2 The Description Ladder

Player description can blunt—but not erase—consequences:

Basic Action

Roll the pool as-is. All 1s generate SB.

Detailed Action

A clear, specific flourish allows the player to re-roll *one* die showing 1.

Intricate Action

A richly described, multi-sensory approach allows the player to re-roll *all* dice showing 1, and on success they may add a positive flourish to the fiction.

Important: Re-rolling 1s does *not* remove SB already generated; new 1s add more SB. (See SRD Section 2.1.2 for detailed rules on re-rolling)

2.3 Difficulty Ladder

2.4 Outcome Matrix

Let S be successes (≥ 6) and C be SB generated (number of 1s).

Clean Success

($S \geq DV$ and $C = 0$) — Deliver the intent crisply. If the action was *Intricate*, offer a small

DV	Name	When to Use
2	Routine	Clear intent, modest stakes, controlled environment
3	Pressured	Time pressure, mild resistance, partial information
4	Hard	Hostile conditions, active opposition, precise timing
5+	Extreme	Multiple constraints, high precision, dramatic failure potential

Table 2.1: Difficulty Value (DV) Ladder

positional or information edge.

Success & Cost

($S \geq DV$ and $C > 0$) — Grant the intent; the GM spends or banks SB to add friction (noise, time loss, resource wear, new observers).

Partial

($0 < S < DV$) — Progress with a complication: achieve the goal with added cost, or fail forward to a different advantage.

Miss

($S = 0$) — No direct progress. The GM spends or banks SB to introduce immediate consequences.

2.5 SB Spend Menu

2.5.1 Universal SB Options

1 SB

Minor pressure: suspicious noise, trace left behind, +1 Supply segment, minor time loss.

2 SB

Moderate setback: alarm raised, lose favorable position/cover, lesser foe appears, added obstacle.

3 SB

Serious trouble: reinforcements arrive, key gear breaks, significant complication introduced.

4+ SB

Major turn: trap springs, authority arrives, scene shifts dramatically.

2.5.2 Combat-Specific SB Options

1 SB

Lose footing (next defense -1 die), minor environmental shift.

2 SB

Weapon jam or battlefield momentum shifts (fire spreads, cave-in starts, cavalry arrives).

3 SB

Pinned, disarmed, or separated from allies.

4+ SB

Enemy reveals a special ability, terrain collapses, a major reinforcement wave hits.

2.5.3 Stealth & Intrusion SB Options**1 SB**

Footstep heard, door squeaks, shadow noticed.

2 SB

Patrol adjusts, lock resists (extra test), guard becomes suspicious.

3 SB

Partial alarm triggered (localized response).

4 SB

Full alarm and lockdown protocol.

2.5.4 Social Interaction SB Options**1 SB**

Faux pas (future interactions with this contact -1 die), rumor spreads.

2 SB

Concession required (gift, favor, or compromise to proceed).

3 SB

Rival interjects with leverage; negotiation turns against you.

4 SB

Patron turns hostile; audience becomes antagonistic.

2.5.5 Travel & Survival SB Options**1 SB**

Lose time, minor injury, weather worsens.

2 SB

Supply clock +1 segment, mount lamed, gear damaged.

3 SB

Wrong path or blocked pass; all characters gain Fatigue 1.

4 SB

Major environmental event—storm, rockslide, flood—scene fundamentally changes.

2.5.6 Arcana & Ritual SB Options**1 SB**

Backlash prickle, sensory bleed, minor magical residue.

2 SB

Unintended side-effect (e.g., cold off a fire working; echoes draw attention).

3 SB

Residue anchors a hex or attracts supernatural attention.

4 SB

Significant backlash condition or manifestation; ritual mark persists with ongoing effects.

High-Tier SB Sinks For major 3–6+ SB spends that affect the campaign world (reputation cascades, faction instability, magical resonance, prophecy triggers), use advanced complications rules. A practical default: *at the end of a journey leg*, **3 SB** → **advance 1 Campaign Front**.

2.6 Fail Forward: Every Roll Matters

When a character **misses** (0 successes) on a *significant action*, they gain **2 Boons** and one on a **partial** success. Boons represent insight, opportunity, or a sudden edge that can be spent later.

2.6.1 Significant Action Criteria

A miss or partial success awards Boons only if **all three** are true:

1. **Procedure Followed** — Intent and approach declared; DV set; roll resolved.
2. **Stakes Stated** — What changes on success; what lands on failure.
3. **Consequence Lands** — The GM spends or banks SB, applies a condition, or advances a thread.

2.6.2 Actions That Do *Not* Award Boons

- Rehearsals or null-risk probes with trivial stakes.
- Repeated identical attempts in the same scene *without* a new approach, position, or stakes.
- Actions whose fallout would be trivial or purely informational.

2.6.3 Additional Boon Sources

- Strong bond-driven play that highlights relationships.
- Creative solutions to complex problems (GM discretion).
- Sacrifices made for the group or greater good.
- Spotighting character flaws or complications.

2.6.4 Boon Economy and Limits

Holding Cap

Hold up to **5** Boons.

Scene Carryover

At scene end, trim to **2** Boons (excess lost).

Spending

Spend in-scene for re-rolls, Asset activations, Rites, or special abilities.

Multi-Phase Scenes

For extended set pieces (chase → duel → escape), trim to 2 only after the sequence ends.

2.6.5 Rites & Assets: Practical Notes

High-power Rites that require 2 Boons remain viable—characters can start a scene with 2 Boons and must earn more to chain further Invokes. On-screen Asset activations cost **1 Boon** as normal.

2.6.6 Anti-Fishing Measures

Optional stability rules:

- **Failure Limit:** Max **2 Boons** from failures per character per scene. Further misses still generate SB but no Boon.
- **Repetition Rule:** Same approach with identical stakes in the same scene cannot award another Boon.
- **Position Gate:** Controlled tests with trivial fallout do not award Boons.

2.6.7 Practical Examples

- **Boons Awarded:** Picking a lock under watch (Risky, DV 3). Stakes: success opens door; miss triggers alarm. Roll misses; GM spends 2 SB to start *Guards Incoming* [6]. Player gains 2 Boons.
- **No Boon:** Tapping flagstones "just in case" (Controlled, no stakes). Info-only; no SB spent. No Boon.
- **Carryover:** End of scene, character holds 4 Boons → trim to 2. Next scene, they earn/spend freely (never exceeding 5); trim to 2 when that scene ends.

2.7 Boon Conversion and Advancement

- **Conversion Rate:** Once per session during downtime, convert **2 Boons** → **1 XP**.
- **Limit:** Max **2 XP/session** via conversion.
- **Timing:** Between scenes or during downtime only.

2.7.1 Boon Sharing

Players may gift **1 Boon per scene** to an ally with a brief narrative justification.

- **Bonded Allies:** If characters share a bond, they may gift **2 Boons per scene**.
- **Assistance:** Boons may be spent to enhance an ally's roll (counts as assistance).
- **Campaign Events:** Major victories or setbacks may generate shared Boons for the party.

Table Use: Require a short story beat for each gift. Normal Boon limits apply. Track shared Boons openly. **GM Notes:** Reward generosity with extra opportunities, introduce occasional complications from dependence, and balance group vs. individual needs.

2.8 Asset Activation Mechanics

Players can activate Assets in several ways:

Free Off-Screen

Each Asset's off-screen effect *once per session* for free.

XP Activation

Spend **2 XP** to trigger an extra off-screen effect beyond the session allowance.

Boon Activation

Spend **1 Boon** to bring an Asset's influence on-screen now.

Plausibility Test

The Asset must have scope/reach appropriate to the effect.

2.9 Experience Point Economy**2.9.1 Session Awards****Table Attendance**

+2 XP

Major Objective

+2–4 XP

Discovery

+1–2 XP

Hard Choice

+1–2 XP

Complication Spotlight

+1–3 XP

Bond-Driven Play

+1–2 XP

GM Curveball

+0–3 XP

2.9.2 Milestone Awards

At the end of a major arc:

- +8–12 XP to all players (arc completion)
- +2 XP to one player for a signature moment

2.9.3 Complication Dividend

- Resolve a Face-card complication: +1 XP
- Resolve an Ace complication: +2 XP

2.9.4 XP Spending Costs**Attributes**

Cost = new rating \times 3 XP; downtime = new rating (days).

Skills

Cost = new level \times 2 XP; downtime = new level (days).

Followers (on-screen)

Cost = Cap² XP; 1–3 days to recruit/brief.

Assets (off-screen)

Minor (4 XP, 1 day), Standard (8 XP, 1 week), Major (12 XP, 1 month).

2.10 Rush Rule for Advancement

A player may skip required downtime for an advance; the GM creates a **Haste** [4] clock. If it fills during the rushed period, the new ability or Asset arrives with flaws or narrative complications.

2.11 Tiers of Reputation

Tier I — Rookie

(0–40 XP): Local reputation; prestige abilities locked.

Tier II — Seasoned

(41–90 XP): Regional notice; prestige abilities may unlock.

Tier III — Veteran

(91–150 XP): National influence; second follower slot suggested.

Tier IV — Paragon

(151–220 XP): Movers and shakers; rivals emerge to challenge.

Tier V — Mythic

(221+ XP): Legendary status; kingdoms and cults respond directly.

2.11.1 Recommended Session Order (GM Checklist)

1) Off-Screen (Downtime, 10–20 min)

- Upkeep: choose Efficient/Intensive; apply Neglected/Compromised if missed.
- Obligation: clear via Acts of Service; note Claims/overflow risk.
- Projects: tick long-term clocks; resolve Gather Info; prep assets.
- Intent: each player states one on-screen goal; GM surfaces 1–2 front pressures.

2) On-Screen (Scenes)

- Frame hard: where/what's at stake; set Position → DV.
- Run spotlight: rotate beats; fold in bonds and Boon sharing.
- Advance: move faction/Patron clocks openly when triggered.

3) Wrap-Up (5–10 min)

- XP & Talents: award, mark progress; note any Gifts gained/forfeit.
- SB & Harm: convert Fatigue→Harm if full; apply recoveries.
- Fronts: advance unresolved clocks; note consequences.

4) Off-Screen Hooks (2–5 min)

- Log next Downtime intents, service opportunities, upkeep deadlines.
- Capture cliffhangers and Patron Largess seeds for next session open.

Optional: Add a cold open flash-cut before Step 2 to spotlight a rival or Patron omen.

Chapter 3

Deck-Based Generators

3.1 Introduction to Deck Generators

Deck generators in **Fate's Edge** transform random card draws into coherent narrative elements. Each deck has a distinct purpose and suit meanings so that randomness serves the story rather than derailing it. These generators provide structured inspiration for GMs while maintaining the game's narrative-first philosophy.

3.2 Standard Deck Structure

Fate's Edge uses several card-based tools, each with specialized suit meanings:

Travel Decks (regional, 52-card)

Used for journey content and location-based adventures.

- **Spade** = Place/Location
- **Heart** = Actor/Faction
- **Club** = Pressure/Complication
- **Diamond** = Reward/Opportunity

Deck of Consequences (scene drama)

Used for immediate complications and narrative twists during gameplay.

- **Hearts** = Social/Emotional Fallout
- **Spades** = Harm/Escalation
- **Clubs** = Material Cost/Resource Drain
- **Diamonds** = Magical/Spiritual Disturbance

Important: Never mix suit meanings across decks. When rules reference “Spade/Club/Diamond,” they mean the *Travel Deck*. When they say “Hearts/Spades/Clubs/Diamonds,” they mean the *Deck of Consequences*.

3.3 Rank Severity and Clock Size

Card rank sets the size/significance of the primary Clock:

- **2–5 (Minor):** 4-segment Clock
- **6–10 (Standard):** 6-segment Clock

- **J, Q, K (Major):** 8-segment Clock
- **Ace (Pivotal):** 10-segment Clock

Color Influence:

- **Black suits** (♠, ♣): Travel hazards, tangible threats, fatigue
- **Red suits** (♥, ♦): Social intrigue, reputational pressure, emotional complications

3.4 Draw Procedures

3.4.1 Quick Hook (2 cards)

Ideal for spontaneous scene generation or when players zag unexpectedly:

1. Draw one **Spade** (place) and one **Heart** (actor/faction).
2. Use the higher rank to set Clock size.
3. Combine elements into a simple, compelling scenario.

3.4.2 Full Seed (4 cards)

For full adventures or significant arcs:

1. Draw until one card of each suit appears:
 - **Spade** = Primary location
 - **Heart** = Main actor/faction
 - **Club** = Central complication
 - **Diamond** = Key reward/opportunity
2. The highest rank sets the main Clock size.
3. If multiple face cards or Aces appear, create parallel Clocks for secondary threats or opportunities.

3.4.3 Act Builder

Structure sessions or multi-part adventures:

1. Draw three cards: setting (**Spade**), actor (**Heart**), complication (**Club**).
2. Treat **Diamond** cards drawn during play as foreshadowed opportunities or act payoffs.
3. Highest rank determines the session's primary challenge scope.

3.5 Using the Deck in Play

1. Players roll; each die showing **1** generates **1 Complication Point (SB)**.
2. The GM chooses one method for that roll:
 - (a) **Direct Spend:** Translate SB into immediate consequences or clock ticks.
 - (b) **Deck Draw:** Draw up to **min(SB, 3)** cards and synthesize a single twist guided by suit and highest rank.
3. Interpret the cards to create a coherent complication that advances the narrative.

3.6 Combo Rules

Special combinations add texture:

Pair (same rank)

Recurring motif with a twist.

Run (3+ sequential ranks)

Momentum—reduce the main Clock by 1 segment.

Flush (3+ same suit)

Strongly theme the act toward that suit's axis.

Face + Ace

Reveal a hidden patron or power behind the element.

All one color

GM gains +1 SB to use in that scene.

3.7 Regional Generator Summary

3.8 NPC Generation Deck

Every NPC should feel like a person with desires, convictions, and contradictions. This deck lets you assemble a complete profile quickly by drawing one element from each category.

3.8.1 Generation Categories

Ambition

What they seek to achieve or obtain.

Belief

The principle or philosophy guiding their worldview.

Attitude

How they present themselves and interact day-to-day.

Twist

A contradiction or hidden facet that creates tension.

3.8.2 Using the NPC Generator

Select or draw one from each column and consider the frictions between public ambition, private belief, surface attitude, and the twist.

3.9 Practical Deck Usage Examples

3.9.1 Example 1: Quick Scene Generation

The party detours through the Mistlands. The GM draws:

- **Spade (8):** Ancient standing stones covered in moss
- **Heart (Queen):** A territorial spirit guardian

A 6-segment Clock *Spirit's Wrath* begins: the guardian demands tribute for safe passage.

Region	Theme	Special Mechanics
Acasia	Broken Marches	Curse motifs; every Ace adds a lingering omen
Aelaerem	Hearth & Hollow	Red-thread motifs; Ace echoes quiet bells/watch-geese
Aeler	Crowns & Under-Vaults	Stone/breath motifs; Ace keys click, bells answer
Aelinnel	Stone, Bough, Bright Things	Moonlight motifs; Ace adds a shortcut where none should be
Black Banners	Condotta & Crowns	War & winter motifs; Ace: weapons remember, ice holds the dead
Ecktoria	Marble & Fire	Imperial forms; Ace carves precedent in marble
Kahfagia	Pilot's Mirror	Lantern-law jurisdiction shifts; Ace redefines lanes
Linn	Skerries & Storm-Oaths	Sea omens; Ace horns on wind, white horses on swell
Mistlands	Bells, Salt, Breath	Breath/boundary motifs; Ace: bells answer across water
Silkstrand	City of Bridges & Dyewater	Dye/bridge motifs; Ace adds a lingering omen
Theona	Three Greens, No Ninth	"No Ninth" custom; Ace adds a telling omission
Thepyrgos	City of a Thousand Stairs	Height/sound motifs; Ace echoes bells/wind/stair-steps
Ubral	Stone Between Spears	Upland motifs; Ace echoes horns/heather/stone
Valewood	Empire Under Leaves	Empire echoes (J/Q/K add relic-logic); Ace rearranges approach
Vhasia	Fractured Sun	Broken-sun motifs; Ace blots medal/scratches milestone
Vilikari	Laurels & Longhouses	Two-laws motifs; Ace shows wolf/eagle side-by-side
Viterra	Last Kingdom	Legacy, parishes, and final-stand themes
Wilds	Roads, Ruins, Weather	Reskin palette for any biome
Zakov	Salt & Serpent	Salt & serpent omens; Ace: tides remember, reefs shift, deep listens

Table 3.1: Regional Generator Summary

Ambition	Belief	Attitude	Twist
Power	Might makes right	Arrogant	Secretly insecure
Wealth	Ends justify means	Charismatic	Betraying their allies
Revenge	Honor above all	Cold	Working for their enemy
Love	Truth is sacred	Friendly	Hiding a dark past
Knowledge	Loyalty is paramount	Paranoid	Actually an impostor
Survival	Family above all	Cruel	Deeply compassionate
Fame	Justice must prevail	Pious	Corrupted by power
Freedom	Fate can be changed	Optimistic	Hopelessly cynical
Protection	Tradition must be upheld	Pessimistic	Revolutionary at heart
Control	Change is necessary	Calculating	Acts on impulse
Recognition	The system works	Naive	Cynical manipulator

Table 3.2: NPC Generation Categories

3.9.2 Example 2: Consequences During Play

Kael misses a stealth roll and generates **2 SB**. The GM draws:

- **Hearts (7):** Social complication
- **Clubs (3):** Resource cost

Synthesis: *A ceremonial urn shatters; cultists recognize your patron's mark. Future dealings will demand extra tribute and materials.*

3.9.3 Example 3: NPC Creation

Merchant in Valewood:

- **Ambition:** Wealth
- **Belief:** Family above all
- **Attitude:** Charismatic
- **Twist:** Secretly compassionate

Result: *A charming hard-bargainer who supports a large family and quietly donates to orphanages—even aiding struggling competitors.*

3.10 GM Guidance for Deck Usage

3.10.1 When to Use Which Deck

- **Travel Decks:** journey planning, location adventures, regional exploration

- **Deck of Consequences:** immediate twists during active scenes
- **NPC Generator:** fast creation with built-in tension and hooks

3.10.2 Interpreting Card Draws

- Prioritize narrative coherence over literalism.
- Use suits as inspiration, not constraints.
- Combine cards into layered complications rather than parallel noise.
- Remember: players can mitigate, pivot, or overcome deck outcomes.

3.10.3 Balancing Randomness and Narrative

- Draw when you want surprise or need a nudge.
- Ignore or modify draws that don't serve the current story.
- Treat combinations as creative prompts, not mandates.
- The goal is to *enhance* the narrative, not derail it.

Absolutely—here’s a cleaned, compile-safe version of your Travel Reference chapter with added, consistent index entries, fixed typos, and corrected environments. I also repaired the broken list in Astroegro Straits, removed the stray “Ecktoria/V” fragment, and fixed the duplicate/broken row in the Gateways table.

Chapter 4

Travel Reference

4.1 Introduction to Travel

Travel in **Fate's Edge** is not just movement between locations—it's an opportunity for adventure, discovery, and complication. The travel system uses deck-based generators to create meaningful journeys that advance the story while presenting challenges and opportunities.

4.2 Core Travel Procedure

For each leg of a journey, follow this structured approach:

4.2.1 Card Draw Sequence

Draw 3–4 cards using the appropriate regional decks:

- **Spade** from the destination deck: Sets the scene (place and environment).
- **Heart** from the destination deck: Introduces the local actor or faction.
- **Club** from the Wilds (general hazards) or destination (if strongly policed): Brings pressure and complications.
- **Diamond** from the authority that controls the route: Represents papers, escorts, rights, or exceptions needed.

4.2.2 Travel Clock Setup

Set a travel clock based on the highest card rank drawn:

- **2–5** \Rightarrow 4-segment clock (short, straightforward journey).
- **6–10** \Rightarrow 6-segment clock (standard journey).
- **J, Q, K** \Rightarrow 8-segment clock (extended or complex journey).
- **Ace** \Rightarrow 10-segment clock (epic or highly dangerous journey).

4.2.3 Resolution and Consequences

- On success: Advance to the next leg of the journey.
- On failure: Mark delay, debt, or diversion and resolve consequences in the fiction.
- Each segment filled typically represents significant progress or a meaningful encounter.

4.3 Travel Modes and Special Rules

4.3.1 Sea Travel

Sea journeys (Amaranthine/Dolmis/Aberderrin routes) follow special considerations:

- If Theona or Valewood 9s appear in the seed, add an omission or taboo to the leg.
- Navigational challenges use Sailing or Survival skills with modified DVs.
- Weather and sea conditions act as persistent complications.

4.3.2 Underground Passes (Aeler)

Aeler's underground routes have unique mechanics:

- Any Ace can convert a surface route to an under-route.
- Diamond cards from Aeler always codify outcomes—no roll required—for sealed doors, breath time, and escorted segments.
- Underground travel uses different skill sets (Engineering, Geology, Survival).

4.3.3 River Travel

River journeys present distinct challenges:

- Ecktoria/Viterra rivers: Bridges, booms, and legal checkpoints.
- Mistlands/Linn waters: Reed-mazes and bell-line navigation systems.
- Current strength and river conditions affect travel pace and difficulty.

4.3.4 Frontier and Border Crossings

When traveling between regions with different laws or authorities:

- Draw two Diamond cards (one from each controlling authority).
- Choose which authority's laws you will be judged by at the journey's end.
- Border crossings typically add +2 segments to the travel clock.

4.4 Major Regional Routes

4.4.1 Amaranthine Coastway

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

- Draw Spade+Heart from the port you are entering.
- Draw Club from the Wilds deck (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.

4.4.2 Astroegro Straits

Thepyrgos controls this crucial maritime hinge:

- Draw Spade+Heart and Club from Thepyrgos deck (stairs, boom, synod).

- Draw Diamond from Thepyrgos (harbor pass, crane allotment).
- Switch to Dolmis/Amaranthine modules once the boom is lowered.

4.4.3 Dolmis Sea Circuits

Route: Fairport (Viterra) → Theona (Three Greens) → Ubral fjords → Aelinnel west shore.

- Spade+Heart from destination deck.
- Club from Linn or Wilds decks.
- Diamond from Theona when island custom matters.
- Island-hopping presents unique navigation challenges.

4.4.4 Aelerian Underground Passes

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

- Spade+Heart and Club from Aeler deck.
- Diamond from Aeler (Underway Pass, Key-Writ, Breath Time).
- Underground routes bypass surface dangers but present their own risks.

4.4.5 Shadow Corridors (Valewood)

Thin Shore route along Valewood's east coast toward Zakov:

- Spade from Valewood deck.
- Heart from Mistlands or Valewood deck.
- Club from Mistlands deck (wraiths, bell-line failures).
- Diamond from either Mistlands (Ward-salt, Lantern Writ) or Valewood (Way-cord, Truce-bough).
- **Rule of 9s:** Any 9 in the seed adds an omission or taboo.

4.4.6 Green Gate Tidal Routes (Aelinnel)

Aelinnel's tide-dependent passages:

- Spade+Club from Aelinnel deck (tides, geasa).
- Diamond from Aelinnel (Tide-path Key, Host-rights).
- Timing is critical—miss the tide and wait for the next cycle.

4.4.7 Major River Systems

Belworth River

Boundary between Vhasia and Viterra.

- Twin ports at the mouth (Marcott and Fairport).
- Tarlington Falls requires lift/portage to plateau towns.
- Use Viterra for east-bank audits, Vhasia for west-bank politics.

Yloka River

Northern raid routes into Aberderrin and Dolmis.

- Overlay Linn Clubs for hazards.

- Draw destination for Spade+Heart.

Acasian Rivers

Hazardous approaches to Silkstrand.

- Use Acasia Clubs (feuds/levies/curse).
- Diamonds represent condotta permits, bridge rights.

4.4.8 Steppe Frontier Routes

Ykrul ↔ Vilikari ↔ Ecktoria/Acasia borders:

- Spade from the road (Wolf Road or Foedus Stone).
- Heart from the counterpart region (envoys, comitatus).
- Club from Wilds or frontier decks (rasputitsa, hostage protocol).
- Diamond from either Ykrul (paiza, remounts) or Vilikari (foedus seal).

4.5 Strategic Gateways and Control Points

4.6 Special Travel Rules and Regional Features

4.6.1 Theona and Valewood Taboos

Whenever a 9 appears in a travel seed involving Theona or Valewood:

- Add an omission: missing step, unsaid name, unseen guest.
- If the 9 is a Diamond, you may break the taboo once—but someone will come to collect.
- These taboos create ongoing narrative hooks and complications.

4.6.2 Aeler Ace Route Manipulation

Aeler's underground network allows special route manipulation:

- An Ace can rewrite routes beneath the mountains.
- You may swap your Spade to Aeler (keeping other seed cards) and continue under-vault procedures.
- This represents discovering or activating hidden passages.

4.6.3 Echoing Omens and Motifs

Any Ace drawn during travel adds a recurring motif:

- Examples: ash on the wind, bell heard underground, landmark that reappears.
- These motifs can be referenced later for narrative advantage or complication.
- Makes the world feel interconnected and memorable.

4.7 Worked Travel Examples

4.7.1 West-to-East Coastal Journey

Leg 1: Kassamira → Ecktoria

Gateway	Controlling Deck	Diamond Source	Typical requirements	Require- ments
Kassamira (Kahfagia)	Kahfagia	Kahfagia	Convoy letter; lantern-law warrant; pilotage token	
Ecktoria Capital Port	Ecktoria	Ecktoria	Berth priority; coin-house credit; procession permit	
Silkstrand	Acasia	Acasia	Exchange floor access; condotta permit; watergate priority	
Marcott	Vhasia	Vhasia	Letters patent; safeconduct; fairground precedence	
Fairport	Viterra	Viterra	Customs seal; ferry priority; Dawn escort	
Tarlington Falls	Viterra	Viterra	Lift priority; bridge/portage pass; County ruling	
Thepyrgos Boom	Thepyrgos	Thepyrgos	Harbor pass; crane allotment; Synod indulgence	
High-Mist Pass	Aeler	Aeler	Underway pass; Key-Writ; Breath-time allotment	
Payden's Port	Mistlands	Mistlands	Lantern writ; ward-salt; wraith indemnity	
Thin Shore	Valewood	Valewood/Mistlands	Way-cord; dew-mirror; lantern writ	
Green Gate	Aelinnel	Aelinnel	Tide-path key; host-right bough; salt license	
Ubral Passes	Ubral	Aeler/Ubral	Vurim pass-ring; hill-fort shelter writ; guide's braid	
Thing-holm	Linn	Linn	Thing ruling; harbor-green; escort writ	
Foedus Stone	Vilikari	Vilikari/Ykrul	Foedus renewal; remount allotment; hostage treaty	
Zakov Roadstead	Theona/Linn	Theona/Linn	Raid-truce ribbon; whale-road escort; market immunity	

Table 4.1: Major Travel Gateways and Control Points

- Seed: Ecktoria Spade (Aqueduct arcades), Ecktoria Heart (Coin-house factor), Wilds Club (gale), Kahfagia Diamond (convoy letter).
- Clock: 6 segments.
- Narrative: 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 segments depending on unrest severity.

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 segments.

4.7.2 Mountain Pass Expedition

Leg 1: Silkstrand → Aeler Gate

- Seed: Aeler Spade (Avalanche gallery), Aeler Heart (Geometer), Aeler Club (Engineer requisition), Aeler Diamond (Underway Pass).
- Underground route bypasses surface dangers.

Leg 2: Aeler Gate → Mistlands

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

4.7.3 Shadow Route Travel

Leg 1: Payden's Port → Thin Shore

- Seed: Valewood Spade (Green lane), Mistlands Heart (Protectorate clerk), Mistlands Club (bell failure), Mistlands Diamond (Lantern writ).
- Rule of 9s applies for additional complications.

Leg 2: Thin Shore Transit

- Seed: Valewood Spade (Unfound stile), Valewood Heart (Path-warden), Valewood Club (Sweet wind), Valewood Diamond (Way-cord).
- Shadow corridors require special navigation skills.

4.7.4 Frontier Diplomacy Journey

Leg: Foedus Stone Parley

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

- Additional draw: Ykrul Diamond (Paiza) for border crossing rights.
- Choose which authority's laws govern your passage.

4.8 Travel Pace and Consequence Guidelines

4.8.1 Standard Travel Times

- **Road/River Leg:** 6-segment clock standard; +2 segments if crossing law boundaries.
- **Sea Strait/Mountain Pass:** 8-segment clock; -2 segments with priority documents.
- **Shadow Corridor:** 6-segment clock; Ace adds free omen for future use.
- **Urban Travel:** 4-segment clock; complications are more social than environmental.

4.8.2 Failure Consequences

Standard failure outcomes include:

Delay

Lose time; enemies advance their plans.

Diversion

Forced alternate route; draw new Club card for additional complications.

Debt

Promise, fine, or favor owed to the controlling authority.

Discovery

Unexpected find that creates new opportunities or dangers.

4.8.3 Success Benefits

Successful travel can provide:

- Information about upcoming regions or threats.
- New contacts or faction relationships.
- Resource acquisition or trade opportunities.
- Narrative advantages for future scenes.

Absolutely—here's a cleaned, compile-safe version of your Travel Reference chapter with added, consistent index entries, fixed typos, and corrected environments. I also repaired the broken list in Astroegro Straits, removed the stray "Ecktoria/V" fragment, and fixed the duplicate/broken row in the Gateways table.

Chapter 5

Travel Reference

5.1 Introduction to Travel

Travel in **Fate's Edge** is not just movement between locations—it's an opportunity for adventure, discovery, and complication. The travel system uses deck-based generators to create meaningful journeys that advance the story while presenting challenges and opportunities.

5.2 Core Travel Procedure

For each leg of a journey, follow this structured approach:

5.2.1 Card Draw Sequence

Draw 3–4 cards using the appropriate regional decks:

- **Spade** from the destination deck: Sets the scene (place and environment).
- **Heart** from the destination deck: Introduces the local actor or faction.
- **Club** from the Wilds (general hazards) or destination (if strongly policed): Brings pressure and complications.
- **Diamond** from the authority that controls the route: Represents papers, escorts, rights, or exceptions needed.

5.2.2 Travel Clock Setup

Set a travel clock based on the highest card rank drawn:

- **2–5** \Rightarrow 4-segment clock (short, straightforward journey).
- **6–10** \Rightarrow 6-segment clock (standard journey).
- **J, Q, K** \Rightarrow 8-segment clock (extended or complex journey).
- **Ace** \Rightarrow 10-segment clock (epic or highly dangerous journey).

5.2.3 Resolution and Consequences

- On success: Advance to the next leg of the journey.
- On failure: Mark delay, debt, or diversion and resolve consequences in the fiction.
- Each segment filled typically represents significant progress or a meaningful encounter.

5.3 Travel Modes and Special Rules

5.3.1 Sea Travel

Sea journeys (Amaranthine/Dolmis/Aberderrin routes) follow special considerations:

- If Theona or Valewood 9s appear in the seed, add an omission or taboo to the leg.
- Navigational challenges use Sailing or Survival skills with modified DVs.
- Weather and sea conditions act as persistent complications.

5.3.2 Underground Passes (Aeler)

Aeler's underground routes have unique mechanics:

- Any Ace can convert a surface route to an under-route.
- Diamond cards from Aeler always codify outcomes—no roll required—for sealed doors, breath time, and escorted segments.
- Underground travel uses different skill sets (Engineering, Geology, Survival).

5.3.3 River Travel

River journeys present distinct challenges:

- Ecktoria/Viterra rivers: Bridges, booms, and legal checkpoints.
- Mistlands/Linn waters: Reed-mazes and bell-line navigation systems.
- Current strength and river conditions affect travel pace and difficulty.

5.3.4 Frontier and Border Crossings

When traveling between regions with different laws or authorities:

- Draw two Diamond cards (one from each controlling authority).
- Choose which authority's laws you will be judged by at the journey's end.
- Border crossings typically add +2 segments to the travel clock.

5.4 Major Regional Routes

5.4.1 Amaranthine Coastway

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

- Draw Spade+Heart from the port you are entering.
- Draw Club from the Wilds deck (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.

5.4.2 Astroegro Straits

Thepyrgos controls this crucial maritime hinge:

- Draw Spade+Heart and Club from Thepyrgos deck (stairs, boom, synod).

- Draw Diamond from Thepyrgos (harbor pass, crane allotment).
- Switch to Dolmis/Amaranthine modules once the boom is lowered.

5.4.3 Dolmis Sea Circuits

Route: Fairport (Viterra) → Theona (Three Greens) → Ubral fjords → Aelinnel west shore.

- Spade+Heart from destination deck.
- Club from Linn or Wilds decks.
- Diamond from Theona when island custom matters.
- Island-hopping presents unique navigation challenges.

5.4.4 Aelerian Underground Passes

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

- Spade+Heart and Club from Aeler deck.
- Diamond from Aeler (Underway Pass, Key-Writ, Breath Time).
- Underground routes bypass surface dangers but present their own risks.

5.4.5 Shadow Corridors (Valewood)

Thin Shore route along Valewood's east coast toward Zakov:

- Spade from Valewood deck.
- Heart from Mistlands or Valewood deck.
- Club from Mistlands deck (wraiths, bell-line failures).
- Diamond from either Mistlands (Ward-salt, Lantern Writ) or Valewood (Way-cord, Truce-bough).
- **Rule of 9s:** Any 9 in the seed adds an omission or taboo.

5.4.6 Green Gate Tidal Routes (Aelinnel)

Aelinnel's tide-dependent passages:

- Spade+Club from Aelinnel deck (tides, geasa).
- Diamond from Aelinnel (Tide-path Key, Host-rights).
- Timing is critical—miss the tide and wait for the next cycle.

5.4.7 Major River Systems

Belworth River

Boundary between Vhasia and Viterra.

- Twin ports at the mouth (Marcott and Fairport).
- Tarlington Falls requires lift/portage to plateau towns.
- Use Viterra for east-bank audits, Vhasia for west-bank politics.

Yloka River

Northern raid routes into Aberderrin and Dolmis.

- Overlay Linn Clubs for hazards.

- Draw destination for Spade+Heart.

Acasian Rivers

Hazardous approaches to Silkstrand.

- Use Acasia Clubs (feuds/levies/curse).
- Diamonds represent condotta permits, bridge rights.

5.4.8 Steppe Frontier Routes

Ykrul ↔ Vilikari ↔ Ecktoria/Acasia borders:

- Spade from the road (Wolf Road or Foedus Stone).
- Heart from the counterpart region (envoys, comitatus).
- Club from Wilds or frontier decks (rasputitsa, hostage protocol).
- Diamond from either Ykrul (paiza, remounts) or Vilikari (foedus seal).

5.5 Strategic Gateways and Control Points

5.6 Special Travel Rules and Regional Features

5.6.1 Theona and Valewood Taboos

Whenever a 9 appears in a travel seed involving Theona or Valewood:

- Add an omission: missing step, unsaid name, unseen guest.
- If the 9 is a Diamond, you may break the taboo once—but someone will come to collect.
- These taboos create ongoing narrative hooks and complications.

5.6.2 Aeler Ace Route Manipulation

Aeler's underground network allows special route manipulation:

- An Ace can rewrite routes beneath the mountains.
- You may swap your Spade to Aeler (keeping other seed cards) and continue under-vault procedures.
- This represents discovering or activating hidden passages.

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Any Ace drawn during travel adds a recurring motif:

- Examples: ash on the wind, bell heard underground, landmark that reappears.
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Ubral Passes	Ubral	Aeler/Ubral	Vurim pass-ring; hill-fort shelter writ; guide's braid	
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- Clock: 6–8 segments depending on unrest severity.

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

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- Seed: Viterra Spade (Fairport tideworks), Viterra Heart (shipwright), Linn Club (boom lifts), Viterra Diamond (customs seal).
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5.9 Locations Lore and Generators

5.10 Acasia — “Broken Marches”

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.

5.11 Aelaerem (Halflings) — “Hearth & Hollow”

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.
- **Neighboring 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.

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

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.

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

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.

5.14 Black Banners — “Condotta & Crowns”

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. Ektorian 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 Ektorian 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.

5.15 Dungeon — “Living Infrastructure”

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).

5.16 Ecktoria — “Marble & Fire”

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; ferrymaster 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; ferrymaster 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.

5.17 Linn — “Skerries & Storm-Oaths”

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.

5.18 Mistlands — “Bells, Salt, and Breath”

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.

5.19 Silkstrand — “City of Bridges & Dyewater”

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.

5.20 Theona — “Three Greens, No Ninth”

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.

5.21 Thepyrgos — “City of a Thousand Stairs”

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.

5.22 Ubral — “The Stone Between Spears”

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.

5.23 Valewood — “Empire Under Leaves”

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. **Unfounded 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/passes) 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.

5.24 Vhasia — “The Fractured Sun”

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.

5.25 Vilikari — “Laurels & Longhouses”

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. **Roman 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 Roman 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.

5.26 Viterra — “The Hedge-Law Realm”

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 bribe can open doors that armies cannot breach, and a single forged document 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.

(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.

Spades — Places (categories)

2. **Fen Causeway** — Stile with toll-rod and eel carts queueing; each reeve claims right to collect under different charter.
3. **Hedgerow Green** — In Dales; bows strung under apple trees where justices of the peace hold court beneath makeshift arbors.
4. **Beacon Hill** — Above Highlands; fire-grate still warm from last winter’s levy call, signal tower with semaphore arms for legal dispatches.
5. **Belworth Stairs** — Ferry ledgers gone damp with river-mist; three manors claim toll rights, writs in three different hands.
6. **Bloom Quarry** — Old iron-bloom turned drill yard; hammer echoes carry, forge-reeve holds tally of crown contracts.
7. **Parish Maze** — Stone maze where three maps disagree; hedge-priest’s vote decides who pays tithe and who holds freehold.
8. **Fairport Works** — Tideworks at Dolmis mouth; customs writs in three languages flutter, inspectors with magnifying glasses examine every cargo manifest.
9. **Law Quarter** — Valora archives, oath-rooms, Hall of Dawning where precedent birthed in ink and sealed with wax.
10. **Counting Fields** — Tarlington beside muster ground; wagons load, ledgers mis-sum, auditors with quill-pens and suspicious eyes.
 - J **Dike Crown** — Ring of turf and timber; brotherhood bells warn of flood—and spies who move like water through the fen.
 - Q **Progress Camp** — Queen’s canvas palisade, banners stiff, whispering old courtiers plot advancement through legal maneuver.
 - K **Tilt-Yard** — Hall of Dawning at first light; Dawn-knights drill clean, loyalties in contracts signed with careful pen.
 - A **Highway Stone** — Queen’s milestone above Dolmis road; three sheriffs post seals over hers, each claiming different jurisdiction.

(**Reeve/Guild/Knight**) 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.

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.
 3. **River Syndic** — Moves grain faster than rumor; knows which writs matter and which customs officials can be... persuaded.
 4. **Parish Surveyor** — Three maps, one opinion; hedge-walks settle more disputes than courts, measures boundaries with careful chain.
 5. **Dawn Quartermaster** — Ledgers sharper than tongue; logistics before lances, counts every farthing spent in the Queen’s name.
 6. **Levy Serjeant** — Dales bow calm, cider breath, memory keen for every loophole in the mustering laws.
 7. **Cleric-Pair** — Light preacher vs. Everflame canon lawyer; debates decide tithe law, one for the spirit, one for the letter.
 8. **Fairport Shipwright** — Dolmis cousins; skiff carries more secrets than cargo, knows which manifests to forge and which to honor.
 9. **Fenwood Comptroller** — Conjures wagons with signature, silence with seal, counts the Queen’s coin and tracks every debt owed to the crown.
 10. **Queen’s Justiciar** — Law on road, polite as noose; bearing three kings’ judgments and a purse full of pardons for the right price.
- J **Border Routier** — Reads ledgers as ambushes; serves two crowns, collects from both, knows which border posts take bribes in what coin.
- 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.
- K **Crown Council** — Fenwood dukes, guild envoys, abbots; weighing grain against glory, charters against coin, precedent against practicality.
- A **Tarling Rumor** — Lost sigil surfaces; old loyalties twitch like hounds on scent, whispers of conspiracies that would see the Queen’s head on a pike.

(**Writ/Charter/Intrigue**) 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.

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.
3. **Feast Clash** — Light vs. Everflame processions collide; shutters slam, writs fly, justices of the peace called to settle which holy day takes precedence.
4. **Quiet Tolls** — Sprout on Queen’s Highway; escorts sniff traps, sheriffs argue rights, customs officials demand duties no one knew existed.
5. **Audit Freeze** — Counting-house freezes cargo; Queen’s seal vs. old writs, auditors with suspicious eyes and quill-pens sharp as daggers.

6. **Border Snarl** — Three courts arrest same hay-cart; whose hay is it? Which lord's charter takes precedence? Bribes flow like wine.
7. **Isle Refusal** — Theona withholds levy; quays choke on rumor, ships idle while lawyers debate maritime law and ancient treaties.
8. **Delta Spat** — Fairport vs. Marcott customs; barges stack three deep, merchants pick sides, inspectors with magnifying glasses examine every manifest.
9. **Routier Arrears** — Free-company flips unless someone pays; your name on ledger, debt owed to men who know the price of blood.
10. **Salt Pinch** — Import spikes, bakers barricade; Queen's promise tastes like thin gruel, merchants hoard salt like gold, riots brew in back alleys.
- J **Dawn Recall** — Escort pulled to flood-struck parish; writ argues with river, justices demand inquiry into who neglected the dikes.
- Q **Aberielist Intrigue** — Royalist seals in wrong hands; Queen's patience thins, conspirators plot in counting houses, whispers of rebellion.
- K **Levy Call-Up** — Dalesmen mustered; your wagons seized "for the realm," conscription writs signed with careful pen, families left to tend fields alone.
- A **Gale Train** — Dolmis winds slam coast; timetables drown, writs tear in spray, ships blown off course arrive in wrong ports with wrong cargo.

(**Bribe/Seal/Writ**) Ferry priority at Belworth crossing; dike-work allotment with brotherhood labor granted; market license sealed with proper wax.

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.
3. **Dike Allotment** — Brotherhood labor granted if three clerks convinced and proper bribes distributed among the right hands.
4. **Market License** — Valora's square; guild nod still needed, but the right seal on the right parchment opens many doors.
5. **Dawn Escort** — Four lances at dawn; loyalty waxes and wanes with pay, but their presence keeps lesser men from troubling you.
6. **River Charter** — Guaranteed haul on grain artery—weather permitting and proper duties paid to the right officials.
7. **Map Correction** — Hedge moves, borders shift, lawsuits bloom; a new survey can make or break a man's fortune overnight.
8. **Customs Seal** — Fairport for Dolmis cargo; honored today, disputed tomorrow, but tonight it clears the way for what needs moving.
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.
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.
- J **Wardship** — Minor fen-keep; men-at-arms "for now," tutor has plans, but the right guardian can be found for the right price.

- Q **Queen’s Audience** — Private; her questions strike like thrusts, but her favors can elevate a man from nothing to something overnight.
- K **Ducal Warrant** — Fenwood to enforce customs; old power bows, new power watches, but the parchment carries weight in any court.
- A **Coronation Writ** — Amnesty and remission for those who kneel—old debts still owed, but new alliances can be forged in the Queen’s name.

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.

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.

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.

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.

In Viterra, 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 **reeves or customs officials**, men who know the law and how to use it against you.
- **Noise:** Sounds of your actions alert nearby **levy serjeants or court clerks**, officials with sharp ears and sharper quills.
- **Trace:** Evidence of your passage marks your route for **trackers or tax collectors**, men who follow paper trails as easily as footprints.
- **Delay:** A brief but meaningful setback costs you **time or favorable legal window**, missing the chance to present your case before the right magistrate.
- **Supply Strain:** Mark +1 segment on a relevant **resource clock**, perhaps coin running short when bribes are needed most.

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

- **Alarm Raised:** **Sheriff or parish surveyor** becomes aware and begins responding, summoning men with writs and warrants.
- **Position Lost:** You lose advantageous ground/cover/stealth due to **legal challenge or road closure**, forced to deal with officials demanding proper papers.
- **Foe Appears:** A **rival faction or routier company** arrives on scene, perhaps tipped off by someone who saw your papers.

- **Gear Trouble:** A piece of equipment becomes **Compromised/Neglected**, perhaps a seal ring worn smooth or a charter damaged by rain.
- **Lock/Barrier:** A simple obstacle now requires a test to overcome, perhaps a gate that demands proper toll or a bridge that requires inspection fees.

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

- **Reinforcements:** Additional **Dawn-knights, levy forces, or rival ducal troops** arrive, summoned by officials who take legal disputes seriously.
- **Key Gear Breaks:** A crucial tool/weapon becomes temporarily unusable, perhaps a seal ring that breaks or a charter that tears at the wrong moment.
- **Major Twist:** The situation fundamentally changes - **writ voided/levy called/border dispute erupts**, legal foundations shift beneath your feet.
- **Rail Tick:** Advance a relevant campaign/front clock by 1 segment, perhaps a conspiracy clock or a rebellion brewing in the countryside.
- **Condition Applied:** Mark **Fatigue 1/Harm 1/Condition** appropriate to fiction, perhaps the stress of legal maneuvering wearing on your nerves.

Major Turns (4+ SB)

- **Trap Springs:** A prepared danger activates with full effect, perhaps a legal trap set by rivals who know your weaknesses.
- **Authority Arrival: Warrior Queen, Justiciar, or Crown Council** intervenes, bringing the full weight of legal authority to bear.
- **Scene Shift:** The environment changes dramatically - **flood hits/levy called/court erupts**, legal proceedings disrupted by natural or political forces.
- **Patron Omen:** Divine/arcane forces take notice - **omen appears/blessing lost/curse manifests**, perhaps signs that the law itself takes sides.
- **Narrative Pivot:** The story takes an unexpected turn that reframes objectives, perhaps revealing that your legal authority was forged or that your enemies hold the real writs.

Region-Specific SB Options

- **Viterra (Hedge-Law):** Boundaries shift without warning, legal papers contradict each other, precedents reverse mid-argument, and the careful web of authority shows its cracks.
- **Viterra (Legal Warfare):** Court decisions change with tide, writs expire at crucial moments, clerks demand additional fees, and justice depends more on purse than principle.
- **Viterra (Border Disputes):** Parish stones move overnight, toll roads sprout new collectors, ferry operators go on strike, and every crossing demands negotiation.

Viterra — Hedge-Law Realm

Starting Location: A flooded law quarter where reeds clutch at marble steps and justiciars wear waterproof vellum, their quill-pens never far from hand.

"In Viterra, law bends with the tide, and justice drowns those who hold their breath too long. But those who know the right words, the right seals, and the right hands to grease can walk dry-shod through any flood."

In... A Law Quarter, a Justiciar offers a coronation writ. “The Queen rides the tide,” she says. “And the fen-reeves sharpen their tally-rods. But remember - in this realm, a well-placed bribe can open doors that armies cannot breach.”

Regional Motifs Hedge courts, water-rights, tally-rods, coronation processions, sealed writs, quill-pens and wax seals.

Whispers to Offer “Forge a writ,” “Change a boundary,” “Name a false heir,” “Bribe the right clerk,” “Hide evidence in plain sight.”

External Clocks Community: “Fen Unrest”; Threat: “Usurper’s Move”; Anchor: “Hedge Peace.”

Complications Rods count breath; marsh lights lead elsewhere; writs blur; clerks demand additional fees; justices of the peace take bribes.

Anchors at Risk A reed-chapel; a ferryman ally; a clerk who knows your secrets.

Escalation Beat The tide arrives at the wrong hour, and with it, auditors with suspicious eyes.

Relief Seat the rightful claimant; redraw a map in public; accept a marsh-due; forge the right seal; pay the right bribe.

Conspiracy Elements

Court Intrigue

The Queen’s court is a web of alliances and betrayals, where a single whispered word can elevate a man to power or send him to the block. Spies are everywhere, and loyalty is bought and sold like any other commodity. Courtiers plot advancement through legal maneuver, knowing that the right charter or the right pardon can be worth more than a chest of gold.

Legal Manipulation

In Viterra, the law is not a fixed thing but a living, breathing entity that can be shaped by those who know its secrets. Precedent can be found or created, writs can be forged or interpreted to suit one’s needs, and the careful application of ancient rights can grant power over lords and commoners alike. The truly skilled can make the law dance to their tune.

Economic Warfare

Trade is the lifeblood of the realm, and those who control the flow of goods control the fate of nations. Customs officials can be bribed, tolls can be negotiated, and the right charter can open trade routes that others thought closed. But economic warfare cuts both ways - a single forged manifest can ruin a merchant’s reputation, and the wrong word in the right ear can see a ship seized and its cargo confiscated.

Information Networks

In the age of quill and parchment, information is power. Writ-runners carry news faster than horses, and the right message delivered to the right person at the right time can change the course of history. Spies operate under cover of legal business, and the careful cultivation of sources can provide advantages that no amount of steel can match.

Religious Politics

The clash between Light and Everflame is not merely theological but deeply political. Each faction controls vast resources and has its own interpretation of law and custom. A parish priest’s word can make or break a man’s fortunes, and the support of the right religious authority can provide legitimacy that no crown can grant. But religious politics are treacherous waters - one misstep can see a man branded heretic and his property confiscated.

Regional Autonomy

The old duchies still remember their independence, and local officials wield influence through their knowledge of traditional customs and hedge-law. What passes for law in Valora may not hold sway in the Fenlands, and a writ that carries weight in the Highlands may be worthless on the coast. Those who would wield power in Viterra must understand these regional differences and navigate them with care.

The Power of the Written Word

In Viterra, the written word carries the weight of law itself. A charter properly sealed can grant authority over men and lands, while a forged document can destroy houses greater than dukes. The careful preservation of records ensures that debts are remembered and obligations honored, while the destruction of the same can erase a man’s very existence. Those who master the art of the written word master the realm itself.

5.27 The Ways Between — “Spiritways & Veilways”

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.

5.28 The Wilds — “Roads, Ruins, and Weather”

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.

5.29 Ykrul — “Wolf Standards, Winter Camps”

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.

5.30 Zakov — “Salt & Serpent”

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.

Chapter 6

Resource Management

6.1 Introduction to Resource Management

Resource Management in **Fate's Edge** focuses on tracking the tangible and intangible assets that enable character actions while creating narrative tension. Rather than micromanaging every item, the system uses abstract clocks and conditions that trigger when dramatically appropriate. This keeps the focus on story consequences rather than bookkeeping.

6.2 Supply Clock

The *Supply Clock* is a shared condition for the entire party, representing food, water, ammunition, and basic gear. It tracks the group's overall readiness for extended endeavors.

6.2.1 Supply States

***Full Supply* (0 segments filled)**

The party is well-equipped and prepared. No penalties or complications.

***Low Supply* (2 segments filled)**

Minor narrative complications occur: bland food, damaged arrows, thinning waterskins, or worn gear.

***Dangerously Low* (3 segments filled)**

Each character gains **Fatigue 1** due to exhaustion and deprivation.

***Out of Supply* (4 segments filled)**

Severe penalties apply; characters face starvation, dehydration, and failing gear with significant mechanical consequences.

6.2.2 Filling the Supply Clock

The Supply Clock advances under the following circumstances:

- Harsh travel conditions or lost pack animals (GM fiat).
- GM spends **2+ Story Beats (SB)** to represent resource depletion.
- The party chooses to travel light for speed or stealth advantages.
- Failed foraging or resource-gathering attempts.

6.2.3 Emptying the Supply Clock

The Supply Clock can be reduced through:

- Reaching civilization or safe haven resets to **Full Supply**.
- Successful foraging/hunting: group *Survival* check (DV 2) clears 1 segment.
- Downtime spent in relative safety removes 1 segment.
- Purchasing or trading for supplies in settlements.

6.3 Fatigue

Fatigue represents physical exhaustion, hunger, emotional strain, and spiritual depletion. It accumulates through extended effort, deprivation, or magical backlash.

6.3.1 Fatigue Effects

1 *Fatigue*

Minor drain. On your next significant roll, re-roll *one* success (player's choice).

2 *Fatigue*

Worn down. On each significant roll, re-roll one success.

3 *Fatigue*

Failing fast. On each significant roll, re-roll *two* successes.

4 *Fatigue*

Collapse/KO/spiritual break. You fall out of the scene until treated or rescued.

6.3.2 Clearing Fatigue

- A night's rest with adequate Supply removes 1 level of Fatigue.
- You cannot clear Fatigue if the party's Supply clock is *Dangerously Low* or *Out of Supply*.
- Magical healing or special abilities may provide additional Fatigue recovery.
- Extended downtime (3+ days) in safety clears all Fatigue.

6.4 Gear Condition

Gear in **Fate's Edge** does not have hit points or detailed durability tracking. Instead, equipment suffers consequences only when drama demands it.

6.4.1 Compromised Items

- Compromised status is introduced via SB spends or narrative consequence.
- A **Compromised** item gives -1 die on relevant rolls until repaired.
- Multiple Compromised items affecting the *same* action do not stack penalties.

6.4.2 Breaking Point

If a Compromised item suffers another significant setback, it breaks entirely and becomes unusable.

6.4.3 Repair Options

Field Repair

Temporary fix; requires *Craft* or *Survival* check (DV 2) to remove the penalty for one scene.

Proper Repair

Permanent restoration; requires proper tools, materials, and significant downtime.

Magical Repair

Certain spells or rituals can instantly restore gear, but may carry Obligation or Backlash costs.

Equipment Enchantments Quick Reference

XP Costs:

- Minor Enchantments: 2-4 XP
- Major Enchantments: 6-8 XP
- Prestige Enchantments: 10+ XP

Limitations:

- Max enchantments = Spirit attribute
- No stacking identical benefits
- Maintenance affects functionality

Creation Guidelines:

- Price like Talents with similar mechanical impact
- Consider campaign power level
- Balance benefit against XP cost

6.5 Asset and Follower Management

6.5.1 Followers (On-Screen Resources)

Cost

Cap² XP to acquire.

Assist Dice

When applicable, the follower adds help dice equal to min(Cap, helper's relevant Skill), capped at **+3** dice total from all sources. *Exception:* *Exceptional Coordination* Talent allows one follower to provide **+4** assist dice.

Capability

Ranges from 1–5 (5 is exceptional).

Upkeep

Each Downtime period, pay XP equal to Cap *or* spend a Scene tending the relationship.

Risk

If the GM spends 2+ SB on an action you take with assistance, they may endanger, injure, or separate the follower instead of you if fictionally appropriate.

Off-Screen Capability

Once per downtime, a Cap 5 follower can solve one significant problem but generates 1 SB for the party; the GM must describe how their action creates consequences.

6.6 Upkeep (Expanded)

Upkeep is the story of attention. Followers and assets thrive when seen and sour when ignored. This section expands the SRD rule with narrative intent, concrete examples, edge cases, and GM guidance.

6.6.1 Design Intent

- **Choice with Teeth.** Players choose *time* or *XP*. Either way, the fiction moves: quick delegation vs. hands-on scenes.
- **Visible Drift.** Missing upkeep degrades things predictably: **WARY**→**SEIZED**, **NEGLECTED**→**COMPROMISED**.
- **Story First.** Every payment should say something about the relationship or the tool.

6.6.2 Asset Upkeep

Frequency. Once per Downtime period.

Option A — Efficient (Higher XP, Less Time). Pay Upkeep $XP = \max(1, \frac{XP \text{ Acquisition Cost}}{3})$. Minimal effort in-fiction (a retainer handles it; you check in by letter).

Option B — Intensive (Lower XP, More Time). Pay 1 XP. Spend a *dedicated Downtime action* personally tending the follower/asset.

Failure. If unpaid this Downtime:

- *Follower:* Becomes **Wary** (or **Seized** if already Wary).
- *Asset:* Becomes **Neglected** (or **Compromised** if already Neglected).

6.6.3 What the Conditions Look Like

Wary (Follower).

They hesitate, ask for guarantees, or interpret orders narrowly. *Mechanical nudge:* first social/test involving them is -1 position *or* costs 1 extra Stress.

Seized (Follower).

Someone else sets terms (rival, guild, family) or they withdraw until appeased. *Nudge:* cannot assist this Downtime; to re-engage, pay 1 Boon *or* clear via a narrative scene that addresses their grievance.

Neglected (Asset).

It underperforms; parts go missing; paperwork piles. *Nudge:* -1 effect on its next use *or* an *Alarmed Attention* clock +1/2.

Compromised (Asset).

Faults propagate; someone has leverage; the tool is noisy or unsafe. *Nudge:* first use this session automatically creates 1 **SB** (formerly CP) *or* requires a costly fix scene.

6.6.4 Examples by Type

	Type	Efficient Upkeep (pay XP, quick)	Intensive Upkeep (1 XP + action)
Followers.	Scribe	Send coin and a sealed brief with instructions.	Host a lesson; co-author a pamphlet that sharpens their craft.
	Scout	Dispatch a courier with a new map and stipend.	Walk the route together; over-haul signals and caches.
	Acolyte (Patron-bound)	Arrange a blessing via intermediaries.	Lead them in a minor rite; narrate the teaching moment.
	Mercenary	Wire hazard pay with a short commendation.	Drill formation; settle a dispute; toast the unit.
	Informant	Drop a dead-letter and payment.	Meet face-to-face; share protection protocol.
	Type	Efficient Upkeep (pay XP, quick)	Intensive Upkeep (1 XP + action)
Assets.	Workshop	Pay the foreman; authorize routine parts.	Personally recalibrate; craft a sample piece.
	Safehouse	Hire a caretaker; basic supplies delivered.	Repair locks/windows; rewrite the cover story with neighbors.
	Library	Fund copying; buy indices.	Catalogue a shelf; cross-ref a case; bind a damaged tome.
	Boat	Pay moorage and minimal maintenance.	Scrape hull; patch sails; sail a proving run.
	Sigil Network (Invoker)	Replace two worn plates.	Etch a new master glyph; clear 1 wear mid-scene next session.

6.6.5 Edge Cases & Rulings

- **Multiple Resources.** Each follower/asset checks upkeep separately. A single Intensive action can cover a *cohesive group* if fiction supports it (e.g., one drill for a squad).
- **Remote Care.** If you narrate convincing remote oversight (sending a trusted lieutenant), count as Efficient.
- **Patron-Tinted Upkeep.** Tie upkeep scenes to a Patron's theme for small boons (advantage on the next related roll) without changing costs.
- **Stacking Misses.** Missing upkeep across *two* consecutive Downtime periods moves WARY→SEIZED or NEGLECTED→COMPROMISED; a third consecutive miss risks loss (follower quits; asset condemned) at GM discretion.

6.6.6 Optional Modules

Ledger Credits. Track fractional prep: three Efficient payments can be banked to waive one Intensive action later.

Union Rules. Some factions demand Intensive upkeep; Efficient counts as half (two Efficient = one Intensive).

Patron Favor Swap. Spend a **Boon** to treat missed upkeep as paid for one follower/asset if the scene honors the Patron.

6.6.7 GM Guidance

- **Making it a Scene.** Intensive upkeep should reveal something (new contact, flaw, rumor).
- **Foreshadowing Degradation.** Before applying SEIZED/COMPROMISED, show warning signs the players can act on.
- **Naming the Toll.** If a **Patron's Largess** (wrath) applies, state the narrative reason and the extra toll (e.g., an added SB, a temporary lockout, or a vow demanded).

Quick Reference

Once per Downtime. Pay Efficient (XP = $\max(1, \frac{acq}{3})$) or Intensive (1 XP + action).
Missed: Follower → WARY→SEIZED; Asset → NEGLECTED→COMPROMISED. Tie scenes to your Patron for flavor, not discounts.

6.6.8 Follower Assist Rules

- Assist dice come from the helper's capabilities, not the leader's.
- Total Assist on any roll (from any sources) is hard-capped at **+3**. *Exception: Exceptional Coordination* may allow **+4** from a single follower.
- Only one follower may assist a given action at a time.
- Followers cannot assist actions beyond their narrative scope or capabilities.

6.6.9 Loyalty & Bonds (Optional Rules)

- Track a simple Loyalty tag per follower: *Wary* / *Steady* / *Devoted*.
- *Devoted* followers can once per arc convert one GM Complication targeting them into a lesser setback.
- *Wary* followers cost +1 XP to maintain during Downtime.
- Loyalty can change based on how the PC treats the follower and shared experiences.

6.6.10 Stress, Harm, & Loss (GM Tools)

Pin

The follower is separated/boxed out of the current action.

Wound

The follower is Injured: until treated off-screen, their effective Cap counts as 1 lower.

Burn

Mark the follower as *Neglected* immediately.

Seize

Escalate to *Compromised* status.

PC Choice Lever

The GM should offer the player a meaningful choice about follower risk.

6.6.11 Off-Screen Assets***Minor Asset (4 XP)***

Safehouse, small charter, local business.

Standard Asset (8 XP)

Noble title, guild section, spy ring, significant property.

Major Asset (12 XP)

City license, regional network, major institution influence.

Artifact Asset (16+ XP)

Unique items or positions with campaign-level significance.

6.6.12 Asset Activations

- **Off-Screen Activation:** At campaign start or during Downtime, activate an off-screen asset by spending **1 Boon** or **2 XP**.
- **Off-Screen Effects:** Use each Asset's listed off-screen effect once per session for free.
- **On-Screen Activation:** To reshape the current scene, spend **1 Boon**.
- **Plausibility Test:** The Asset must have appropriate scope and reach for the intended effect.

6.6.13 Asset Condition Tracks***Maintained***

Full capability; no penalties. The asset is in good standing and fully functional.

Neglected

−1 die when used (assist or leverage). Narratively: slower response, sullen staff, short-staffed operations.

Compromised

Unavailable for use. Narratively: captured, burned, seized, defected, or otherwise incapacitated.

6.6.14 Maintenance and Repair

- After a story arc or 2–3 sessions of heavy use, the GM may flag the resource as *at risk*.
- To keep an asset *Maintained*, the player must either:
 - Spend Downtime repairing/servicing it, or
 - Pay XP immediately (representing replacement parts, masterwork upkeep).
- If neglected, the asset becomes *Neglected* (−1 die) and may eventually become permanently lost.
- Superior and Artifact assets do not require normal upkeep; if *Compromised* through complications, only narrative quests can repair them.

6.7 Bond-Driven Resource Generation

When a player takes a significant action to aid an ally with whom they share a bond, and explicitly references that bond in an *Intricate* description, they may mark that bond to gain **1 Boon** *after* the action resolves.

6.7.1 Requirements

Requirements for Bond-Driven Boon Generation:

- **Mutual Bond:** Player shares a defined bond with the ally they're aiding.
- **Intricate Description:** Player describes how the bond motivates their action using rich, multi-sensory details.
- **Significant Aid:** Meaningful assistance beyond basic dice bonuses.
- **Fiction First:** The bond genuinely drives the choice to help, not added retroactively.

6.7.2 Examples

Valid Examples:

- “Remembering how they saved me from the falling rubble in Aeler, I throw myself in front of the crossbow bolt meant for them!”
- “Thinking of our shared vow to protect the innocent, I use my last healing potion to stabilize them instead of saving it for myself.”
- “Drawing on our years fighting side-by-side in the Border Wars, I rally the other mercenaries to keep fighting alongside them when morale fails.”

6.7.3 Limitations

Restrictions on Bond-Driven Generation:

- Once per bond per session.
- Must involve meaningful sacrifice or risk.
- GM approval required for what constitutes “significant action.”
- Cannot be used for basic assistance rolls or minor favors.
- The Boon is awarded *after* the action resolves, not before.

6.8 Over-Stack Rule

The Over-Stack rule prevents excessive accumulation of advantages from trivial sources while rewarding meaningful preparation.

6.8.1 Structural Advantages

Structural advantages include:

- Active buffs or beneficial tags affecting the party.
- Favorable venue or environmental factors.
- Unused *Follower Initiative* for the scene.
- On-screen Asset activation providing immediate benefits.

- Opponent disadvantaged by fiction (surprised, trapped, etc.).
- Ritual preparation that applies to the current situation.

6.8.2 Over-Stack Trigger

- If the party enters a scene with ≥ 3 structural advantages, apply Over-Stack once for that scene.
- The GM chooses either:
 - Start one named obstacle or challenge at **+1 DV**, or
 - The GM banks **+1 SB** for the first Deck Twist in the scene.
- This represents narrative pushback when characters have overwhelming advantages.
- Over-Stack applies only once per scene, regardless of how many advantages accumulate.

Chapter 7

Character Advancement

7.1 Introduction to Advancement

Character advancement in **Fate's Edge** reflects meaningful growth in capability and standing. XP is awarded for table-facing accomplishments, hard choices, and dramatic friction that defines your story. Advancement should always reinforce narrative identity: what drives, obligations, and affinities are shaping the character?

7.2 Starting Character Builds

7.2.1 Standard Starting XP

Players begin with **30 XP** to allocate during initial character creation. This represents a balanced baseline for competent starting characters.

7.2.2 Enhanced Starting Options

Players may exceed the standard 30 XP build through narrative engagement:

- **Bonds:** Up to two player-defined mutual bonds may be taken for +2 XP total (+1 XP each).
- **Complications:** Up to two initial complications may be accepted for +4 XP total (+2 XP each).

This allows for a maximum starting build of **34 XP**. Players are encouraged to aim for 30 XP and use bonds/complications to enhance characterization rather than pure mechanical optimization.

7.2.3 Initial Complications Reminder

For each initial complication taken at character creation:

- Start each scene with +1 banked SB per character with initial complications.
- These complications remain until cleared through play or character development.

7.3 Player Archetypes

Not every group plays the same way. These archetypes describe how players typically spend XP and seek spotlight.

7.3.1 The Solo

Definition

Invests XP primarily in Attributes and Skills. Minimal followers, minimal holdings. All power is on the character sheet.

Typical XP Spread

70–90% Self; 0–10% On-screen help; 0–20% Off-screen assets.

Strengths

Consistent scene impact; few moving parts; resilient to follower loss.

Risks

Limited fiction reach between sessions; can stall when problems demand logistics or networks.

Starting Focus

Attributes 2–3, Skills 1–2, minimal assets.

7.3.2 The Mixed Player

Definition

Splits XP between self-growth and one or two meaningful assets (a small follower or a reliable holding).

Typical XP Spread

50–65% Self; 15–25% On-screen help; 15–25% Off-screen assets.

Strengths

Versatile: credible in scenes and has a lever for special problems.

Risks

Upkeep pressure; helper can be targeted when the GM spends 2+ Story Beats.

Starting Focus

Balanced approach with one minor asset or low-cap follower.

7.3.3 The Mastermind

Definition

Prioritizes followers/cadres/familiars and off-screen networks. The character sheet is the hub of a larger apparatus.

Typical XP Spread

25–40% Self; 35–55% On-screen help; 20–40% Off-screen assets.

Strengths

Scene control via assistance; strategic reach between sessions; strong heist/social-planning play.

Risks

Dependency on assist lanes; followers can be endangered on 2+ SB spends; upkeep pressure.

Starting Focus

Significant investment in followers or major assets from the beginning.

7.4 XP Costs and Advancement

7.4.1 Core Character Improvements

Attributes

Cost = new rating \times 3 XP. Requires downtime equal to new rating in days.

Skills

Cost = new level \times 2 XP. Requires downtime equal to new level in days.

On-Screen Followers

Cost = Cap² XP. Requires 1–3 days downtime to recruit and brief.

7.4.2 Off-Screen Assets

Minor Asset

4 XP; requires 1 day downtime to establish.

Standard Asset

8 XP; requires 1 week downtime to establish.

Major Asset

12 XP; requires 1 month downtime to establish.

Artifact Asset

16+ XP; requires significant campaign effort to acquire.

7.4.3 Talent Costs

Minor Talents

2 XP — Small narrative tricks, situational bonuses.

Major Talents

4 XP — Strong abilities, permanent +1 effects in niches.

Prestige Abilities

6+ XP — Campaign-defining effects, rare and powerful.

7.5 Tiers of Reputation

Though there are no character levels, total XP spent creates soft “tiers” that shape how the world responds to characters:

Tier I – Rookie

(0–40 XP): Local reputation; prestige abilities locked.

Tier II – Seasoned

(41–90 XP): Regional notice; prestige abilities may unlock.

Tier III – Veteran

(91–150 XP): National influence; second follower slot suggested.

Tier IV – Paragon

(151–220 XP): Movers and shakers; rivals emerge to challenge.

Tier V – Mythic

(221+ XP): Legendary status; kingdoms and cults respond directly.

7.6 Prestige Abilities and Talents

Prestige abilities are narrative milestones unlocked through mastery or story events. They are priced at 6+ XP and include campaign-shaping effects.

7.6.1 General Talents

Battle Instincts

(Cost: 6 XP): Once per scene, re-roll a failed defense roll.

Silver Tongue

(Cost: 4 XP): Gain +1 die when persuading or deceiving through speech.

Iron Stomach

(Cost: 3 XP): Immune to mundane poisons and spoiled food; halve complications from toxic sources.

Exceptional Coordination

(Cost: 8 XP): One follower can provide +4 assist dice (exception to the +3 cap).

7.6.2 Cultural and Ancestral Talents

Humans

Versatile

(3 XP): Once per session, swap one Skill die for another you lack.

Guild Ties

(7 XP; Requires Presence 2+): Call in favors from a guild or order once per session.

Banner-Bearer

(15 XP; Requires Presence 4+, Resolve 3): Inspire an allied unit; once per battle, erase 2 complications for the group.

Dwarves (Aeler)

Stone-Sense

(5 XP; Dwarf only): Detect flaws in stone; +1 die to underground *Lore* or *Survival* checks involving stonework.

Spirit Shield

(8 XP; Requires Spirit 3+): Commune with ancestors; once per session, block 1 complication for an ally.

Forge-Patriarch

(18 XP; Requires Body 4+, Lore 3): Found a forge-citadel; gain loyal smiths and engineers (Cap 5 followers).

Wood Elves

Backlash Soothing

(5 XP; Wood Elf only): Once per session, cancel 1 Backlash die in natural terrain.

Ranger's Step

(9 XP; Requires Wits 3+, Stealth 2): Move unseen in forests; treat terrain penalties as one step lower.

Wild Speaker

(18 XP; Requires Spirit 5+, Survival 3): Speak to beasts and trees; once per session, command local wildlife as allies.

High Elves**Lorekeeper**

(4 XP; High Elf only): Recall obscure history or magic without rolling once per session.

Weave Anchor

(8 XP; Requires Wits 3+, Arcana 3): Reduce magical Backlash by 1 when casting Intricate spells.

Echo-Walker's Step

(20 XP; High Elf only; Requires Wits 5, Arcana 4): Step briefly into the Ways Between; once per arc, turn a complication into a boon.

Ykrul**Blood Frenzy**

(4 XP; Requires Body 2+): When reduced to half health, gain +1 die on melee rolls.

Blood Memory

(7 XP; Requires Body 3+): After battle, gain 1 temporary Skill die reflecting a foe's tactics in the next scene.

Warglord

(18 XP; Requires Body 5, Sway 3): Rally scattered warbands; once per campaign, unify tribes under one banner.

7.6.3 High-Tier Prestige Abilities**Echo-Walker's Step**

(High Elf; Cost: 20 XP; Requires Wits 5, Arcana 4): Once per arc, observe a perfect echo of a past event at your location. GM immediately banks +2 SB; scenes touching that memory carry an omen. Grants DV -1 on one action that uses the revealed truth.

Warglord

(Ykrul; Cost: 18 XP; Requires Body 5, Sway 3): Once per campaign, unify scattered warbands into a single host for a season. Start a Logistics clock and a Grudge clock; either one filling fractures the host.

Spirit-Shield

(Aeler; Cost: 15 XP; Requires Spirit 4, Resolve 3): Once per session, erase up to 3 SB from an ally's current roll; you immediately mark Fatigue +1 and the GM banks +1 SB as backlash.

7.7 Starting Build Examples**7.7.1 Solo Build (30–32 XP)**

- Body 3 (9 XP), Wits 2 (6 XP), Spirit 2 (6 XP).
- Skills: Combat 2 (4 XP), Stealth 1 (2 XP), Survival 1 (2 XP).
- Minor Talent: Iron Stomach (3 XP).
- **Total:** 32 XP (requires 1 bond or minor complication).

7.7.2 Mixed Build (32 XP)

- Attributes: Body 2 (6 XP), Wits 2 (6 XP), Spirit 2 (6 XP).
- Skills: Sway 2 (4 XP), Lore 1 (2 XP).
- Minor Asset: Safehouse (4 XP).
- Cap 2 Follower (4 XP).
- **Total:** 32 XP.

7.7.3 Mastermind Build (34 XP)

- Attributes: Body 2 (6 XP), Wits 3 (9 XP), Spirit 2 (6 XP).
- Skills: Sway 2 (4 XP).
- Cap 3 Follower (9 XP).
- **Total:** 34 XP (requires 2 bonds or complications).

7.8 Advancement Guidance

- Advancement should always reinforce narrative identity and character goals.
- Consider how new abilities fit the character's story and relationships.
- Balance immediate power with long-term narrative potential.
- Work with the GM to ensure advancements make sense in the campaign context.

Chapter 8

Magic System

8.1 Design Philosophy

Magic in **Fate's Edge** is a dangerous negotiation with the fabric of reality. It is powerful and flexible—yet every attempt to shape it carries risk. Each die showing **1** generates **Story Beats (SB)**, which are prompts for twists and complications. The fiction leads; math follows.

8.2 The Four Paths of Magic

8.2.1 Casting (Freeform Magic)

Freeform casting represents raw, improvisational magic.

Requirement

Caster's Gift Talent (2 XP).

Mechanics

Two-step *Weave & Cast* colored by the Eight Elements; fiction-first targets and scope.

Risk

Each 1 generates SB; DV scales with scope; backlash is expressed by Element (or its opposite).

Limits

Heavy control effects (e.g., [WARD], [BANISH], [UNWARD]) require a printed source (Talent, *Rite* text, or Spell result).

GM Guidance

- **Show, then Nudge.** Lead with the fiction (smoke, fissures, whispers), then apply the smallest mechanical nudge that preserves drama.
- **Escalate with Consent.** Offer players the choice to escalate Minor to Major by taking +1 (SB) now to seize something they want.
- **One Bite per Cast.** Apply at most one backlash per cast/action unless a move explicitly stacks. Keep it punchy, not punitive.
- **Clocks with Names.** Name clocks (*Spreading Fire*, *Inevitable Outcome*) so they feed the fiction and remind the table what's at stake.

Backlash Cheatsheet (margin-ready)

Minor = wobble, Major = lurch. Types: Position/Eff, Clock +1/2 or +1, Condition, Cost. Offer Major by (SB)+1. Earth/Fate binds; Fire/Life burns/grows; Air/Luck scatters/ flips; Water/Obishaal pulls/opens.

Place a mini version of Table 8.5 on character sheets.

8.2.2 Rites Users (Runekeepers)

Runekeepers bind themselves to structured *Rites* from a single Patron.

Requirement

Thiasos (Familiar) (2 XP) *and* **Codex** (4 XP). Runekeepers are restricted to **one** Patron.

Mechanics

Invoke a known *Rite* as **1 action**; on completion, mark **+1 Obligation** to that Patron. *Push It* once/scene for amplified effect (**+1 Obligation**).

Patron's Gift (Imbuement)

With Thiasos, once/scene as **1 action** imbue a held item for the scene with **+1 Melee** and **+1 Thematic** (a fixed Skill set by the Patron; see Table in §??). *Push It* to extend one additional scene (**+1 Obligation**). A Codex is *not* required for the Gift.

8.3 Rites Difficulty Value (Expanded)**Core Rule**

The Difficulty Value (DV) to cast a Rite is:

$$DV = \max(\text{Obligation Cost} - \text{Spirit}, \text{Tier})$$

Obligation Cost:

The Rite's listed cost in Obligation segments. This reflects the Patron's toll for the magic.

Spirit:

The caster's Spirit attribute. Each point reduces the effective weight of the Obligation, representing inner resilience and willpower.

Tier:

The Rite's intrinsic difficulty based on scope or potency. DV can never fall below this floor.

Design Philosophy

This formula balances three forces:

- **Debt vs. Strength:** Powerful Rites impose heavier Obligation, but high Spirit offsets that burden.
- **Narrative Tier Floor:** Even the simplest ritual of summoning or warding retains a minimum DV based on its Tier, ensuring gravity and consistency.
- **Scaling:** As characters grow, Spirit makes weaker Rites feel easier, while greater costs still challenge them.

Worked Examples

- *Novice Example:* A Tier 1 Rite with Obligation Cost 2, cast by a Spirit 1 character: $DV = \max(2 - 1, 1) = 1$. The character feels only a slight strain, their Spirit covering most of the toll.
- *Mid-Level Example:* A Tier 2 Rite with Obligation Cost 4, cast by a Spirit 2 character: $DV = \max(4 - 2, 2) = 2$. The Rite taxes them, but their Spirit prevents the burden from becoming overwhelming.
- *Advanced Example:* A Tier 3 Rite with Obligation Cost 7, cast by a Spirit 3 character: $DV = \max(7 - 3, 3) = 4$. Here, Obligation dominates—the cost is heavy, and even strong Spirit cannot fully deflect it.

GM Guidance

- **Patron Themes:** Higher Obligation costs should reflect narrative weight, not just numbers. A Patron of decay may exact tolls in corruption, while a Patron of luck might demand reckless wagers.
- **Spirit as Fiction:** Encourage players to describe how their Spirit manifests—does it show as discipline, willpower, ritual focus, or raw charisma? Make the stat come alive in the fiction.
- **Scaling with Tier:** Remind players that no matter how trivial the fiction might feel, a Tier 2 or higher Rite is never “easy.” The floor maintains tension.

8.4 Obligation Capacity

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

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

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

Optional Modules

- **Overflow DV:** If DV exceeds 5, consider applying minor narrative complications or Backlash risks on top of the roll, to show strain bleeding into the scene.
- **Patron Wrath Trigger:** A Patron may impose extra narrative tolls if the DV was reached primarily through Obligation rather than Tier—this shows over-dependence on their favor.

8.4.1 Invokers (Symbol Path)

Invokers use consecrated **Symbols** as ritual anchors to access a Patron’s *Rites* without a full bond.

Requirement

Patron’s Symbol (4 XP) per Patron; one Symbol per Patron. No Thiasos or Codex required.

Ritual Invocation

Perform the *Rite* as a **ritual** DV +1 rounds. Completion always marks **+1 Obligation**.

Crack the Seal

Resolve instantly as **1 action** by setting the Symbol to *Compromised* and marking **+2 Obligation** (+3 if High-Power). The GM may immediately spend 1 on-theme SB. Restore in Downtime (test DV 3 or by fiction) or spend 1 XP.

Limits

Symbols must be openly displayed during the ritual; carrying **4+** Symbols causes +1 Obligation on the first ritual each scene; rival Symbol interference may worsen Position and add +1 Obligation.

Borrowed Grace

Type: Invoker Talent — *Lesser Imbuement*

Use

- **Cost:** 1 Boon, 1 action.
- **Effect (pick one on use):** **+1 Melee** or **+1 Thematic** (your table's thematic Skill).
- **Duration:** *Single action/attack* (instantaneous boost).
- **Requirement:** Wield/display the Patron's **Symbol**.
- **Obligation:** +1 **Obligation** to that Patron immediately (see §??).
- **Limits:** Cannot be extended, stacked, or *Pushed* for duration.

Fictional Framing

A quick, rule-bending channel through a Patron's *Symbol*—a sliver of grace, borrowed for a moment and paid for in debt.

Table Guidance (1-liners)

- **Combat:** Spike a strike vs. a tough foe; or steady a parry in a desperate bind.
- **Skill:** Nudge a pivotal social/ritual/track roll tied to the Patron's sphere.
- **Fallout:** Repeated use accrues **Obligation**; NPC faithful may notice "stolen" grace.

Balance Notes

- Weaker than full Imbuement: *one* action, no sustain, upfront Obligation.
- **Symbol dependency:** No Symbol, no channel (concealed or lost Symbol = no effect).

GM Hooks (quick picks)

- **Compel Debt:** A Patron agent arrives when Obligation crosses a tick.
- **Clash of Signs:** Using rival Symbols back-to-back risks minor **Backlash** (drop Position or +1 SB).
- **Spotlight Tell:** Brief visual tell (scent, sigil flare) marks the borrowing to observant NPCs.

8.4.2 Summoners (Pact-Whisperer)

Summoners call spirits quickly and manage them with a *Leash* track.

Talents & Access

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

Core Procedure

1. **Call (1 action):** A spirit manifests at *Near*. Choose a Spirit Template (by fiction).
2. **Bind (no extra roll):** Choose one: spend 1 **Boon** or mark 1 **Fatigue**.
3. **Leash:** Set *Leash* = **Cap** + 2 segments on the spirit.
4. **Tick Leash** whenever any of the following happen: the spirit takes harm; you command it against its nature; you *split focus* (you take another significant action while it acts on your order); a rival contests it; it rushes from *Close* to *Far* under pressure. Crossing a [WARD] uses the Outsider crossing rules (DV = Cap).
5. **Release:** When the Leash fills, the spirit acts to its nature *once*, then departs.

Economy & Limits

- **Boon Finesse:** Once per round, you may spend 1 **Boon** to clear 1 Leash tick on your current spirit (not after it has already filled).
- **Action Economy:** Issuing a meaningful command uses your action.
- **Concurrency:** Limit **one active spirit** at a time (you may *Call* again after departure).
- **Downtime** ends all summons unless an ability explicitly states otherwise.

8.5 The Nature of Magic

- **Volatile by design:** Each working pushes boundaries that resist being bent.
- **Risk embodied:** Each 1 on any magic roll generates SB the GM can spend for backlash or twists.
- **Narrative weight:** Every magical action alters the scene, even on a success.
- **Thematic consequence:** Backlash aligns with the invoked Element or its opposition.

8.6 The Eight Elements

8.6.1 Physical

Earth Solidity, structure; shape/sense/move stone; backlash: rigidity/collapse.

Fire Energy, change; ignite/heat/purify; backlash: spread/scorch.

Air Motion, sound; push/pull/resonance; backlash: dispersal/whip.

Water Flow, repair; channel/cleanse/mend; backlash: flood/contaminate.

8.6.2 Metaphysical

Fate Causality, oaths, anti-magic; backlash: paradox/closure.

Life Vitality, growth, repair; backlash: overgrowth/fever.

Luck Chance, openings; backlash: side-coincidence/irony.

Death/Dreams (Obishaal) Thresholds, Ways Between; backlash: thin walls/nightmares.

8.7 Magical Arts

Define your *Art* (gesture/medium, two typical Elements, signature style). If the Art is clearly honored in fiction, gain +1 **die** on your **Cast** once/scene (counts toward +3 cap). Working hard against your Art can worsen Position or pre-load backlash on a Partial.

8.8 Casting Loop (Freeform)

Channel: Focus and draw Potential (e.g., Wits+Arcana); successes become shaping fuel; each 1 generates SB.

Weave: Next turn, shape the effect (e.g., Wits+Art); apply the Description Ladder (Basic/Detailed/Intricate) per core rules.

Backlash: GM spends SB thematically by Element; severity scales with SB and scope. Boons do not reduce SB unless a source says so.

8.9 Magic in Combat

Casting typically takes two actions (Channel + Weave). Runekeeper *Rites* resolve in one action (with Obligation risk). Invoker rituals are usually too slow for a fight—use *Crack the Seal* for instant results at high cost. [COUNTER] can interrupt any magical action in its window.

8.10 Path Comparison

8.11 Guardrails

- **Duration defaults:** Buffs \approx 3 beats; areas 1 beat. Sustaining costs 1 Fatigue/beat.
- **Stacking:** Same-source effects do not stack; take the best instance.
- **Assist cap:** +3 dice total from assists/buffs.
- **Over-Stack:** Active magic can count as structural advantages for Over-Stack.
- **Plausibility:** All effects must fit the fiction and established limits.

8.12 Of Patrons, Runes, and Invokers

“You wish to walk the road of power? Then listen well. The world is old, and older still are the voices beneath it. We call them *Patrons*, though they were never sworn to us.

Aspect	Caster (Freeform)	Runekeeper (Rites)	Invoker (Symbols)	Summoner
Access Cost	Caster's Gift (2 XP)	Thiasos + Codex (6 XP)	Symbol (4 XP per Patron)	Lesser/Great Pactwright
Speed	Medium (2 actions)	Fast (1 action)	Slow (ritual) / Fast w/ Seal	Fast (Call =
Risk Type	SB backlash (Elemental)	Obligation (Patron ledger)	Symbol compromise + Obligation	Leash fill + costs
Breadth	High (fiction-gated)	Medium (defined <i>Rites</i>)	Medium (breadth across Patrons)	Medium (plates/Cap)
Sustain	Fatigue/backsplash	Obligation; Push adds +1	Obligation; Symbol state gates	Leash ticks nesse

Table 8.1: Comparison of Magic Paths

They are the tides that move unseen, the keepers of forgotten bargains, the sleepers beneath the stone and the stars. To call upon them is to dip a hand into a river that has carved mountains.”

The Patrons

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

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

Aliyah, the Chained Angel (Curses & Corruption)

Lore. Once a righteous warrior of light, Aliyah was torn from heaven and bound in chains of black iron beneath a forgotten chapel. There, corrupted by dark rituals, she became the Arch-Angel of Cursed Blessings—the one who grants gifts that devour from within. Her followers learn that power always demands a price, and that the most beautiful gifts often carry the most terrible curses.

“I was light. I was hope. Now I am the shadow in your salvation, the thorn in your rose. What I touch, I corrupt—not with malice, but with the terrible weight of what I have become.” — Aliyah, the Chained Angel

Blessing of Chains (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Self/Ally; Yes (curse only).* **Materials:** A broken chain link or iron shackle.

Effect: Grant supernatural strength/resistance at the cost of growing dependency. Target gains +1 **die** to one physical action but suffers **Fatigue 1** if they don't perform a related act of violence or dominance before scene end.

Push It: The blessing intensifies—+2 **dice** but **Fatigue 2**; mark 1 **SB (Spades)** as the curse's hunger grows.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Fallen Star (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Near; No. Materials:* A shard of meteoric iron blessed by moonlight.

Effect: Bestow a gift that carries a hidden curse. Target gains one significant advantage (GM choice) but also accrues a 4-segment “Corruption” clock. When it fills, they suffer a related curse.

Push It: The gift is more powerful but the corruption clock advances **2 segments**; mark **1 SB (Diamonds)** as divine attention notices the perversion.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Mark of the Celestial Wound (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Touch; No. Materials:* Holy water mixed with graveyard dust.

Effect: Infect target with a supernatural condition. Choose: vampiric hunger (gain power at night, suffer in sunlight), bestial rage (strength when angry, lose control), or shadow-bind (move unseen, fear light). Condition lasts scene.

Push It: The condition becomes permanent but grants **+1 die** to relevant actions; mark **1 SB (Hearts)** as the curse begins to define their identity.

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

The Chained Host (Standard, 9 XP) *Scene; Self; No. Materials:* Wear manacles while speaking her true name.

Effect: Aliyah’s power flows through you directly. Gain **+2 dice** to one action per beat for the scene, but each use marks **1 SB (suit by GM)** as her influence spreads. You cannot refuse her whispered commands.

Push It: Channel her full fury—**+3 dice** but mark **2 SB** and suffer **Fatigue 1**; her voice grows louder in your mind.

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

Curse of the Ascended Fall [BANE] (High, 12 XP) *Scene; Near; No. Materials:* Chain links forged from a fallen angel’s tears.

Effect: Transform a target into something more and less than human. They gain a powerful supernatural trait (flying, shapechanging, deathless) but also inherit a fatal weakness (silver vulnerability, need for blood, etc.).

Push It: The transformation is complete and irreversible; mark **2 SB (Hearts)** as they become a permanent monster in the world.

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

Obligation: 7 segments.

The Heavenly Descent (High, 14 XP) *Extended; Zone; No. Materials:* A chapel bell cracked by divine lightning.

Effect: Corrupt a sacred space, turning it into a font of cursed power. For the next session, all supernatural effects gain **+1 Effect** but also generate **+1 SB** when they fail. Blessings become curses, curses become blessings.

Push It: The corruption spreads to adjacent areas; mark **3 SB (Diamonds)** as reality itself begins to fray around the perversion.

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

Obligation: 8 segments.

The Carrion-King (Decay, Renewal & Transformation)

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

Quote. “*What crumbles feeds what grows. What dies becomes the soil of tomorrow’s triumph.*” — *The Carrion-King*

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

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

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

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

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

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

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

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Obligation: 7 segments.

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

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

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

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

Obligation: 7 segments.

The Clockwork Monad (Iterative Evolution)

Lore. The Clockwork Monad is the divine architect who builds not just machines, but systems that improve with use. Where others see entropy, it sees optimization. Its followers are engineers, artificers, and system-builders who understand that true perfection comes not from flawless creation, but from flawless adaptation.

Quote. “Each gear teaches the next. Each failure builds tomorrow’s solution.” — *The Clockwork Monad*

Rite of Iterative Refinement (Low, 4 XP) *Instant; Self; Yes (Tinker/Craft/Device use only).*

Materials: A tool or mechanical device you are actively using for the triggering roll.

Effect: Re-roll one die showing 1 or 6 on your current roll.

Push It: Re-roll up to two dice, but mark 1 segment on a **Strain Clock** [4] for the tool/device. If the Strain Clock fills, the item becomes [COMPROMISED].

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Note: This represents making micro-adjustments or adaptations on the fly to improve performance.

Rite of Mechanical Intuition (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Self; No. Materials:* A moment of focused observation of a mechanism or engineered system.

Effect: Gain +1 die to one Wits + Tinker or Wits + Craft roll this scene to understand, repair, jury-rig, or optimize a mechanical or engineered system.

Push It: Also identify one hidden weakness, pressure point, or inefficiency in the observed system (Keeper’s choice), but mark Exposure +1.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Note: This represents the Monad’s insight granting deeper understanding of mechanical principles.

Rite of the Self-Improving Device (Standard, 8 XP) *Extended; Touch; No. Materials:* A mechanical device with space for additional components.

Effect: Install a learning mechanism in a device. Create a 6-segment **Improvement Clock**. Each time the device is successfully used for its primary function, advance the clock by 1. When filled, choose one permanent enhancement:

- **Efficiency Core:** The device gains +1 Effect when used.
- **Resilient Frame:** The device ignores the first instance of [COMPROMISED] or [DAMAGED] status.

- **Auxiliary Function:** The device gains one minor, related function (e.g., a lockpick gains a small light source, a winch has a built-in measuring tape).

Push It: The device gains its first enhancement immediately (choose one), but mark 2 segments on its Improvement Clock instantly.

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

Note: This represents embedding iterative learning directly into the construct.

Rite of the Automated Sequence (Standard, 7 XP) *Scene; Zone (Near the mechanism); No. Materials:* A series of interconnected mechanical triggers (gears, levers, pulleys, weights).

Effect: Create an automated process that performs one specific, simple, physical task per round without direct control. Examples include: maintaining steady pressure, repeatedly striking an object, turning a winch, opening/closing a valve, ringing a bell, sorting items by size/weight (if pre-sorted chute exists). The mechanism occupies a Near space.

Push It: The automation can perform a slightly more complex task or two simple tasks in sequence, but requires a 4-segment **Maintenance Clock** that must be tended each scene or it seizes up (becomes non-functional until repaired, DV 3 Tinker).

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

Note: This is a temporary, dedicated mechanical helper for repetitive physical tasks.

Rite of the Perfect Design (High, 13 XP) *Extended; Self; No. Materials:* Blueprints inscribed with Clockwork Monad's sigils.

Effect: Design and create a construct or dedicated system (counts as a Standard Asset) that gains +1 Effect each time it is successfully used for its intended primary purpose, up to a maximum of +3 Effect.

Push It: The construct is built to maximum efficiency immediately (+3 Effect), but it also accrues 1 segment on a **Stress Clock** [6]. If the Stress Clock fills, the construct suffers a critical, non-repairable failure (GM determines specifics, likely destruction or dangerous malfunction).

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

Obligation: 7 segments.

Note: This represents creating a masterpiece of iterative engineering, pushing it to its theoretical limits.

Rite of the Infinite Workshop (High, 14 XP) *Extended; Zone; No. Materials:* A dedicated workshop or laboratory inscribed with the Monad's evolving equations.

Effect: Consecrate the zone. While within:

- All Crafting, Tinkering, and Wits-based engineering/problem-solving rolls gain +1 Effect.
- Once per scene, a failed Tinker or Craft roll may be re-attempted with +2 dice.

Push It: The zone's influence expands slightly beyond its physical boundaries (e.g., affects work done in an adjacent room) and allows one roll this scene related to invention or radical innovation to be treated as Intricate (re-roll all 1s), but mark 2 segments on an **Entropic Backlash Clock** [8] (GM spends SB from this clock to introduce minor, weird malfunctions or inefficiencies in other nearby non-Monad devices/constructs).

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

Obligation: 7 segments.

Note: This is a locus of pure optimization and accelerated iterative development.

The Gallow's Bell (Justice & Judgment)

Lore. The Bell tolls not just for punishment, but for the restoration of balance. Its keepers are judges of the unseen court, ensuring that debts are paid and justice flows like water—sometimes gentle, sometimes as a flood. To call upon the Gallow's Bell is to swear to uphold the weight of consequence, for the Bell sees all reckonings and demands their fulfillment.

Quote. “*What is broken must be mended, what is owed must be paid. The Bell remembers all reckonings.*” — *The Gallow's Bell*

Rite of the Measured Debt (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Near; No.* **Materials:** Scales balanced with tokens from both parties.

Effect: Establish a temporary truce or parley; both parties suffer -1 die if they break terms first. Gain +1 die to enforce fair dealing.

Push It: The debt becomes magically binding for the scene; breach forces 1 SB (Hearts) on breaker. *Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

Rite of the Weighed Heart (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Near; No.* **Materials:** A brass scale touched to target's chest.

Effect: Sense if target acts against their stated nature or recent oaths; gain +1 die to social rolls exploiting this knowledge.

Push It: Target must make a Resolve test (DV 3) or reveal one hidden motivation/conflict. *Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

Rite of the Balanced Scales (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Near; No.* **Materials:** Iron scales marked with sigils of justice.

Effect: Exchange a condition between two willing parties (Harm 1 for Fatigue 2, Debt for Favor, etc.). Both gain +1 die to actions requiring cooperation.

Push It: Force exchange on unwilling target with contested Wits + Command roll. *Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

Rite of the Judge's Eye (Standard, 7 XP) *Scene; Self; No.* **Materials:** A black hood worn for one minute.

Effect: Gain the ability to sense lies/deception within Near range; +2 dice to Insight rolls. Target lying must suffer -1 die or confess one truth.

Push It: See through all social deceptions for the scene, but mark Exposure +1. *Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

Rite of the Final Reckoning (High, 13 XP) *Scene; Zone; No.* **Materials:** A circle of iron bells, each inscribed with a name.

Effect: All present must speak their greatest debt or wrongdoing; those who lie suffer Harm 2. Truth-tellers gain +2 dice to social actions for scene.

Push It: The reckoning becomes magically enforced—liars automatically suffer consequences GM determines.

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).
Obligation: 7 segments.

Rite of the Great Adjudication (High, 14 XP) *Extended; Zone; No.* **Materials:** A ceremonial gavel and judge's bench marked with Bell sigils.

Effect: Establish a temporary court of justice; for next session, all social conflicts

Grimmir, the Old Man of the Forest (Instinct & Wild Memory)

“They say he taught the wolves to stalk, and the children of men to kindle fire. Listen close, and you may remember what your blood already knows.”

Lore. In mist-thick woods and hollow caves, the stories whisper of **Grimmir**, the Old Man of the Forest. Neither wholly human nor wholly beast, he is the memory of the primal hunter—matted hair, claw-like nails, the antlers of a stag and the eyes of a wolf. He is not a god, but a reminder: that humankind was once feral, and the wild still claims its due. Those who call on him gain the instincts of predator and prey alike, yet risk losing their civil tongue for the growl and the howl.

Patron's Gift — Beastial Relic. Your sworn implement (club, bone spear, or totem mask) sprouts hair, fang, or horn.

- **Enchanted Weapon:** Counts as enchanted melee +1 **Melee**.
- **Thematic Skill:** You gain +1 to **Intimidation** or **Survival** when drawing on primal instinct.

Hunter's Snarl (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Self; Yes.*

Materials: A scrap of bone or a beast's tooth.

Effect: Bare teeth, snarl, and draw on animal menace. Gain +1 die to Intimidation or resist fear this scene.

Push It: Enemies hesitate—first hostile act against you suffers –1 die.

Backlash (Fate): Your instincts flare—1 die on attempts at polite social interaction this scene.

Wolf-Step (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Self; Yes.*

Materials: Dirt from a wolf's track or claw scratch.

Effect: Move with lupine cunning. Gain +1 die to Stealth or Athletics when flanking or stalking.

Push It: Also ignore one minor environmental penalty (brambles, roots).

Backlash (Body): Predatory gait aches your joints—minor Fatigue until you rest.

Horn of the Wild Hunt (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Near; Yes.*

Materials: A horn, conch, or hollowed bone.

Effect: Sound the primal call. Allies gain +1 die to their next attack or chase roll this scene. Enemies of lesser courage must resist or falter.

Push It: Also call a Cap 1 beast follower (a hound, crow, or stag) until the scene ends.

Backlash (Spirit): The horn echoes back; GM gains 1 SB to spend on attracting a rival predator.

Mark of Antlers (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Self or Touch; Yes.*

Materials: Ash or blood traced across the brow.

Effect: Sprout phantom antlers and command primal space. Gain +1 die to Command or resist physical shoves; foes treat you as larger.

Push It: For one exchange, enemies in Near range must test or suffer –1 die to strike you.

Backlash (Life): The mark lingers—1 die to Diplomacy checks until it fades.

Wild Communion (Major, 12 XP) *Scene; Region; Yes.*

Materials: Sit upon raw earth, surrounded by a circle of bones.

Effect: Commune with primal memory. Ask two questions about the movement of beasts, predators, or prey in the last day. Gain advantage on the next hunt, track, or ambush.

Push It: Ask a third question, or extend your communion to human hunters nearby.

Backlash (Dreams): You wake that night with wild hunger—GM may introduce an omen or Complication.

Shape of the Ancestor (Epic, 16 XP) *Scene; Self; Yes.*

Materials: Wear a mask of fur, antler, or bone.

Effect: Transform into a primal hybrid—fangs, claws, heavy pelt. For the scene:

- +1 Body
- Natural melee attack (enchanted, +1)
- +1 die to Athletics, Melee, or Survival

Push It: Extend to a second ally, marking them with blood or ash.

Backlash (Life/Death): When it fades, you suffer a minor Exhausted condition, and the Old Man whispers in dreams.

Ikasha, She Who Sleeps (Latent Potential & Shadow)

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

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

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

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

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

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

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

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

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

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

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

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

Push It: Also gain one free escape attempt; next scene, you must help another cross a threshold or

flee danger—shadow-debt calls for shadow-service.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Obligation: 7 segments.

Inaea, Angel of the Spider (Webs & Fate)

Lore. Where Isoka sheds, Inaea binds—threads of debt, favor, and inevitability. She is the Weaver of Connections, the patron of those who see the invisible threads that tie fate to fate, person to person, promise to consequence. Her followers learn to manipulate these connections, drawing power from the web of relationships that binds all things.

Tie one knot for what you owe, two for what you're owed, and a third for what will answer both. But beware—the Weaver always collects her due.

Tie a Simple Knot (Low, 4 XP) *Action; Near; Yes (link once).* **Materials:** A single thread.

Effect: Declare two minor events linked; either **force 1 SB** (GM suit) on a foe when the first triggers *or* bank +**1 die** for a follow-on roll this scene.

Push It: The held +1 ignores one minor disruption; the web's tension tightens—mark **1 SB (Clubs)** as the connection becomes more demanding.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Tangled Thread (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Near; No. Materials:* Tug a web or net.

Effect: Invisible snare in a lane/door. First to cross suffers –1 die on next action.

Push It: Brief bind (one beat) enabling an ally setup; affects all who cross—the tangled threads ensnare indiscriminately, mark **1 SB (Spades)** as allies may also be caught.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

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

Effect: Link two actors/actions: when A moves, B is exposed. Choose: **force 1 SB on B** next

action *or* **+2 dice** to one prediction/setup keyed to the link.

Push It: Invert once (B cues A); the web's pattern shifts—mark **1 SB (Hearts)** as the manipulation strains the natural order.

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

Rite of the Weaver's Glance (Standard, 7 XP) *Scene; Self; No. Materials:* Watch a spider finish one radial line.

Effect: Ask one precise question about in-scene ties; then gain **+1 effect** on one leverage/pressure action exploiting it.

Push It: Surface a hidden tie (Keeper reveals a quiet obligation/fear); mark *Exposure +1* as the web exposes your own entanglements.

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

Bind the Bargain [OATH] (High, 11 XP) *Scene; Near; No. Materials:* Silk loop tied around two thumbs, then cut/knotted.

Effect: Bind up to two consenting parties to a clear term. Breach *forces 2 SB* on the breaker and leaves a subtle tell until amends.

Push It: Widen to a small circle (up to four); each party names a narrow loophole (Keeper approves). Exploiting it generates **1 SB (Diamonds)** as the web's complexity creates unforeseen resonances.

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

Obligation: 7 segments.

Isoka, Angel of Serpents (Change & Shedding)

Lore. Isoka teaches that every self is temporary. Serpents shed their skin not in weakness but in renewal, leaving the brittle husk behind as proof that transformation is survival. Followers of Isoka learn to embrace disguise, deception, and metamorphosis, casting aside the past as easily as a garment.

Quote. *“Do not mourn the skin you shed. It was never meant to last.” — Isoka, Angel of Serpents*

Loosen the Old Skin (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Self; Yes (resist only). Materials:* A discarded snakeskin or a loose thread.

Effect: +1 die to resist an ongoing *Condition* this scene *or* re-roll one **1** on an escape/evasion.

Push It: Also ignore one minor movement penalty; you leave behind a token of your old self that others can leverage.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Subtle Shift (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Self; No (stable). Materials:* Palming a small object from one pocket to another.

Effect: Fluid demeanor: +1 die to **Deceive** to pass as a nearby class/profession *or* +1 Effect to blend into a new crowd/site.

Push It: Bypass one minor identity check; you must maintain the false role until scene end.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Shed the Former Self (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Self; No. Materials:* Full change of clothing and an adopted mannerism.

Effect: +2 dice to resist one named ongoing *Condition*; once/session declare a minor physical contingency retroactively.

Push It: Clear a *temporary, identity-based* Minor Condition; your former identity becomes active in the fiction.

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

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

Effect: Ambiguous persuasion: when you **Sway** or **Command**, a success may generate *Diamonds* (leverage) instead of SB.

Push It: One carefully worded lie this scene is accepted as truth; the displaced truth seeks return, complicating matters.

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

Complete Metamorphosis (High, 12 XP) *Scene; Self; No. Materials:* A complete identity kit (garb, voice, tokens).

Effect: Full appearance/voice change; begin *Controlled* on **Deceive/Stealth**; once/scene declare a minor contingency retroactively.

Push It: Spoof scent/biometric for one check; your original identity partially unmoors and acts independently.

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

Obligation: 7 segments.

Rite of the Cast-Off History (High, 13 XP) *Extended; Self; No. Materials:* Burning or defacing all mundane records of your old life.

Effect: On completion, common records/memories of that identity become unreliable. Trackers via that identity suffer –2 dice. (Does not foil magic or intimates.)

Push It: A plausible “death” is created for the old identity; one intimate senses deception.

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

Obligation: 7 segments.

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

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

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

Whisper of the Trench (Low, 4 XP) *Instant; Near; No.*

Effect: Target hears impossible echoes and suffers **1 die** on their next action.

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

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of Crushing Silence (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Zone; No.*

Materials: A broken shell filled with ink-dark water.

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

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

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Pressure of the Maw (Standard, 7 XP) *Instant; Near; No.*

Materials: A length of rusted chain submerged in water.

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

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

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

Rite of the Abyssal Vision (Standard, 9 XP) *Scene; Self; No.*

Effect: You perceive the world as Khemesh does—fractured, alien, crushing. Gain **+2 dice** to Notice and Arcana, and may ask one “true nature” question about a foe or structure.

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

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

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

The Maw Opens (High, 12 XP) *Scene; Zone; No.*

Materials: A sealed vessel of abyssal water, broken open.

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

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

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

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

Rivalry: Raéyn. Khemesh embodies the unknowable trench that swallows sailors; Raéyn embodies tides, travel, and the sea's surface. Where Raéyn charts and protects, Khemesh unmoors and devours. In scenes of open sea, Raéyn gains the upper hand; in the abyssal dark, Khemesh dominates.

Livaea, the Crimson Courtier (Seduction & Social Binding)

Lore. In salons where wine flows like honey and words cut sharper than daggers, the Crimson Courtier holds court. She is the patron of those who would bind others not with webs, but with desire, obligation, and the sweet poison of whispered promises. Her followers are masters of the intimate covenant, the secret alliance, and the kiss that seals a fate. She teaches that the deepest wounds are those inflicted through trust, and the strongest chains are those forged from willing hands.

Quote. “A word can wound deeper than a blade. A promise can chain stronger than iron. The Courtier knows which words to whisper—and which silences to sell.” — *The Crimson Courtier*

Rite of the Velvet Whisper (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Near; No.* **Materials:** A silk handkerchief or ribbon touched to lips.

Effect: Your next whispered words carry supernatural weight; +1 die to Sway when speaking privately to one target.

Push It: The target feels compelled to whisper back a secret of their own, but you mark Exposure +1 and the exchanged confidence creates **1 SB (Hearts)** as gossip spreads.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Intimate Covenant (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Touch; No.* **Materials:** A shared cup of wine or exchange of personal tokens.

Effect: Create a temporary bond of trust; both parties gain +1 die when cooperating, and suffer -1 die when acting against each other this scene.

Push It: The bond becomes slightly magical - one party feels the other's emotional state, but you mark Fatigue 1 and the emotional intimacy leaves both parties vulnerable—mark **1 SB (Diamonds)** as psychic resonance lingers.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Binding Vow (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Near; No.* **Materials:** A ring or token held while speaking the vow.

Effect: Forge a magical agreement between willing parties; +1 Effect when working together, breach forces 1 SB (Hearts) on breaker.

Push It: The vow becomes supernaturally enforced - breaker suffers Harm 1 and cannot act against the agreement for one scene; the Court takes note of the binding—mark **1 SB (Clubs)** as social forces align around the vow.

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

Rite of the Court's Favor (Standard, 7 XP) *Scene; Self; No.* **Materials:** Perfumed oil or cosmetic applied before social interaction.

Effect: Gain +2 dice to social manipulation in refined settings; you appear perfectly attuned to the social environment.

Push It: Become the center of attention - all social actions in the scene focus on you, but you cannot leave unnoticed and attract unwanted admirers—mark **1 SB (Spades)** as social complications arise.

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

Rite of the Crimson Alliance (High, 13 XP) *Scene; Near; No.* **Materials:** A circle of red candles, each representing a participant.

Effect: Bind multiple parties in a web of mutual obligation; all participants gain +1 die when acting in group's interest, and suffer Harm 1 if they act against it.

Push It: The alliance becomes magically permanent - breaking it requires a ritual and advances a 6-segment "Broken Bonds" clock; the Court's attention intensifies—mark **2 SB (Hearts)** as social forces take notice.

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

Obligation: 7 segments.

Rite of the Eternal Court (High, 14 XP) *Extended; Zone; No.* **Materials:** A throne or seat of honor consecrated with rare perfumes.

Effect: Establish yourself as the center of a social web; for the next session, all social interactions in your presence are influenced by your will (+1 Effect to your social actions, -1 die to those opposing you).

Push It: The court becomes supernaturally compelling - all who enter must test Resolve (DV 3) or become devoted to you for the scene; the Court's influence expands—mark **2 SB (Diamonds)** as supernatural social pressure affects the wider area.

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

Obligation: 7 segments.

Mab, Queen of Courts (Glamour & Bargain)

Lore. The blush of truth, the dagger of etiquette, the smile that writes debts in perfume. Mab rules where desire dresses itself as courtesy.

Bend, don't bow. Smile, don't promise.

Courtly Guise [VEIL] (Low, 4 XP) *Action; Self; Yes (social only).* **Materials:** Pin a sprig of green or silver thread.

Effect: Subtle glamour: +1 die to Persuade/Sway in refined settings; you appear as expected rank/guest.

Push It: Also mask one minor tell; the first piercing question in the scene generates **1 SB (Hearts)**.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Token of Favor (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Near; No.* **Materials:** A ribbon or ring bestowed.

Effect: Grant an ally +1 die to one social action against onlookers who recognize your favor; you gain +1 effect to support.

Push It: The token also chills a heckler (one beat of hesitation), but you mark *Exposure +1*.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Mirror of Motives (Standard, 7 XP) *Action; Near; No.* **Materials:** A polished shard or compact mirror.

Effect: Ask one pointed question about an NPC's *immediate* social goal; Keeper answers truthfully or with a strong tell. Gain +1 die to exploit it this scene.

Push It: Also expose a concealed slight or insult that matters to them, creating **1 SB (Hearts)** on that target.

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

The Price Agreed [OATH] (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Near; No.* **Materials:** Exchange a token of equal apparent value.

Effect: Bind a petty bargain (favor-for-favor). Breach forces **1 SB (Hearts or Diamonds)** on the breaker and stains their reputation locally this arc.

Push It: Sweeten terms with a minor boon (+1 die once to the beneficiary), but you take **1 SB (Hearts)** if they later breach.

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

Sovereign Glamour [VEIL][REVEAL] (High, 11 XP) *Scene; Zone; No.* **Materials:** A circle of green felt or silk.

Effect: Establish Court: allies in Zone gain +1 die to social actions; crude threats suffer -1 die.

Once, peel one disguise/illusion in Zone.

Push It: Name a *Court Law* (e.g., no drawn steel): first violation *forces 2 SB* on the violator.

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

Obligation: 6 segments.

Maelstraeus, the Merchant of Equities (Exchange & Balance)

Lore. The Merchant moves through markets seen and unseen, ensuring that all transactions carry weight and meaning. Those who trade in his name learn that every exchange has a price, but also a reward. He is the patron of merchants, diplomats, and anyone who seeks to balance the scales of fortune. His golden scales never lie, and his ledgers record not just coin, but the weight of every promise, every debt, every obligation owed to the cosmic order.

Quote. “*All things have value. All values can be traded. The Merchant sees the true price—and always collects his due.*” — *The Merchant of Equities*

Rite of the Fair Trade (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Near; No. Materials:* A balance scale with equal weights.

Effect: Establish a neutral trading ground; all parties gain +1 die to negotiate in good faith.

Push It: Force one party to reveal their true bottom line or minimum acceptable terms; the scales’ truth-compelling power marks **1 SB (Hearts)** as hidden agendas surface.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Merchant’s Eye (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Self; No. Materials:* A merchant’s token or coin from a distant land.

Effect: Gain +2 dice to appraise goods, judge value, or spot market opportunities.

Push It: Also sense the emotional value an item holds for its owner, but mark Exposure +1 and the item’s history clings to you—mark **1 SB (Diamonds)** as ghostly echoes of past transactions whisper secrets.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Balanced Exchange (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Near; No. Materials:* Two items of equivalent perceived value.

Effect: Facilitate a fair trade between parties; both gain +1 Effect on the exchange. If trade is unfair, the disadvantaged party gains +2 dice to resist.

Push It: Enforce the trade magically - parties cannot renege without suffering 1 SB (Hearts) and the cosmic balance demands correction—mark **1 SB (Clubs)** as the universe notes the intervention.

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

Rite of the Contract Seal (Standard, 7 XP) *Scene; Touch; No. Materials:* Official seal or stamp used on important documents.

Effect: Mark a document or agreement with authority; +1 die to Command when enforcing it, and -1 die for those who would break it.

Push It: The seal becomes temporarily magical - breach causes the document to burn and the liar to suffer Harm 1; the seal’s power attracts **1 SB (Spades)** as legal authorities take notice.

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

Rite of the Great Market (High, 13 XP) *Scene; Zone; No. Materials:* A merchant's booth or trading post consecrated with salt and coin.

Effect: Create a zone of enhanced commerce; all trading, hiring, and negotiation gains +1 Effect. Allies may reroll one failed social roll per scene.

Push It: The market becomes supernaturally successful - attract attention from powerful figures, but also jealous competitors; mark **2 SB (Hearts/Clubs)** as both opportunity and rivalry flourish.

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

Obligation: 7 segments.

Rite of the Cosmic Ledger (High, 14 XP) *Extended; Self; No. Materials:* A book that records all debts and credits across the campaign.

Effect: Access the cosmic balance sheet; once per session, convert any resource into any other (1 Boon to 1 Fatigue, 2 XP to 1 SB spent, etc.) at fair market rate.

Push It: Make an imbalanced trade that heavily favors you, but create a 6-segment "Karmic Debt" clock that will eventually demand payment; the ledger's attention intensifies—mark **2 SB (Diamonds)** as cosmic forces take notice of the manipulation.

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

Obligation: 7 segments.

Mykkiel, Arbiter of the Writ (Judgment & Writ)

Lore. Mykkiel weighs speech against deed and seals verdicts in cold iron. He is the Keeper of Sacred Covenants, the patron of judges, scribes, and those who would build justice upon the foundation of written law. His followers learn that every word carries weight, every signature binds fate, and every judgment echoes through the halls of eternity.

Name the charge. Name the terms. Then sign where you'll bleed if you're wrong. For the Word made manifest cannot be unsaid.

Stamp of Authority (Low, 4 XP) *Action; Near; Yes (doc/object).* **Materials:** Cold-iron seal or writ-tag.

Effect: Visible mark of authority. +1 die to *Command/Persuade* that asserts lawful order/claim.

Push It: Brief hush (one beat) among hecklers; mark *Exposure +1* as the seal's power draws attention from higher authorities.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of Proper Notice (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Near; No. Materials:* Writ-string tied and snapped.

Effect: Name a *lawful venue* (dais, doorway, wagon). First hostile act there suffers -1 die.

Push It: Name a *protected act* (parley, surrender, testimony): +1 effect in the venue; breaking custom generates **1 SB (Hearts)** and marks you as oath-breaker before the sacred courts.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Writ of Compliance [COMMAND] (Standard, 8 XP) *Action; Near; No. Materials:* Red cord knotted while speaking the order.

Effect: Immediate command ("Stand down," "Drop it," "Open"). Target must comply now or suffer a Keeper-stated cost. DV by fiction; elites may test Resolve.

Push It: On compliance, impose -1 die on target's next aggressive act this scene; the writ's

authority resonates—mark **1 SB (Spades)** as the command creates legal precedents.

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

Rite of the Speaking Seal (Standard, 7 XP) *Scene; Near; No.* **Materials:** Wax seal impressed over a name/sigil.

Effect: Sanctify a statement (truce, custody, claim). Contradicting it suffers -1 die; you gain $+1$ die to enforce it.

Push It: Once, ask who here intends breach; Keeper gives a strong clue or direct name—the seal’s truth-compelling power marks **1 SB (Diamonds)** as divine attention falls upon the liar.

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

Oath Irons [OATH] (High, 11 XP) *Scene; Near; No.* **Materials:** Two iron pins warmed in flame, touched to wrists, then quenched.

Effect: Bind two parties to a bounded term. Breach *forces 2 SB* and brands a faint iron-mark until amends.

Push It: Extend to a small circle (up to four); each chooses one narrow exception (Keeper approves). Exploiting it generates **1 SB (Diamonds)** as the sacred covenant’s complexity invites divine scrutiny.

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

Obligation: 7 segments.

Nidhoggr, the World-Worm (Dreaming Antiquity)

Lore. Beneath stone and sleep lies the slow memory of the world. Nidhoggr turns in aeons, dreaming of roads once walked and oaths once sworn.

Press your ear to the earth and wait. If it remembers you, it will answer.

Glimpse the Ancient’s Shadow (Low, 4 XP) *Action; Self; No.*

Materials: Pinch of dust from a worked stone.

Effect: $+1$ die to actions that identify, date, or interpret *ancient* sites, scripts, or artifacts this scene; once this scene, ask one yes/no about the site’s original purpose.

Push It: Add $+1$ Effect on one related roll, but suffer *Fatigue 1*.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Drink from the Dreaming Deep (Low, 5 XP) *Instant; Self; No.*

Materials: Mouthful of clean water poured over stone, swallowed with eyes closed.

Effect: Learn one hidden factual detail about the immediate locale’s *past*. GM answers plainly or via a sensory echo.

Cost: Suffer *Fatigue 1* and mark *Exposure +1* as the dream clings.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Stone-Sleeper’s Murmur (Standard, 7 XP) *Scene; Near (contact locus); No.*

Materials: Ear to bedrock, wall, or hewn pillar.

Effect: Once per beat while in contact, ask 1 question about a *past event* that physically touched this stone; answers are fragmentary but truthful (max 3 questions/scene).

Push It: One answer is delivered with precise sensory clarity, but generate 1 SB (suit by GM).

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

Awakened Chronicle (Standard, 9 XP) *Ritual (Significant Time); Zone; No.*

Materials: Chalk spiral and four touchstones from the site.

Effect: The zone “replays” a notable past moment as ghostly echoes all can witness (no harm). Participants gain +2 dice on *one* Investigate/Recall about that event this scene.

Push It: Add a second moment from a different era, but mark +1 Obligation.

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

Dive into the World-Worm’s Dream (High, 12 XP) *Scene; Self; No.*

Materials: Lie upon bare earth within a drawn circle of stones.

Effect: Ask up to **3** factual questions about the *distant past* or *buried truth* of this place, people, or item. Answers arrive as lucid dream signs.

Cost (choose one): Suffer *Fatigue 2 & Exposure +1* or gain +3 dice to one reality-warping cast this scene and generate 2 SB immediately.

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons). Obligation: 7 segments.

The Ninth Rim (The Unseen Ninth) (Void, Negation, Absence)

Lore. Beyond the mapped heavens, past the counted stars, lies the Ninth Rim—an infinite expanse of nothingness that presses against the edges of the known. It is not merely empty space, but the *antithesis* of existence itself. Where the Sacred Geometry carves clean lines and the Witness records truths, the Ninth Rim erases. It is the silence that swallows words, the gap where memory fades, the slow decay of certainty into doubt. It is the hunger of the void between thoughts, the cold that seeps into warmth until warmth is forgotten. Its followers learn to find power in subtraction, in the spaces between things, in the quiet unraveling of the ordered world. They are erasers, underminers, and those who seek the peace of oblivion or the strength found in true emptiness.

Patron’s Gift (Imbuement). Once/scene as an action (cost: 1 Boon; requires **Thiasos**), touch an item to imbue it until scene end with +1 **Melee** and +1 **Stealth** or **Arcana** (when leveraging absence/concealment) (Thematic). *Push It:* extend for one extra scene by marking +1 **Obligation**. Same-patron Gifts don’t stack; take the best. Dice bonuses respect the +3 cap.

Low Rites

Rite of the Missing Note (Low) *Duration: Instant; Range: Near; Stacking: No.*

Materials: A sound deliberately not made, or a word left unspoken.

Effect: Render a minor sound or visual detail imperceptible for the scene. Gain +1 die to Stealth or an action relying on that specific absence.

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

Push It: The absence becomes contagious, affecting a related sound/detail, but mark 1 SB (Spades) as the void’s touch is noticed elsewhere.

Rite of the Unmapped Path (Low) *Duration: Scene; Range: Self; Stacking: No.*

Materials: Walk a route without marking it, leaving no trace.

Effect: Gain +2 dice to Stealth or Evade when moving through a familiar area. Allies following your path gain +1 die if they do not speak or mark their passage.

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

Push It: Your passage becomes a temporary “gap” in space; briefly step “outside” a pursuer’s perception, but arriving elsewhere requires a risky test (DV 4) or you risk being lost (GM discretion).

Standard Rites

Rite of the Hollowed Shell [VOID] (Standard) *Duration: Instant; Range: Touch; Stacking: No.*

Materials: An object or concept tied to its purpose (a key to a lock, a vow to an oath).

Effect: Temporarily strip an object or abstract concept of its function or meaning. A key turns in a lock but opens nothing. A vow becomes just words. Target suffers -2 dice on one action tied to that function. Duration: Scene.

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

Push It: The effect lingers or spreads subtly; the key breaks, the vow is forgotten by others, but mark 1 SB (Clubs) as the void's influence destabilizes the object/concept further.

Rite of the Calculated Absence (Standard) *Duration: Scene; Range: Zone; Stacking: No.*

Materials: Remove one significant item from a space (a chair, a book, a person).

Effect: The *absence* of the removed element becomes palpable, creating a subtle wrongness. Enemies in the zone suffer -1 die to rolls requiring perception, memory, or comfort. You gain +1 die to rolls exploiting this disquiet.

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

Push It: The absence "pulls" at reality; minor items related to the removed thing begin to vanish or malfunction, but mark 1 SB (Diamonds) as the local reality resists the negation.

High Rites

Rite of the Entropic Bloom [UNWARD] [DISPEL] (High) *Duration: Scene; Range: Zone; Stacking: No.*

Materials: A circle drawn with a substance that sublimates or decays instantly (like frost or ash).

Effect: Create a zone where entropy accelerates. [WARDS] flicker and fade (+1 DV to sustain). Ongoing magical effects (like light or minor glamours) require a test (DV 3) or collapse. Mundane items age or become fragile. Duration: Scene.

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 **Obligation** (some tables prefer +2—set at campaign start).

Push It: The effect is permanent in a small area, but mark 2 SB (Spades/Clubs) as reality tries to correct the anomaly.

Rite of the Perfect Stillness (High) *Duration: Extended; Range: Self/Zone; Stacking: No.*

Materials: Complete isolation—no light, sound, or sensation for the duration of the ritual.

Effect: You (or the zone) enter a state of perfect negation. You become immune to all non-physical effects (social, magical, mental) for one scene, but cannot act or perceive. If cast on a zone, all activity ceases—no movement, no magic, no thought—like a paused moment.

Invoke: Extended ritual; mark +2 **Obligation**.

Push It: The stillness is "saved" and can be triggered later as an instant action once per arc, but the cost is immediate and severe: mark Harm 2 and +2 **Obligation**.

Patron Relationships. Rival: The Witness. Friction in places of forgotten truths or unreliable records. SB prompts: crucial facts slip, records crumble, confessions are silenced.

Rival: The Sacred Geometry. Conflict at points of decay or conceptual breakdown. SB prompts: lines warp, patterns degrade, structures fail.

Opposed by: The Sealed Gate. Tension at failing thresholds or thinning barriers. SB prompts:

seals weaken, wards flicker, things slip through. The Sealed Gate's [WARD] and [BANISH] may be less effective or suffer backlash when the Ninth Rim's influence is strong.

Oath of Flame & Light (Dawn & Vows)

Lore. Light names, binds, and burns. The Oath favors sworn keepers—those who stand in the open and keep their word even when it costs.

Speak in the light. Keep it, or the light will keep *you*.

Patron's Gift (Imbuement) — Paladin Flavor. With **Thiasos (Familiar)**, you may invoke the Gift (1 action, 1/scene) to sanctify a weapon or badge: it grants **+1 Melee** and **+1 Thematic (Command)** while your fiction honors a declared vow or protection. Push: extend one extra scene (+1 Obligation). (See §??.)

Kindle Vow (Low, 4 XP) *Action; Self/Ally; Yes.* **Materials:** Ampoule of consecrated spark. **Effect:** Name a near-term pledge this scene (*hold the line, get them out*). Bearer gains **+1 die** to actions that keep it.

Push It: First betrayal or hesitation *forces 1 SB (Hearts)* on the bearer.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Lay on Hands [CLEANSE][HEAL] (Low, 5 XP) *Instant; Touch; No.* **Materials:** Palm over wound; vow whispered.

Effect: Remove one minor affliction or downgrade *Harm* by one step *or* clear *Fatigue 1*. DV by fiction for stubborn curses/poisons.

Push It: Also grant **+1 die** to the target's next Resist this scene; you mark *Exposure +1*.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Sunlit Parley (Standard, 7 XP) *Scene; Near; No.* **Materials:** Vow-ring engraved with sunrise and true name.

Effect: Establish open terms: honest persuasion gains **+1 die**; deceit attempts suffer **−1 die** in this scene's parley.

Push It: Once, demand a public answer; evasion *forces 1 SB (Hearts)* on the evader.

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

Purge the Shadow [REVEAL][DISPEL] (Standard, 9 XP) *Instant; Near; No.* **Materials:** Consecrated spark cracked to light.

Effect: Expose illusions/disguises and suppress one minor ongoing glamour/curse in Near (DV by fiction).

Push It: Also sear a lingering tell on the source; you can sense it once again this arc; mark **1 SB (Diamonds)**.

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

Radiant Smite [FOLLOW-UP] (Standard, 8 XP) *Action; Self; No.* **Materials:** Consecrated spark smeared on weapon or badge.

Effect: Consecrate your next strike this scene. On your next successful *melee* hit this scene:

- Upgrade the hit's **Effect** by one step (to Great if applicable), and

- Add **+1 Harm (Burn)** or force **1 SB (Spades)** on the target's side if the blow is narrative rather than wounding.

Special. Versus Undead, Oath-breakers, or Outsiders: the blow also *sears the untrue*. Undead/Oath-breakers suffer **−1 die** on their next action; Outsiders gain **+1 segment** on Leash/Exit Tally (Hit only). If the attack *misses*, the smite charge lingers for one beat; after that it gutters, creating **1 SB (Diamonds)** as attention swells.

Push It: The strike flares—on hit, emit a Close burst: hostile creatures in Close suffer **−1 die** for one beat or are driven back (worse Position by one step). Mark **+1 Obligation**.

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

Covenant Blaze [OATH][FORTIFY] (**High, 12 XP**) *Scene; Zone; No. Materials:* A brazier lit with three names spoken.

Effect: Those who swear within gain a halo: **+1 die** to acts that keep the oath; attackers against a haloed subject suffer **−1 die** if the act would violate the sworn terms. Oath-breakers immediately force **2 SB (Hearts/Spades)** and the halo scorches them (1 Harm, Burn).

Push It: The blaze also sanctifies the threshold (one beat of temporary [WARD] vs. oath-breakers entering).

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

Obligation: 7 segments.

Raéyn, Mistress of the Sea (Tides, Change, Sea-Travel)

Lore. Raéyn is the restless sea and the promise of a changing tide. She favors those who read currents, bargain with weather, and carry news between shores.

Mark the tide, name your course, and trust the wave-road.

Tidemark's Favor (**Low, 4 XP**) *Scene; Self; No.*

Materials: A knotted length of salt-twine brushed with seawater.

Effect: Treat slick, swaying, or water-slicked footing as stable for you this scene. Gain **+1 die** on balance, boarding, or shipboard movement.

Push It: Extend to one ally in Close for one beat, but generate **1 SB** (Spades: shifting deck/hazards).

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Whisper of Currents (**Low, 5 XP**) *Instant; Near; No.*

Materials: A shell held to the ear while facing the wind.

Effect: Learn the *safest near-term route* across water or coastline (reefs, eddies, patrol patterns) or gain **+1 die** to navigation checks along coasts or rivers for this scene.

Push It: Also learn where the *fastest* route diverges, but mark **Exposure +1** (you leave a telltale wake).

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Changing Tide (**Standard, 7 XP**) *Scene; Zone (water-adjacent); No.*

Materials: A handful of pebbles cast in a crescent.

Effect: Bias water level and currents in the zone. Those moving *with* the tide gain **+1 die** to traverse/board/evade; those moving *against* it suffer **1 die**. Small craft test to hold position.

Push It: Create a brief surge or drawdown (one beat): open a ford *or* swamp a skiff on a Miss; mark **+1 Obligation**.

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

Blessing of the Wave-Road (Standard, 9 XP) *Scene; Route (sea-to-sea); No.*

Materials: Two sea-glass markers dropped overboard at start and end points.

Effect: Consecrate a *wave-road* between two visible marks. Allies traveling along it gain **+2 dice** to traverse, evade, or carry at sea; designated pursuers suffer **1 die** to intercept on that leg. One active wave-road at a time.

Push It: For one beat, extend the route's favor to an adjacent leg (shoal, cove, channel); mark **+1 Obligation**.

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

Storm-Queen's Hand (High, 12 XP) *Scene; Zone (sea/shore/sky above); No.*

Materials: A vial of rainwater gathered at *three crossings*.

Effect: Shape a bound storm-band over the zone. Choose **two** modes at cast; you may switch one mode once per scene:

- **Propulsion:** Favorable wind/sea; your vessel gains +1 band of movement per beat (or **+1 Effect** to maneuvers).
- **Concealment:** Veil of rain and spray; ranged targeting is impaired; **1 die** to hostile sighting/tracking.
- **Smite:** [AREA] wave or lightning lash once per beat as an action; treat as a strong hazard (GM sets Cap by fiction).

Push It: Add a third mode for one beat, then the storm “slips” and the GM immediately spends **1 SB** on collateral; mark **+1 Obligation**.

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons). Obligation: 7 segments.

Rivalry: Khemesh. Raéyn's currents *counter* Khemesh's abyssal *pressure*. In scenes dominated by *open water and weather*, Raéyn rites that shift tides/currents gain favorable fiction against *Depth/Pressure* effects; in *deep or confined* waters, Khemesh's rites exert advantage. Adjudicate as Position/Effect shifts or modest DV nudges; SB remains the primary prompt.

The Sacred Geometry (Order & Pattern)

Lore. Beneath mess lies measure. The Geometry carves clean lines through chaos, demanding symmetry from a crooked world.

Chalk, string, and a prayer to ratios. When the circle closes, luck remembers its place.

Find the Pattern (Low, 5 XP) *Action; Self; Yes (investigation).* **Materials:** Compass and straightedge.

Effect: **+1 die** to decode patterns/codes/systems; re-roll one 1 on math/logic rolls.

Push It: Upgrade effect one step on a single roll; you become obsessively pattern-seeking (scene): **−1 die** to social rolls.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Ordered Step (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Self; No. Materials:* Walk a perfect square. **Effect:** Ignore difficult terrain penalties for walking; +1 die to actions requiring perfect calibration/balance.

Push It: Cross a fragile surface silently once, but must follow a geometrically perfect path for the scene.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Thread the Loom of Chance (Standard, 7 XP) *Action; Self; No. Materials:* Weighted dice or a balanced scale.

Effect: Re-roll up to **two dice** in your current pool.

Push It: Treat one zone tag as favorable for this action; accept an equal/opposite consequence later this scene (**1 SB**, Keeper suits).

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

Rite of the Golden Ratio (Standard, 7 XP) *Scene; Touch; No. Materials:* A string cut to the golden ratio.

Effect: Optimize one object \leq door-size. Choose: door resists breach (+1 effect to resist), weapon strikes truer (+1 die next attack), tool grants +1 effect on next use.

Push It: Affect a second connected object at half strength.

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

Rewrite the Fundamental Equation (High, 12 XP) *Scene; Zone; No. Materials:* Complex diagram at zone center.

Effect: Declare one physics/magic rule different in-zone (no instant kills; Keeper may veto scene-enders). Once/scene, downgrade a *Miss* to *Success & Cost*.

Push It: Affect an adjacent zone for one beat; create paradox: **2 SB**.

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

Obligation: 7 segments.

The Sealed Gate (Boundaries & Closure)

Lore. You write borders into the world and prosecute trespass. Doors remember their true keepers; lines mean what you say they mean.

Patron's Gift (Imbuement). Once/scene as an action (cost: 1 Boon; requires **Thiasos**), touch an item to imbue it until scene end with **+1 Melee** and **+1 Tinker** (Thematic). *Push It:* extend for one extra scene by marking **+1 Obligation**. Same-patron Gifts don't stack; take the best. Dice bonuses respect the +3 cap.

Low Rites

Seal the Threshold (Low) *Duration: Scene; Range: Touch; Stacking: No.*

Materials: Brief sign across a door/line (chalk, wax, chain, sigil).

Effect: Mark a threshold. Crossing parties suffer worsened Position *or* a brief stumble on first entry (Keeper's choice by fiction).

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

Push It: Treat the edge as difficult terrain or a snag (+1 Obligation).

Key's Rebuke (Low) *Duration: Instant; Range: Near; Stacking: No.*

Materials: A snapped ward-key gesture or clack of chain.

Effect: Flick a spectral hasp at a reaching hand/tool: stagger or disarm a target for one beat (fiction sets DV if contested).

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

Push It: Also drop the object just beyond their reach (+1 Obligation).

Standard Rites

Circle of Denial [WARD] (Standard) *Duration: Scene; Range: Near; Stacking: No.*

Materials: Mark a ring/arc with sanctioned medium.

Effect: Outsiders crossing test $DV = Cap$. On Hit: cross and add $+DV$ segments to their Leash/Exit Tally; on Partial: cross and add $+1$; on Miss: fail to cross this beat.

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

Push It: Fortify the circle (harder to bypass, clearer tells) (+1 Obligation).

Writ of Passage (Standard) *Duration: Scene; Range: Near; Stacking: No.*

Materials: Spoken naming of the route; scribed pass-mark.

Effect: Designate a path as permitted. Allies on that route gain improved flow (Position/Effect bump or ignore one level of difficult terrain).

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

Push It: Extend to one extra ally *or* carry across one obstacle (+1 Obligation).

High Rite

Banishment Knot [BANISH] (High) *Duration: Instant; Range: Near; Stacking: No.*

Materials: Knot of cord/chain sealed with a gate-sigil.

Effect: Target a visible Outsider. Test $DV = Cap$. On Hit: add $+DV$ segments to Leash/Exit Tally; on Partial: add $+1$; if this fills, it acts to nature once, then departs.

Invoke: 1 action; mark **+1 Obligation** (some tables prefer $+2$ —set at campaign start).

Push It: Strip one tether/anchor if present (+1 Obligation).

Invoker Access (Symbol Path). With a **Sealed Gate Symbol** (4 XP), perform any Rite above as a *ritual* (Significant Time); completion always marks **+1 Obligation**. *Crack the Seal* to cast instantly: set the Symbol to *Compromised* and mark **+2 Obligation** (**+3** if High-Power). The Keeper may spend 1 on-theme SB immediately. Restore a *Compromised* Symbol in Downtime via a fitting test (DV 3) or 1 XP.

Example Symbols (Sealed Gate). Lead sounder-weight engraved with abyssal curls; salt-etched iron chain link; sealed lockplate token.

The Traveler (Ways & Roads)

Lore. Crossroads remember every footfall. The Traveler minds the stories that move between places.

Put one foot in a promise, and the road will meet you halfway.

Road-Sense (Low, 4 XP) *Action; Self; Yes (navigation).* **Materials:** A road-nail or waystone pebble.

Effect: Unerringly pick the fastest *safe* route in Near/Far; +1 **die** to avoid ambushes and delays this leg/scene.

Push It: Also spot one hidden bypass; taking it creates 1 **SB (Clubs)** elsewhere on the map.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Traveler's Boon (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Self/Ally; No.* **Materials:** Tie thread around a wrist.

Effect: Ignore one level of difficult terrain or bureaucracy for this scene; +1 **effect** to overland progress/escape checks.

Push It: Extend to one additional ally; mark 1 **SB (Diamonds)** as the road exacts a toll (favors, papers, attention).

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Waymark [PASSAGE] (Standard, 7 XP) *Action; Near; No.* **Materials:** Chalk mark at eye level.

Effect: Declare a lane as permitted/easy: allies on that lane gain better flow (Position/Effect bump or ignore one obstacle).

Push It: The lane persists between scenes until disturbed; first enemy who exploits it *forces 1 SB (Spades)* on your party.

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

Bridge the Mile [TRANSPORT] (Standard, 9 XP) *Instant; Near; No.* **Materials:** Two pinches of road-dust clapped together.

Effect: Relocate a willing target within Far along a visible or named route; arrivals are steady but noticed.

Push It: Carry one extra ally or a small bundle; arrivals are off-balance (worse Position for one beat).

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

Crown of Crossings (High, 12 XP) *Scene; Zone; No.* **Materials:** A brass compass missing its needle.

Effect: You call the Road: allies gain +1 **die** to move/evade; pursuit suffers −1 die. Once, declare “the long way is short” to finish a travel clock segment for free.

Push It: Also seal a hostile route (like a temporary [WARD] against passage) for one beat; generates 2 **SB (Clubs/Diamonds)** in border complications.

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

Obligation: 7 segments.

Varnek Karn, the Bone King (Necromantic Archives)

Lore. Bones remember. Varnek keeps their ledgers: last sights, last debts, last names. He is the Archivist of the Dead, the keeper of unfinished business and unresolved oaths. Those who serve him learn to speak with the silence of the grave and to find purpose in the purposeless wandering of lost souls.

Ask gently. The skull will answer in fragments; the ledger is never truly closed. What is owed to the dead must be paid by the living.

Whisper to Restless Spirits (Low, 4 XP) *Action; Near; No.*

Materials: A pinch of grave-dust stirred into breath.

Effect: +1 die to investigate a recent death (within a day) *or* ask a single yes/no about the cause of death.

Push It: Learn one fleeting sensory shard (sound, scent, image), but mark *Exposure +1*.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Unfinished Ledger (Low, 5 XP) *Instant; Touch; No.*

Materials: A binding thread tied to remains or a personal relic.

Effect: Learn one *unfinished business* binding the spirit (name a task, debt, or oath). Acting on it grants +1 die once this scene to relevant rolls.

Push It: Also learn one *adversary* tied to that business; generate 1 SB (Hearts or Diamonds).

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Speaking Bones (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Touch; No.*

Materials: Oil the jaw, set the teeth with a sigil.

Effect: A corpse answers **2** questions about circumstances of death from its own perspective (fragmented, literal). Max 1 corpse/scene.

Push It: Ask a **third** question; the spirit's memories fracture—mark **1 SB (Diamonds)** as necromantic resonance disturbs the area.

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

The Remembering Host (Standard, 9 XP) *Scene; Near; No.*

Materials: A small reliquary and consecrated twine.

Effect: Animate a *seeker swarm* (count it as a **Standard Asset** with 4-segment integrity) to scout, fetch, or tail. Not combat-capable; acts in beats per GM.

Push It: Grant one *special action* (block a doorway, retrieve a key) once, then the swarm unravels—the released spirits demand acknowledgment, mark **1 SB (Spades)** as spiritual debt.

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

Court of Echoes (High, 12 XP) *Scene; Zone; No.*

Materials: Circle of bone-totems and a tolling chime.

Effect: Convene an *advisory court* of the dead (treat as a **Major Asset** clock [6]) that can: answer up to 3 complex questions, sway the fearful, or impose silence upon casual lies in the zone.

Push It: Command a single decisive act (e.g., frighten a mob, barge a door) then tick the court twice; the dead grow restless—mark **2 SB (Hearts)** as spectral tensions rise.

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons). Obligation: 7 segments.

The Witness (Truth Revelation)

Lore. The Witness remembers what others bury. Every shadow cast and oath broken is a line in her unending ledger. She is the keeper of inconvenient truths, the patron of those who seek to expose lies or recover forgotten knowledge. Her followers learn that knowledge comes with a price—the weight of remembering what others would forget.

Quote. “*I will show you what you would rather forget. But first, you must forget what you think you know.*” — The Witness

Rite of the Lingering Glimpse (Low, 4 XP) *Instant; Near; Yes (Investigation/Notice only).*

Materials: A trace of the thing to be remembered (hair, dust, a spoken name).

Effect: Gain +1 die to your roll to investigate or notice something directly related to the trace within the current scene.

Push It: Gain +2 dice instead, but mark 1 segment on a **Memory Strain Clock** [4]. If the clock fills, you gain Fatigue 1 and suffer -1 die on Investigation/Notice rolls until the end of the next scene due to mental exhaustion from forced recall.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Note: The Witness grants fleeting, focused insight drawn from the faintest echoes.

Rite of Piercing Scrutiny (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Zone; No.* **Materials:** A circle drawn with chalk or string while focusing on the truth to be sought.

Effect: Within the zone, gain +1 die to rolls to detect deception (Insight vs. Deceit, spotting social tells) or to recall hidden knowledge (Lore/Investigate for memory). Social interactions within the zone begin one Position step worse for those attempting to deceive.

Push It: One target within the zone must make a Wits test (DV 3) or involuntarily reveal one pertinent lie or hidden fact they are currently concealing (Keeper determines relevance). Regardless of the test result, mark Exposure +1 for the target(s) in the zone.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Note: The Witness's gaze makes falsehoods brittle and memories more accessible.

Rite of the Echoing Truth [OMEN] (Standard, 8 XP) *Instant; Near; No.* **Materials:** A reflective surface (mirror, still water, polished metal) used to focus on the target.

Effect: Target must make a Resolve test (DV 3) or suffer -1 die to rolls involving memory, deception, or resisting interrogation for the scene. If they fail, you may ask one specific, factual question about something they know, and they must answer truthfully or suffer 1 SB (Hearts) as the memory is forcibly drawn forth.

Push It: If the target fails their Resolve test, you may ask a second question, but the mental intrusion causes them Harm 1 (Stress/Mental).

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

Note: The Witness drags reluctant truths into the light.

Rite of the Immutable Record [OATH] (Standard, 7 XP) *Scene; Near; No.* **Materials:** A document signed by all parties within the zone, or a spoken pact witnessed by the caster.

Effect: Bind the agreement. Any party who knowingly breaches it suffers 1 SB (Hearts) immediately and gains a persistent **Oathbreaker's Mark** Condition (-1 die on social rolls involving honor, trust, or oaths until amends are made or a significant act redeems them).

Push It: The bond becomes magically enforced for one specific, crucial clause: violation automatically inflicts Harm 1 (Stress) on the breaker in addition to the SB and Mark.

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

Note: The Witness ensures promises carry weight.

Rite of the Unveiled Heart [OMEN] (High, 12 XP) *Scene; Near; No.* **Materials:** A private setting where the target feels safe or is speaking freely.

Effect: The target suffers -2 dice to all attempts to conceal true emotions, intentions, or lies for the scene. Any successful social roll (Sway, Command, Deceit) made by the target generates 1 SB (Hearts) as the effort to maintain falsehoods under the Witness's gaze creates internal discord.

Push It: You may designate one specific, complex question about the target’s motivations, fears, or hidden loyalties. If you successfully use Sway or Insight against them this scene, you automatically learn the answer to that question. The intense scrutiny marks 1 SB (Spades) for you as the Witness’s attention lingers.

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

Obligation: 6 segments.

Note: The Witness strips away the veils of the heart.

Rite of the Final Reckoning [OMEN] (High, 13 XP) *Scene; Zone; No. Materials:* A formally called gathering (court, council, family meeting) within the consecrated zone.

Effect: All present must speak their greatest debt, wrongdoing, or hidden truth related to the gathering’s purpose. Those who lie or withhold suffer Harm 2 (Stress/Reputation). Truth-tellers gain +2 dice to social actions for the remainder of the scene within the zone.

Push It: The truth becomes inescapable - even indirect lies or evasions related to the core topic suffer the Harm 2 penalty. The absolute nature of the revelation creates 2 SB (Diamonds) as the disruption to fates and secrets resonates.

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

Obligation: 7 segments.

Note: The Witness calls the ultimate accounting.

No True Acolyte Interpreting a patron’s will is often a dangerous prospect in and of itself. Many a Runkeeper has found themselves on the opposite end of machinations from others from the same patron.

The Runekeepers

If Patrons are the storm, the **Runekeepers** are those who etched the first shelter. They do not serve; they remember. Their charge is to keep record of Rites, bindings, and the old words that tether meaning to symbol. A Runekeeper may never call a Rite themselves, but without their quiet stewardship, Invokers would stumble blind into bargains best forgotten.

“Every Rune is a promise. Every line a covenant. Do not mistake the Runekeeper’s silence for weakness; their memory is the foundation of our craft.”

The Invokers

Invokers are those who dare. Neither archivists nor worshippers, they are travelers on the knife-edge between story and ruin. An Invoker learns the Rites of a Patron, weaves them into their own Art, and bends fate for a moment. Yet invocation is not command: it is negotiation. The Patron always leaves its mark. The stronger the Rite, the deeper the scar.

Invokers are often wanderers, exiles, or seekers. To common folk they are feared—witches, oathbreakers, meddlers with things not meant for mortal hands. But when the village falls to plague, when the sea closes its roads, when the dead refuse their rest, it is an Invoker who is called upon.

Closing Words

The dance between Patron, Runekeeper, and Invoker is a triangle of peril and necessity. Without Patrons, there is no power. Without Runekeepers, no record. Without Invokers, no action. Together, they shape the crooked, perilous art we call Invocation.

8.13 Patrons & Rites

Patron Rivalries

Use this matrix to quickly shade rulings. “Edge Loci” are environments or situations where one side tends to start a step better in Position or gains an Effect nudge (Keeper’s call). “Friction” are handy prompts for SB spends.

Patron	Rival	Edge Loci	Friction & Prompts (SB)
Aliyah (Curses, Corruption)	The Witness (Truth, Revelation)	Chapels with hidden altars, sites of false miracles, confessionals with dark secrets.	SB: a blessing reveals a hidden curse; truth becomes a torment; a "holy" relic acts with malice; the witness sees the corruption and names it "gift".
Aliyah (Curses, Corruption)	Oath of Light & Flame (Dawn, Vows)	Consecrated grounds with buried sins, false shrines, dawn rites with hidden costs.	SB: a sacred vow brings pain, not protection; light reveals a curse’s mark; a "divine" blessing demands a darker sacrifice; the flame burns "clean" but leaves ash of despair.
The Ninth Rim (Void, Negation)	The Witness (Truth, Revelation)	Places where records are incomplete, memories fade, or truths are actively forgotten.	SB: a crucial fact slips from memory; record crumbles to dust; a confession is swallowed by silence; the witness’s gaze finds only emptiness where truth should be.
The Ninth Rim (Void, Negation)	The Sacred Geometry (Order, Pattern)	Zones of decay, entropy, or conceptual breakdown where perfect forms fail.	SB: a precisely drawn circle becomes slightly askew; a calculated structure has a hairline fracture no one noticed; a pattern degrades into static; the compass needle spins.
The Sealed Gate (Boundaries, Closure)	The Ninth Rim (Void, Negation)	Thresholds that are failing, barriers that are thinning, or sealed spaces that are leaking.	SB: a sealed door rattles without being touched; a ward flickers inexplicably; the boundary feels "thin" or "wrong"; something slips through a seal that should hold.
Raéyn (Sea, Tides, Travel)	Khemesh (Abyssal Maw)	Open water, coasts, shipping lanes, storms you can <i>read</i> .	SB: changing tides; shifting winds; a course route opens <i>but</i> a vow at sea is invoked; waymarks appear then vanish; safe harbor demands a price.
Khemesh (Abyssal Maw)	Raéyn (Sea, Tides, Travel)	Trenches, lightless holds, flooded caverns, oppressive silence.	SB: pressure crush; voices from the bottom; hull-groan clocks; lanterns dim; maps are trustworthy; a crewman hears the treacherous call.
Sealed Gate (Boundaries, Closure)	The Traveler (Ways, Roads)	Customs houses, oaths, locks, court thresholds.	SB: writ checked; stamp demanded; wrong ledger; crossing exacts a toll; shortcut lapses into lawful detour; [WARD] keeps hum.
The Traveler (Ways, Roads)	Sealed Gate (Boundaries, Closure)	Desire paths, smuggler tracks, wayshrines, liminal crossings.	SB: desire line opens; escort looks away; marginalia proves true; the lock refuses the lawful key <i>now</i> .

Patron	Rival	Edge Loci	Friction & Prompts (SB)
The Witness (Truth, Revelation)	Mab (Glamour, Courts)	Depositions, confessionals, cold light, mirrored chambers.	SB: mask slips; testimony contradicts courtier; illusion seams show; a polite scandal erupts.
Mab (Glamour, Courts)	The Witness (Truth, Revelation)	Masques, salons, petty courts, festive oaths.	SB: a favor called; duel by slight; truce offends protocol; a boon if the mask stays on.
Ikasha (Shadow, Latent Potential)	The Witness (Truth, Revelation)	Deep shade, empty rooms, places holding unrealized action.	SB: hush worsens Position under scrutiny; a shadow remembers your step; a deferred answer comes due.
Mykkiel (Judgment, Writ)	Varnek Karn (Necromantic Archives)	Courts martial, audit halls, sanctified ledgers.	SB: the writ binds the restless; precedent rejected; a ledger page missing; sentence invites a haunting.
Varnek Karn (Necromantic Archives)	Oath of Light & Flame (Dawn, Vows)	Ossuaries, plague pits, memorial crypts, last testaments.	SB: bone answers but asks payment; unfinished business drags PCs into an old consecration threatens the archive.
Oath of Light & Flame (Dawn, Vows)	Khemesh (Abyssal Maw)	Sunrise rites, consecrated decks, sworn escorts.	SB: dawn burns back the hush; a vow compels aid; the abyss recoils <i>but</i> leaves a lesson.
Ikasha (Shadow, Latent Potential)	Oath of Light & Flame (Dawn, Vows)	Twilight thresholds, watchfires, taboos kept at night.	SB: light corners a secret; a vow drags hidden into view; shadow offers escape at cost.
Varnek Karn (Necromantic Archives)	Carrion King (Carrion, Renewal)	Catacombs, bone-fields, funeral workshops.	SB: ledger of skulls disputes the feast; remains refile themselves; scavengers dictate protocol.
Maelstraeus (Infernal Bargainer)	Oath of Light & Flame (Dawn, Vows)	Witness trees, oath-stones, sanctified doors.	SB: contract vs. vow; a pledge sears a loophole shut; a promised price comes due <i>now</i> .
Livaea (Temptation, Desire)	Inaea (Mercy, Hearth)	Bedchambers, feasting halls, clandestine trysts.	SB: desire strains hospitality; temptation corrodes bonds; mercy offers comfort, passion demands more.
The Traveler (Ways, Roads)	Clockwork Monad (Iteration, Process)	Caravans, milestones, scheduled relays.	SB: timetable buckles; a detour saves time; a routine yields speed <i>but</i> blinds to ambush.
Nidhoggr (Dreaming Antiquity)	The Witness (Truth, Revelation)	Ancient dreams, truth-seeing rites among ruins.	SB: revelation wakes something old; truth contradicts myth—or proves it; an ancestor demands to be heard.

Quick Rulings.

- **Position Nudge:** In a home locus, start one step better; in a rival locus, one step worse.
- **Effect Shade:** Where a Patron dominates, consider an Effect bump; where opposed, consider Limited Effect unless paid for.
- **Symbol Interference (Invokers):** Carrying both sides' Symbols increases narrative noise: first ritual each scene may mark +1 Obligation (Keeper's call).

Patron	+1 Thematic Skill	Gift / Lore Bestowal
Aliyah (Curses, Corruption)	Command	Grants the shadow in salvation, a gift that devours from within.
The Ninth Rim (Void, Negation)	Stealth	Grants mastery over absence, the power found in silence and erasure.
Ikasha (Shadow, Penumbra)	Stealth	Grants the hush between footsteps and the raven's omen at every threshold.
Mykkiel (Judgment, Writ)	Command	Grants the authority of seal and sentence, words that bind like iron.
The Witness (Truth, Revelation)	Notice	Grants the unblinking gaze that unmask deceit and remembers every oath.
Sealed Gate (Boundaries, Closure)	Tinker	Grants mastery of thresholds—doors that yield or bar at your command.
Raéyn (Storm, Tides)	Skirmish	Grants the sailor's fortune: winds that shift, storms that answer to will.
Khemesh (Abyss, Pressure)	Skirmish	Grants the crushing silence of the deep, where strength is drowned in weight.
Mab (Glamour, Courts)	Persuade	Grants the mask of favor, a voice that bends courtiers and kindles desire.
Sacred Geometry (Perfect Forms)	Tinker	Grants the compass of perfection, every shape reduced to its true measure.
Clockwork (Mechanism, Process)	Tinker	Grants the certainty of repetition: a cycle that never falters, a gear that never slips.
Varnek Karn (Ossuary, Dominion of the Dead)	Command	Grants the silence of the archive, where the dead obey and records speak.
Nidhoggr (Deep Earth, Rot)	Skirmish	Grants the weight of ages, the strength of stone and the hunger of roots.
The Traveler (Ways, Roads)	Notice	Grants the open way, a compass that never rests, and roads where none are marked.
Oath of Flame & Light (Dawn, Vows)	Command	Grants the fire of dawn, a vow that shields the faithful and sears the faithless.
Carrion King (Carrion, Renewal)	Survival	Grants the feast of decay, where what is dead becomes seed for what lives.
Gallows Bell (Doom, Last Rites)	Command	Grants the toll of ending, a voice that closes stories and calls debts due.
Old Man of the Black Forest (Primal Humanity, Instinct)	Survival	Grants the wild memory: fang, fire, and the path of instinct through the dark wood.
Isoka (Serpents, Shedding)	Skirmish	Grants the serpent's coil, strength in sudden strike and wisdom in renewal.
Inaea (Mercy, Hearth)	Persuade	Grants the hearth's warmth, shelter to the weary and mercy for the lost.
Maelstraeus (Infernal Bargainer)	Persuade	Grants the contract's weight, every deal sealed in fire and shadow.
Livaea (Temptation, Desire)	Persuade	Grants the lure of longing, beauty sharpened into power over hearts.

Table 8.2: Patron's Gift: fixed Thematic Skill and lore of their bestowed blessing. Thematic bonuses apply only when the fiction matches the Patron's domain.

- **SB Color:** When spending SB in these matchups, prefer suits that fit: Hearts (social), Spades (harm/escalation), Clubs (material cost), Diamonds (numinous disturbance).

8.14 Obligation Overflow (Rites)

When **Obligation** is ticked past its maximum (from Rites, vows, bargains), mark **Fatigue** based on scene severity:

- **Low:** +1 Fatigue
- **Standard:** +2 Fatigue
- **High:** +3 Fatigue

If this *fills* the Fatigue Track, apply the **Fatigue** → **Harm** conversion (see §9.7).

8.15 Clearing Obligation Segments (Extended)

Obligation measures the growing narrative weight of a Patron’s attention. It is not debt in a transactional sense, but rather the sense that a Patron has invested, noticed, and expects relevance. This section expands the SRD guidance with philosophy, examples, and optional rules.

8.15.1 Core Principle

Obligation is cleared through **meaningful engagement** with the Patron. The system assumes Patrons are narrative entities: they do not care about coin, but about resonance. Clearing requires a demonstration that the character is still walking their path.

8.15.2 Off-Screen Clearing (Primary Method)

- **Act of Service.** Clear 1 segment by performing a resonant service aligned to the Patron’s themes or goals.
- **Requirement.** The player must provide an *Intricate Description* of the act—detail, symbolism, and impact.
- **Scope.** The act need not be arduous, but it must be thematically precise (e.g., weaving a shadow tapestry for Ikasha; negotiating a shrewd pact for Maelstraeus).
- **Reward.** Successful clearing often comes with narrative color: whispers of approval, subtle omens, or a temporary advantage in Patron-facing scenes.

8.15.3 On-Screen Clearing (Optional Mechanic)

Talent: Focused Devotion (3–5 XP). Once per scene, spend 1 Boon to clear 1 segment of Obligation from a Patron. This cannot remove segments accrued during the same scene. It represents a desperate or ritualized gesture to stave off attention without fully satisfying it.

8.15.4 Narrative Implications

1. **Player Agency.** The player defines how service manifests, reinforcing creativity within the Patron’s thematic frame.
2. **GM Collaboration.** The GM adjudicates sufficiency: Is the service aligned? Is it intricate enough?

3. **Ongoing Relationship.** Clearing segments emphasizes that the Patron bond is active, not static. The relationship evolves with acts of recognition.
4. **Scene Economy.** The cap on on-screen clearing ensures the mechanic cannot erase costs just accrued. It forces the long view.

8.15.5 Worked Examples

Example 1: Ikasha, Angel of Serpents. A character clears a segment by shedding their old cloak, burning it, and narrating how it symbolizes leaving behind a former self. The GM rules it sufficient, noting the subtle scent of scales in the air.

Example 2: Maelstraeus, Infernal Bargainer. The player narrates writing an elaborate contract that offers a small service to a minor devil. The GM agrees: the service is thematically aligned and clears 1 segment. Later, this contract may resurface as a hook.

Example 3: Isoka, Angel of Change. The group weaves discarded materials into a shrine mosaic. Its intricate description convinces the GM, who clears 1 segment and hints that a future boon will resonate with this act.

8.15.6 Optional Modules

Overflow Consequences. When Obligation fills and overflows, the Patron demands immediate service. This may be delivered as a Complication Point (or Story Beat) trigger: the Patron intrudes, offering aid with a binding cost.

Segment Scaling. Particularly devoted characters may require greater services: clear 2 segments with a dramatic act (pilgrimage, sacrifice, or political maneuver), subject to GM approval.

Shared Obligation. In multi-character bonds, the GM may allow a group act of service to clear multiple segments, but only if each player contributes to the Intricate Description.

8.15.7 GM Guidance

- **Be Generous with Hooks.** Reward creativity with flavorful omens, not just a cleared box.
- **Maintain Tension.** Do not allow trivial or repetitive services to count. Require new symbolic angles each time.
- **Keep On-Screen Costly.** Remind players that Focused Devotion costs a Boon and cannot erase fresh debt.
- **Tie to Patron Themes.** If a service drifts off-theme, let it fail or only partially clear.

Summary

Obligation is cleared through **thematic service, intricate description, and narrative engagement**. Off-screen acts remain the primary path; on-screen clearing is a costly safety valve. Treat every act as a chance to show how characters evolve under their Patron's gaze.

8.16 Acts of Service — Examples

Patrons delight in resonance, not labor. Use these examples as prompts—*petty*, incomprehensible acts, small sacrifices, and *involved* operations both count when on-theme. Each entry lists a scale suggestion and what it might clear.

8.17 Acts of Service — Examples

Patrons delight in resonance, not labor. Use these examples as prompts—*petty* butterflies and *involved* operations both count when on-theme. Each entry lists a scale suggestion and what it might clear.

8.18 Acts of Service — Examples

Patrons delight in resonance, not labor. Use these examples as prompts—*petty* butterflies and *involved* operations both count when on-theme. Each entry lists a scale suggestion and what it might clear.

Here is the updated LaTeX table code with the ****Ninth Rim**** added:

GM Notes

- **Novelty Over Volume.** Repeating the same petty act does not keep clearing segments; vary the symbol or site.
- **Precision Beats Difficulty.** A sharp thematic hit at “petty” scale can clear 1 segment as surely as a muddled “modest.”
- **Hook the World.** Many of these acts conveniently create future clocks, NPC ties, or bargains—use them.

GM Notes

- **Novelty Over Volume.** Repeating the same petty act does not keep clearing segments; vary the symbol or site.
- **Precision Beats Difficulty.** A sharp thematic hit at “petty” scale can clear 1 segment as surely as a muddled “modest.”
- **Hook the World.** Many of these acts conveniently create future clocks, NPC ties, or bargains—use them.
- **Patron’s Largess** A Patron’s will is mysterious, but their displeasure is rarely subtle. For narrative reasons, the GM may rule that a Patron is especially offended—perhaps by a neglected omen, a rival gaining favor, or simple caprice—and exact an additional toll beyond the usual cost.

Table 8.4: Acts of Service (Petty to Dramatic)

Patron	Scale	Example Act (Intricate Description prompt)	Why Pleases	It	Clear
Aliyah, the Chained Angel	Petty	Wear a ribbon of black iron wire beneath your sleeve while offering alms to someone who wronged you. Describe the blessing that bites.	A gift that harms as it helps; curse couched as mercy.		1 seg
Aliyah, the Chained Angel	Significant	Accept a visible flaw to protect another from a worse fate; narrate the transfer of stain.	Willing corruption in service of a vow.	cor-	2 segs
The Ninth Rim (The Unseen Ninth)	Petty	Deliberately omit yourself from a group photo/portrait; ensure your absence is noted.	Honors the power of negation.	the of	1 seg
The Ninth Rim (The Unseen Ninth)	Modest	Remove a significant object from a place (a book from a library, a stone from a wall) and document its absence.	The void made mani-fest.	void mani-	1 seg
Carrion-King	Petty	Compost a ruined feast and deliver the first harvest to the poor.	Turns ending into beginning.	ending begin-	1 seg
Carrion-King	Modest	Convert an abandoned shop into a guild for apprentices;	Renewal from decay.	from	1 seg

8.19 Summons and Outsiders

8.19.1 Definition

An **Outsider** is any being not native to the world of Fate's Edge. This includes summoned spirits, demons, celestials, and entities that arrive from beyond the veil of the Eight Elements. They are powerful but dangerous to bind.

8.19.2 Summoning (Pact-Whisperer Core)

Summoning is a way to call and bind Outsiders for temporary aid.

1. **Call** (1 Action): A spirit manifests at Near range. Choose a Spirit Template.
2. **Bind**: Choose one: spend 1 Boon or mark 1 Fatigue.
3. **Leash**: Set Leash = Cap + 2 segments (Cap is the Outsider's tier, typically 1/3/5 for Lesser/Greater/Elder).
4. **Tick Leash** whenever any occur:
 - Spirit takes harm.
 - You command against its nature.
 - You split focus (take another significant action while it acts).
 - A rival contests it.
 - It moves from Close to Far quickly.
 - It crosses a [WARD].
5. **Departure**: When the Leash fills, the spirit acts to its nature once, then departs.

Limits: Only one active summoned spirit at a time (unless a Talent says otherwise). All summons depart at Downtime unless explicitly sustained.

8.19.3 Boon Finesse

Once per round, you may spend 1 Boon to clear 1 tick from your current spirit's Leash. You cannot do this after the Leash has filled.

8.19.4 Outsider Caps

- PC-summoned Outsiders: Cap is limited by Talents (Lesser = 1, Greater = 3).
- NPC Outsiders: GM assigns based on story needs (Lesser = 1, Greater = 3, Elder = 5).

8.19.5 Tags for Summons & Outsiders

Certain Tags specifically interact with Outsiders.

WARD:

Creates a magical edge/zone that Outsiders must test to cross.

- DV = Outsider's Cap.
- Hit: Outsider crosses and its Leash gains +DV segments.
- Partial: Outsider crosses and its Leash gains +1 segment.
- Miss: Outsider fails to cross this beat.

BANISH:

Drives a visible Outsider toward departure.

- DV = Outsider's Cap.
- Hit: Add +DV segments to its Leash (or Exit Tally).
- Partial: Add +1 segment.
- Miss: No effect.

UNWARD:

Suppresses or dismisses a [WARD].

- DV by fiction (materials, sanctity, prep, locus, opposition).
- Hit: Ward dismissed/suppressed.
- Partial: Ward suppressed briefly (1 beat).
- Miss: No effect.

8.19.6 Unified Leash / Exit Tally System

- Summoned Outsiders track their service via a **Leash** (Cap + 2 segments).
- Non-summoned Outsiders affected by [WARD] or [BANISH] gain a temporary **Exit Tally** = Cap + 2. When the tally fills, they act to nature once, then depart.

8.19.7 GM Guidance

- Summons are not permanent allies; they are volatile forces.
- Always color Outsider behavior by their Elemental resonance and domain.
- When the Leash fills, deliver a memorable "act to nature" moment before they vanish.
- Use SB to escalate Outsider complications: a jealous Patron, a backlash of strange omens, or collateral spiritual harm.

8.20 Elemental Backlash

When magic disturbs the weave, the world pushes back. Backlash manifests as fiction-first complications with light mechanical teeth. Each element (and its metaphysical counterpart) has a **Minor** and **Major** pattern.

Using Backlash at the Table

Trigger. A roll shows a 1 (gaining a (SB)) or the text explicitly says "accept 1 (SB) to escalate."

Choose One: Apply the table's Minor effect, or escalate to Major by adding +1 (SB) immediately.

Mechanical Nudge Types. *Position/Effect shift, Clock tick (1/2), Condition, or Immediate Cost.*

Realms and Counterparts

- **Earth** (*Realm: Stone*) ↔ **Fate** (*Anti-magic, inevitability*)
- **Fire** (*Realm: Ember*) ↔ **Life** (*Vital spark, growth*)

- **Air** (*Realm: Gale*) ↔ **Luck/Fortune** (*Ephemera, unlikely turns*)
- **Water** (*Realm: Tides*) ↔ **Death/Dreams/Thresholds (Obishaal)** (*Passage, veils, the Ways Between*)

8.21 Rituals (Extended)

Rituals are *slow magic*: explicit intent, staged action, and negotiated risk. They are how characters bend the world carefully, trading time, components, and narrative exposure for precise results. This section expands the SRD quick-start (§??) with procedures, dials, and worked examples.

8.21.1 Design Goals

- **Fiction-first.** Components and steps are story handles, not inventory chores.
- **Visible costs.** Every ritual declares *what it costs* (time, component loss, conditions) and *how it risks* (SB)/backlash.
- **Tempting choices.** Players can *push*—accept (SB) to escalate position/effect/scale.
- **Portable.** Works for Runekeepers, Invokers, Summoners, and Free Casters with minimal chassis-specific tweaks.

8.21.2 Ritual Procedure

Use this skeleton for any ritual, published or improvised.

- Step 1: State Intent.** What do you want? Clarify element/Realm if obvious (Fire for heat, Water for memory, Fate for anti-magic, Obishaal for thresholds).
- Step 2: Choose Scope.** Size, duration, range, and detail. Start modest; escalations come later.
- Step 3: Lay Components.** Name *two things*: (a) **Focus** (tool/site/patron sign), (b) **Fuel** (herb, blood, pact, memory). Decide which is consumed vs. retained.
- Step 4: Set Time.** Default: *Low 1 minute / Med 5–10 minutes / High 15–20 minutes*. More time improves position/effect; rushing worsens it.
- Step 5: Call Risks.** Point to the element’s **Backlash** (§??) and the default **(SB) trigger**: any 1 rolled creates a (SB); re-rolling 1s does not remove (SB) and may add another.
- Step 6: Roll and Resolve.** Apply position/effect and any clocks. Offer a *push*: take +1 (SB) to step up result now.
- Step 7: Mark Costs.** Consume components, apply Conditions, or tick wear/concurrency (per chassis). Close the scene hooks the ritual created.

8.21.3 Component Economy

Components are levers, not taxes. Use them to signal tone and stakes.

8.21.4 Teamwork and Aid

- **Hands & Voices.** Each assistant names one component they contribute; either reduces cast time *or* accepts up to 1 (SB) on the caster’s behalf once per ritual.
- **Focus Chain.** Passing the Focus around the circle grants advantage on the finishing action but risks DISTRACTED if interrupted.

- **Distributed Load.** Splitting a High ritual into two coordinated Mediums avoids a Major backlash but creates two Minor hooks instead.

8.21.5 Clocks and Outcomes

Tie every consequential ritual to **named clocks**. Examples: *Spreading Fire*, *Inevitable Outcome*, *Crossing Due*, *Alarmed Attention*. Advancing or reducing clocks is often better than flat bonuses.

Outcome Palette

- On a strong result:** full effect, +1 effect step, or Clock −1.
- On a mixed:** effect with a cost (component consumed; condition applied).
- On a weak:** effect limited; Clock +1/2; Minor Backlash.
- On a push:** player may take (SB) +1 to upgrade one step immediately.

8.21.6 Backlash Integration

Use the condensed table (§??). Calibrate by scene weight: exploratory scenes favor Minor; pivotal moments bait a Major via (SB) +1.

8.21.7 Chassis-Specific Notes

Runekeeper. Embed Rites as *accelerants*: a published Rite may count as a Focus that upgrades position or halves time.

Invoker. Symbols accumulate *wear*; a maintenance rite can clear 1 wear mid-scene on success *or* shift backlash from Major to Minor.

Summoner. *Gate* effects occupy concurrency slots. Disruption on broken terms: (SB) +1 and the entity acts on its last instruction.

Caster (Free). Tags become explicit ritual steps (*bind*, *veil*, *reveal*)—chain two compatible tags once/scene for a synergy bump without extra cost.

8.21.8 Ritual Templates

Use these fill-in cards to author new content quickly.

Template: Utility Rite (Low)

Name: _____ **Element:** _____

Cast Time: 1 minute **Scope:** pocket-scale

Components: Focus (kept): _____; Fuel (consumed): _____

Effect: _____

Cost: _____

Backlash: Minor (§??). **Push:** take (SB) +1 to upgrade one step.

Template: Scene Rite (Med)

Name: _____ **Element:** _____

Cast Time: 5–10 minutes **Scope:** room/street

Components: Focus (kept): _____; Fuel (consumed): _____; Site: _____

Effect: _____

Cost: _____

Backlash: Minor; offer Major via (SB) +1. **Clocks:** _____

Template: Set-Piece Rite (High)

Name: _____ **Element:** _____

Cast Time: 15–20 minutes **Scope:** block/fort

Components: Focus (kept): _____; Fuel (consumed): _____; Site: _____; Vow: _____

Effect: _____

Cost: _____

Backlash: Likely Major; bait with (SB) +1. **Clocks:** _____

8.21.9 Worked Examples

Example 1: Quiet Veil (Team Infiltration). *Intent:* silence the group for one scene. *Scope:* corridor sweep. *Components:* ash (fuel, consumed), bell (focus, kept). *Time:* 5 minutes. *Risks:* Air/Luck Minor on 1; offer Major to avoid dogs' scent. *Roll:* mixed—effect with cost. *Outcome:* MUTED condition until scene ends; Clock $-1/2$ on *Patrol Pass*. Player takes (SB) +1 to also foil scent (Major avoided by paying the (SB)).

Example 2: River's Memory (Investigation). *Intent:* view last night's ferry landing. *Scope:* a few minutes of blurred images. *Components:* bowl, token from dock. *Time:* 10 minutes. *Risk:* Water/Obishaal Minor. *Roll:* strong—clear image; token ruined per Cost. *Outcome:* Clock -1 on *Where did the courier go?*; whisper from the Ways foreshadows a revenant (hook).

Example 3: Fate-Splice (Boss Rescue). *Intent:* move the poison consequence from the prince to the knight. *Scope:* one Major consequence. *Components:* paired names on vellum; vow. *Time:* 15 minutes. *Risk:* Fate/Earth. *Roll:* weak—Minor Backlash; *Inevitable Outcome* +1/2. *Push:* (SB) +1 to capture the full consequence anyway. *Outcome:* knight bears the poison; the OMEN mark appears (future hook).

8.21.10 Safety and Consent

Rituals often touch body horror, spiritual intrusion, or coercive bargains. Use lines/veils, X-card, script change, or your table's preferred tools. Make **vows** opt-in; provide non-coercive alternatives

with different trade-offs.

8.21.11 Optional Modules

Entropy Counters. Track ritual entropy per scene; at 3+ entropy, the next Minor backlash upgrades to Major automatically. Resets on scene change.

Resonance Sites. Mark places that boost one element (+1 effect) and hinder its counterpart (−1 position). Crossing a resonance flips the pairing.

Material Tags. Let special materials act like tags (cold iron, voidglass) granting narrow immunities or redirecting backlash type.

8.21.12 GM Troubleshooting

- **Pacing drifts long.** Shorten cast time by consuming an extra Fuel component; keep one meaningful step.
- **Risk feels toothless.** Name a clock and advance it on mixed/weak even if the effect lands.
- **Runekeeper dominates.** Insert a *Rune Draw* tell for high-grade rites *or* grant Invokers a mid-scene maintenance clear on a solid success.
- **Summons flood scene.** Enforce concurrency and Disruption (§8.21.7).
- **Casters feel mushy.** Require two explicit tags per ritual step (bind/veil/reveal); grant once/scene synergy bump.

Summary

Rituals trade **time, components, and exposure** for **precision and scale**. Keep costs visible, risk tempting, and outcomes named via clocks. Offer players the choice to buy bigger results with (SB)—then pay off every hook

Table 8.5: Backlash by Element (Minor / Major)

ElementStone / *Fate*

Heat flares. Smoke blinds; sparks bite. • Effect,-1 or Condition,: Singed (disadvantage to precision)
Air

Table 8.6: Components as Narrative Levers

Type	Examples	Mechanical Nudge
Focus (retained)	Patron token, true-name sigil, saint's nail, ancestral blade.	+1 <i>position</i> on setup or advantage to related follow-up actions.
Fuel (consumed)	Herb bundle, salt vial, blood drop, silver bead, memory-laden note.	−1 <i>time step</i> (faster) or +1 <i>effect</i> step if expensive/rare.
Site (context)	Crossroads, standing stones, bathhouse, bell tower at midnight.	Shift backlash element or re-route it (e.g., into <i>Alarmed Attention</i> clock).
Vow (social)	Sworn phrase, bargain pledge, offered favor.	If broken, immediate (SB) +1 and an intrusion linked to the vow.

Chapter 9

Combat and Conflict

9.1 Core Philosophy

Combat in **Fate's Edge** uses the same consequence-forward mechanics as all other challenges. Every action can produce triumph and complication, and outcomes cascade through Story Beats (SB), clocks, and position changes. The focus is narrative positioning, tactical choice, and meaningful risk—not granular simulation.

9.2 Combat Structure

9.2.1 Rounds and Turns

- **Rounds:** A few seconds of simultaneous action.
- **Turns:** One significant action per participant.
- **Scenes:** A battle is usually one scene unless the fiction splits it.
- **Initiative:** Act in the order that makes sense fictionally; the GM adjudicates flow based on Position and established threats.

9.2.2 Action Declaration

1. **Approach:** Describe intent and method.
2. **Position:** GM sets *Controlled*, *Risky*, or *Desperate*.
3. **Pool:** Build dice (Attribute + Skill + situational modifiers).
4. **Roll & Resolve:** Compare to DV and the Outcome Matrix; any 1s generate SB.

9.3 Position States

Controlled

Advantage (cover, flank, surprise, elevation). Failure leaves options; consequences are minor.

Risky

Even footing; typical exchange of blows. Failure has teeth; moderate consequences.

Desperate

Bad footing, outnumbered, wounded. Failure is severe; success may unlock extra narrative rewards.

9.4 Range Bands and Movement

9.4.1 Range Band Definitions

Close

Arm's length; grappling; only melee is practical.

Near

Same room/zone; most actions occur here.

Far

Same site but distant; requires movement to engage.

Absent

Off-screen/another area; requires significant effort/time.

9.4.2 Movement Rules

- **1 Move:** Shift one band (Close↔Near or Near↔Far).
- **Dash (action):** Shift two bands (Close→Far or Far→Close).
- **Engage:** Entering Close from Near usually costs a Move.
- **Disengage:** Leaving Close may require a test if threatened.

9.5 Combat Actions

9.5.1 Standard Actions

Attack

Strike with the appropriate Skill (e.g., Melee or Ranged).

Defend

Active defense against incoming harm (parry, block, roll aside).

Maneuver

Change Position, create advantage, or set up an ally.

Use Object

Doors, levers, lanterns, terrain, or gear.

Cast Spell

Perform magical actions (see Chapter 8).

9.5.2 Special Actions

Aid

Provide assistance to another's action (costs as per Assist rules).

Ready

Prepare an action with a clear trigger.

Withdraw

Attempt to disengage safely.

Sprint

Spend your action to Dash (two-band shift).

9.6 Ranged Combat

9.6.1 Firing Profiles

Fast

(knives, slings, shortbows) — Move *and* Shoot. Reload is incidental. Risky at Close while Engaged.

Standard

(longbows, crossbows) — *Move or Shoot*. Reload takes part of the turn. May *Aim* for +1 die or +1 Effect.

Slow

(greatbows, arbalests, siege) — Requires Set/Brace. Reload takes a full turn. Cannot Move and Shoot in the same round.

9.6.2 Options

- **Aim:** Spend a turn to gain +1 die or +1 Effect on the next shot (lost if you Move or are disrupted).
- **Volley:** Spend extra ammunition for +1 die (max +2).
- **Suppress:** Target a zone; foes act at -1 die or Limited Effect until they shift cover.
- **Overwatch:** Hold action; take a Risky shot when a foe crosses your line.

9.6.3 Cover & Close

- **Light cover:** +1 DV or -1 die to attacker.
- **Heavy cover:** +2 DV or -2 dice.
- **Obscured (fog, night):** Worsen Position by one step.
- **Shooting while Engaged at Close:** Risky (Fast) or Desperate (Standard/Slow).

9.7 Health, Fatigue, & Harm

Tracks & Caps

- **Fatigue Track:** boxes equal to **Body**.
- **Harm Levels:** as defined elsewhere (**Harm 1**, **Harm 2**, **Harm 3**).

Fatigue → Harm Conversion

When your Fatigue Track *fills*:

1. Increase your **Harm** by one level (0→Harm 1, 1→2, 2→3).
2. **Clear all Fatigue.**

This can occur multiple times in a scene.

Taking Fatigue

Mark Fatigue for strain, exertion, travel, magic costs, or §?? overflow. If an instance of Fatigue would exceed remaining boxes, only fill to trigger the conversion; any excess is ignored after Harm increases and the track clears.

Recovering Fatigue

- **Short Rest** (quiet watch, food/water): remove **2 Fatigue**.
- **Full Night**: remove **all Fatigue**.

Fatigue recovery does not remove Harm (use your medical/ritual rules).

Mitigation (Optional Dials)

- **Soak/Ward**: Reduce Fatigue by 1–2 before marking if protected by armor/boons/rites.
- **Convert**: Some effects turn **Harm 1** into **2 Fatigue**; if this fills the track, convert as normal.

9.7.1 Harm and Consequences

Harm 1

–1 die to related actions.

Harm 2

–1 die to most actions until treated.

Harm 3

Incapacitated or dying.

Resist: Roll a relevant Attribute vs DV 3 (1s still generate SB) to reduce harm by one level.

9.8 Teamwork in Combat

9.8.1 Assistance

- **Cost**: 1 Boon (or your table’s stress-equivalent).
- **Effect**: +1 die to the assisted roll (max +3 from all assists unless a Talent says otherwise).

9.8.2 Setup Actions

- Create cover, draw fire, threaten flanks, or break formation.
- On success, grant +1 Position *or* step up Effect to an ally’s next action.

9.8.3 Protection

- Interpose to take harm intended for an ally.
- You must be in plausible Position; resolve as a defense or resist.

9.9 Tactical Clocks

Use clocks to track persistent pressures and battlefield states.

Mob Overwhelm [6]

Numbers begin to swamp the PCs.

Fatigue Spiral [4]

Exhaustion degrades performance.

Morale Collapse [6]

A side is on the brink of routing.

Environmental Collapse [8]

Fire, flood, or structure failure escalates.

Reinforcement Arrival [4]

Additional foes or allies appear.

9.10 Position Dynamics**9.10.1 GM-Initiated Shifts**

- **Spend 1 SB:** Worsen a character's Position by one step.
- **Narrative Events:** Reinforcements, collapsing cover, weather, smoke, crowding.

9.10.2 Player-Initiated Shifts

- **Spend 1 Boon:** Improve Position by one step for the current action.
- **Maneuvers/Assets:** Flank, gain elevation, trigger tools/terrain/followers.

9.11 Magic in Combat**9.11.1 Casting Actions*****Standard Casting***

Channel then *Weave*: 1 action each, in order.

Rushed Casting

Combine phases at *Risky* with harsher consequences.

Rites Invocation

1 action; may *Push* for +1 Obligation.

Invoker Rituals

Usually too slow; *Crack the Seal* for instant effect at cost.

9.11.2 Combat Spell Effects

- Shift Position for multiple combatants; advance clocks.
- Spawn hazards (smoke, grease, quake) or advantages (light, ward, barrier).
- Grant offensive/defensive edges; Backlash may add Fatigue/Harm or SB.

9.12 Social Conflict**9.12.1 Social Skills*****Sway***

Persuasion, negotiation, formal discourse.

Deception

Lies, misdirection, manipulation.

Performance

Oratory, entertainment, emotional appeal.

Insight

Reading people, spotting tells, motives.

Command

Leadership, intimidation, asserting authority.

9.12.2 Social Position & Consequences***Controlled***

You hold leverage, information, or status.

Risky

Even footing; standard negotiation.

Desperate

You lack leverage; they hold the cards.

SB may manifest as rumors/scandal, strained alliances, owed concessions, lost access, or broken relationships.

9.13 Mass Combat

Treat armies as high-Cap followers with domain tags and clocks.

9.13.1 Army as Followers

- **Cost:** Cap² XP to raise/maintain.
- **Types:** Infantry, cavalry, archers, engineers, fleets.
- **Capabilities:** Provide large assist dice to war-scale actions (still capped unless a rule overrides).
- **Risks:** Supply, morale, command/control, terrain.

9.13.2 War Clocks***Supply Lines [8]***

Logistics and provisioning.

Army Morale [6]

Cohesion and willingness to fight.

Strategic Position [8]

Passes, ports, bridges.

Alliance Stability [6]

Political support and coalition strain.

9.14 Environmental Combat**9.14.1 Environmental Hazards*****Fire [6]***

Spreading flames limit movement and cause harm.

Flood [8]

Rising water creates difficult terrain and drowning risk.

Collapse [6]

Falling debris, blocked routes.

Weather [4]

Storms, fog, glare reduce visibility/accuracy.

9.14.2 Terrain Effects

- **Choke Points:** Favor defenders, constrain numbers.
- **Elevation:** Bonuses to ranged/oversight, harder to assault.
- **Cover:** Improves Position and reduces consequence severity.
- **Difficult Terrain:** Consumes movement; may worsen Position.

9.15 Miniatures and Tactical Layer**9.15.1 Core Concepts**

- Works on square or hex grids; declare grid type at setup.
- Units have base sizes (Small, Medium, Large, Huge) and a facing.
- Actions per turn: Move and Act (attack, cast, interact, etc.), in either order.
- All checks use normal SRD roll + DV system.

9.15.2 Turn Structure

1. Start: resolve ongoing effects.
2. Move: up to Speed; obey Zones of Control (ZOC).
3. Act: attack, test, assist, cast, rally, shove, guard, etc.
4. End: resolve end effects and reactions.

9.15.3 Zones of Control (ZOC)

- **Squares:** 4 orthogonal adjacents (optional: 8).
- **Hexes:** 6 adjacents.
- Large/Huge project ZOC from edges; Reach may extend ZOC by +1 ring.
- **Rules:**
 - Entering enemy ZOC ends movement (you are engaged).
 - Cannot move through enemy ZOC.
 - Leaving requires Disengage (DV 4–6) or spend 1 Boon.
 - Multiple ZOCs increase DV by +1 per extra controller.

9.15.4 Facing and Flanking

- Choose a facing at end of movement.
- Flank: +1 die if attacked from opposite arcs; Rear: +1 die and +1 Effect.

9.15.5 Special Actions

- **Guard:** Ready a strike when enemy leaves ZOC.

- **Dash:** +2 movement this turn.
- **Brace:** Resist Shoves/Pulls and extend ZOC (opportunity only).
- **Tackle:** Knock target prone (DV 4–6).

9.15.6 Magic Integration

- Magic uses **[TAGS]** (e.g., [WARD], [BANISH], [CONJURE]) tied to ZOC, range, and LoS.
- Casting while engaged worsens Position unless [INSTANT] or aided by Talent.
- Rituals require clear space and visible Symbols; disrupted rituals fail or require a test.

9.15.7 Quick Reference

- Entering enemy ZOC ends movement; leaving requires Disengage.
- Flank = +1 die; Rear = +1 die and +1 Effect.
- Difficult terrain +1 cost; moving up elevation +1.
- Boons may break ZOC rules: auto-Disengage, change facing, or Heroic Rush.

9.16 Quick Reference

9.16.1 Position Effects

Position	Typical Edge	Consequence Severity
Controlled	Better options, easier withdraw	Minor
Risky	Standard options	Moderate
Desperate	High reward potential	Severe

9.16.2 Harm Quick Reference

Harm	Penalty	Typical SB Grant	Recovery
Harm 1	–1 die (related)	0–1 (GM option)	Rest/basic care
Harm 2	–1 die (most)	0–1 (GM option)	Treatment
Harm 3	Incapacitated	1–2 (GM option)	Major intervention

9.16.3 Common Action DVs

Action Type	Typical DV	Notes
Basic Attack	2	Standard melee/ranged in even footing
Maneuver	2–3	Create advantage, change Position
Active Defense	3	Parry, block, evade under pressure
Complex Action	4	Multi-target or strong field control
High-Risk	5+	Desperate gambit, extreme precision

9.17 Combat Examples

9.17.1 Melee Combat Example

Kael strikes a cultist (*Risky*, DV 2):

- 5d10 \rightarrow 9, 7, 5, 2, 1 \Rightarrow 3 successes, 1 SB.
- **Success with cost:** The cultist falls.
- GM spends 1 SB: *Blood spatters the ritual circle; the summoning clock advances 1.*

9.17.2 Ranged Combat Example

Lyra fires a longbow at a distant archer (*Desperate*, DV 3):

- 4d10 \rightarrow 10, 6, 3, 1 \Rightarrow 2 successes, 1 SB.
- **Partial:** The archer is hit but dives for cover.
- GM offers choice: shift Lyra to *Risky* (stay exposed) *or* take Harm 1 from return fire.

9.17.3 Magic Combat Example

Theron raises a defensive ward (*Controlled*, DV 3):

- **Channel:** 2 successes, 0 SB.
- **Weave:** 3 successes, 2 SB.
- **Success with cost:** Ward holds; GM spends 2 SB to start *Ward Strain* [4].

9.18 Tags & States

[HEALED]

Remove **all Fatigue**. (Does not remove Harm.)

[RALLIED]

Remove **2 Fatigue**; +1 die on your next action this scene.

[FORTIFIED]

Until scene end, the first incoming **Harm 1** becomes **2 Fatigue**.

[STABILIZED]

End bleed/burn/poison; does not remove Harm.

[MENDED]

Remove Harm per your recovery procedure.

[REVIVED]

Stand a fallen ally; follow Harm 3/KO rules.

9.18.1 Running Social Clocks (GM Guidance)

Framing the Ask. State a concrete outcome (“grant passage tonight,” “drop the bounty,” “fund our expedition”). If it’s strictly binary and low-stakes, use one roll. Otherwise, build a clock.

Set Two Clocks.

- **Persuasion** (4/6/8): your progress.
- **Opposition** (4/6): their resistance (ego, risk, duty, rival’s whisper).

Name them (“COUNCIL SWAYED,” “CAPTAIN’S DOUBT”) so the table sees the story move.

Position → DV. Use setting, leverage, and stakes:

- **Controlled (DV 2):** private audience, proof in hand, shared values.
- **Risky (DV 3):** time pressure, partial access, mixed reception.
- **Desperate (DV 4–5+):** public scrutiny, scandal risk, hostile crowd.

Distinct Approaches (examples).

- **Wits+Sway:** reframe incentives; offer face-saving out.
- **Wits+Lore:** cite precedent, produce documents or testimony.
- **Body+Presence:** command presence, ritual authority, oath.
- **Wits+Tinker:** demonstrate a device/proof-of-concept on the spot.
- **Bonds/Boons:** an ally vouches (assist) or gifts a Boon; NPC bonds can reduce DV by 1 if genuinely invoked.

Outcomes Palette.

- **Strong Hit:** Tick Persuasion +2; optionally bank a *Concession* (you can waive a future cost).
- **Mixed:** Tick +1 and choose a cost: start a small REBUTTAL 1/4, owe a minor favor, or the GM spends 1 SB to introduce a new stakeholder.
- **Miss:** No progress. GM may (a) reduce Persuasion 1, (b) advance OPPOSITION +1–2, or (c) worsen Position one step.

When Opposition Fills First. The target hardens or reframes the negotiation: narrow the ask, accept a condition, or escalate proof (pay a Boon, reveal evidence, bring a witness) to keep going.

Scaling Dials.

- **Crowd Scenes:** Add HECKLERS/APPLAUSE 1/4 that swing Position when they fill.
- **Stake Weight:** For life-or-death asks, require a *Concession* on success (named cost that must be paid during wrap-up).
- **Truth vs. Bluff:** Real proof improves Position; blatant lies risk a hidden CAUGHT OUT 1/4 that explodes later.
- **Patron Color:** Invoking a Patron symbol can shift Position if on-theme—or add +1 DV if it antagonizes the audience’s loyalties.

End States. On fill, summarize the agreement and record any *Concessions*, debts, or clocks that carry forward. If not filled by scene end, bank current ticks and reopen later if fiction supports it.

Chapter 10

Lore-Heavy Backgrounds, Skills, and Talents

10.1 Introduction to Lore-Heavy Content

Lore-heavy backgrounds, skills, and talents provide deep integration with **Fate's Edge's** setting while maintaining mechanical consistency with the SRD. These options offer specialized capabilities tied to specific regions, cultures, and magical traditions, allowing characters to become true masters of their chosen domains.

10.2 Regional and Cultural Skills

10.2.1 Utaran Law and Precedent

Attribute: Wits or Presence + Utaran Law

Scope: Imperial codes, edicts, and forum custom from Ecktoria to the marches

Specialization: Legal/bureaucratic procedures, imperial precedent

Effects:

- On success in legal/bureaucratic scenes, downgrade one legal complication to *Bureaucratic Delay* (buys time without removing scrutiny).
- Critical success creates a temporary *Stay of Writ* (debt flip: clerk demands future favor).
- In Vhasia/Viterra ports, convert quarantine/levy complications to softer inspections.

Complications: Audit flags, paperwork trails, or offended minor officials.

10.2.2 Stone-Tongue (Aeler Affinity)

Attribute: Spirit + Stone-Tongue

Scope: Reading the memory of stone, from unworked rock to vault masonry

Specialization: Geological history, architectural insight, underground navigation

Effects:

- Ask 1–3 questions about who carved/used/strained the stone (Intricate description required).
- Each extra question risks 1 SB of haunt (fatigue or intrusive memory).
- Once per Aeler travel leg, peek at the next leg's location or complication card.

Complications: Disorientation; GM may add subtle echoes/omens to later scenes.

10.2.3 Monsoon-Reckoning

Attribute: Wits + Monsoon-Reckoning

Scope: Seasonal winds and their social/economic effects in southern/eastern regions

Specialization: Weather prediction, maritime timing, economic forecasting

Effects:

- Once per sea/river leg, shift weather complication severity down one rank.
- Or convert a weather complication to a *Forecast* boon (DV -1 to the next two navigation rolls).
- Intricate description requires reading skies, currents, and ledgers.

Complications: Failed predictions (miss by 2+) bank +1 SB for false windows later.

10.2.4 Heraldry and Lineage

Attribute: Presence + Heraldry

Scope: Houses, devices, marriages, feuds in Vhasia/Vilikari regions

Specialization: Noble identification, alliance tracking, protocol navigation

Effects:

- Gain Controlled position vs. titled NPCs in social interactions.
- Ask one specific House-truth on success.
- Critical success creates one-use *Letters of Lineage* pass (acts as local warrant).

Complications: Name a feud; someone slighted takes notice.

10.2.5 Geasa and Oath-Weaving

Attribute: Spirit + Geasa

Scope: Binding promises, taboos, and loopholes in Theona/Elven traditions

Specialization: Oathcraft, ritual binding, contractual magic

Effects:

- Attach a 4-segment geas clock to a willing target with defined trigger/consequence.
- Intricate description requires exact terms, witnesses, and tokens.
- GM must honor properly established geasa.

Complications: Failed geasa grant GM +2 SB as oath backlash or minor personal bind.

10.3 Specialized Talents

10.3.1 Echo-Walker's Step (Prestige)

Requirements: Visit site of deep memory (ruined city, great betrayal, etc.)

Cost: 20 XP

Use: Once per arc, enter perfect echo of past event at location

Effects:

- Observe past events perfectly; handle ephemeral objects.
- GM banks +2 SB; figures in echo may notice you (complication tag).
- Next mystery complication in arc treated as Known (DV -1).

10.3.2 Margravine's Warrant (Acasia)

Requirements: Complete job for petty ruler

Cost: 15 XP

Use: Carry portable warrant of rank (7–K value)

Effects:

- Bypass minor tolls, commandeer limited aid, sway magistrates in Acasia.
- Each use ticks Patron Exposure clock (3 segments).
- At Burned, warrant revoked and character wanted.

10.3.3 Pilot's Mirror Glint (Kahfagia)

Requirements: Survive hazardous channel using lantern-law

Cost: 12 XP

Use: Once per session predict lantern-law shift

Effects:

- Bank +1 free success on pilotage/navigation actions tied to the predicted shift.
- Failure grants GM +2 SB; timing off with convoy for current leg.

10.3.4 Speak with the Pale Shepherd (Aelaerem)

Requirements: Hearthbound tie and resolve hearth threat

Cost: 18 XP

Use: Ritual communion with protective spirits

Effects:

- Ask one question about cycles, loss, or protection; GM answers plainly.
- Requires significant personal offering.
- Gain *Melancholy* tag until next dawn (narrative weight).

10.3.5 Forge-Seal of Khaz-Vurim (Aeler)

Requirements: Craft masterwork in major Aeler forge

Cost: 16 XP

Use: Guild recognition and crafting authority

Effects:

- Automatic Controlled position with dwarven craft-guilds.
- Once per session upgrade a relevant action to *Intricate* when demonstrating method.
- Deception/shoddy work revokes Seal permanently.

10.3.6 Inspire (Bonded)

Cost: 3 XP (uses scale with Tier: 2/3/4 uses between downtime)

Prerequisite: Declared Bonded PC ally

Effects (choose Bonded ally in Near range):

- Bonded ally: +1 Boon and +1 die on next roll this scene.
- You: +1 die on next roll this scene.
- Each other PC in Near: +1 die on next roll this scene.

Limitations:

- Followers cannot benefit from Inspire.
- Each PC benefits once per scene maximum.
- All +1 dice count toward the +3 cap.
- Boons follow normal hold/carry limits.

10.4 Background Packages

Background packages combine cultural roles with signature talents, perks, scene keys, and narrative hooks.

10.4.1 Sepulcher Adept (Aeler)

Required Asset: Aeler Crypt Access or Oath-Pennant Keeper

Signature Talent: Whisper of the Unquiet Dead (6 XP)

Perks (choose one per session):

- Mitigate the first SB from spiritual/ancestral complications.
- Silence group movement in sealed stone spaces for one beat.
- Detect necromancy or grave-robbing instantly.

Scene Keys: Royal Crypt, Under-Vault Archive, Disputed Burial Site

Hooks: Ancestral spirit misidentification, senior adept censure, damning truths

10.4.2 Lantern-Law Advocate (Kahfagia)

Required Asset: Kahfagian Harbor Charter or Pilot's Guild Membership

Signature Talent: Jurisdiction on the Tide (5 XP)

Perks (choose one per session):

- Predict beacon shifts for pilotage advantage.
- Minor port official backs claims on technicalities.
- Halve customs levies through flawless paperwork.

Scene Keys: Admiralty Court, Fog-bound Harbor, Pilot's Guildhall

Hooks: Rival bylaw citations, precedent weaponization, lantern malfunctions

10.4.3 Curse-Breaker of Silkstrand (Acasia)

Required Asset: Silkstrand Safehouse or Archivolt Research Rights

Signature Talent: Follow the Unspooled Thread (7 XP)

Perks (choose one per session):

- Anchor location against a Curse for one scene.
- Identify persons/objects anchoring Curse knots.
- +1 effect protecting others from Curse fallout.

Scene Keys: Cursed Crossroads, Affected Estate, Archivolt Library

Hooks: Curse twisting successes, cult marking, knot transfer consequences

10.4.4 Voice of the Moot (Linn/Theona)

Required Asset: Thing-holm Speaking Rights or Foster-Bond with Jarl

Signature Talent: Word-Bond (6 XP)

Perks (choose one per session):

- Calm heated crowds with proverbs (Position → Controlled).
- Call minor boons from oath-bound parties.
- Detect geas/compulsion during parley.

Scene Keys: Thing Gathering, Wedding Feast, Oath-Swearing

Hooks: Loophole exploitation, conflicting judgments, oath nullification

10.4.5 Legate of the Silent Gate (Mistlands)

Required Asset: Protectorate Commission or Bell-Warden Authority

Signature Talent: Breath-Test (8 XP)

Perks (choose one per session):

- Command Cap 3 Protectorate squad for point security.
- Sanctify area against wraiths for one scene.
- Decode bell-logs for exact watch timing.

Scene Keys: Weeping Gate, Bell-Line Levee, Breach Site

Hooks: Local authority challenges, protocol exceptions, sacrificial demands

10.5 Prestige Backgrounds (Campaign Tier)

Prestige backgrounds represent destiny-tier roles earned through significant campaign achievements. Their signature talents are once-per-campaign abilities with major narrative impact.

10.5.1 The Cursed Child of Silkstrand

Requirements: Personal involvement in major Acasian Curse event; deep Silkstrand ties

Signature Talent: Laughter That Ends Sieges (20 XP, once/campaign)

Effects:

- End large-scale conflict (siege, battle, storm) through reality unraveling.
- No roll required; automatic success within line of sight.
- Creates *Silkstrand Echo* Front (6 segments) with personal consequences.

Epic Hook: Curse binds to character; minor echoes affect every session.

10.5.2 Stone-Speaker of Khaz-Vurim

Requirements: Broker monumental peace between Aeler holds or major powers

Signature Talent: Move the Mountain's Will (20 XP, once/campaign)

Effects:

- Reroute geological or political reality (pass opening, flooding, edict ignoring).
- No roll required; automatic success for defined objective.
- Creates *Geas of Stone* Front (8 segments) with monumental task.

Epic Hook: Loss of dwarven hospitality until geas completed.

10.5.3 The Last Dauphin's Shadow

Requirements: Public championing of Sun Court claimant; entangled in cause

Signature Talent: The Sunburst Warrant (18 XP, once/campaign)

Effects:

- Issue commands obeyed as from lost Sun-King (mobilization, levies, sanctuary).
- Concrete objective happens unless physically impossible.
- Creates *Candle of the Sun* Front (6 segments) tracking movement cohesion.

Epic Hook: Each use consumes loyalist assets through exposure or loss.

10.5.4 Mist-Seer of the Weeping Gate

Requirements: Endure Direwood and return changed; face uncommon horror

Signature Talent: Bargain with the Deep Mist (20 XP, once/campaign)

Effects:

- Parley with Mist's sentience for one true question or year-long protection.
- No roll required; automatic success for defined terms.
- Creates *Lost Thing* Front (6 segments) for surrendered attribute.

Epic Hook: Permanent loss of memory/name/sense/skill with narrative weight.

10.5.5 Keeper of the Foedus Stone

Requirements: Primary mediator preventing major faction war

Signature Talent: The Law That Binds Spears (18 XP, once/campaign)

Effects:

- Impose absolute truce between named factions with supernatural enforcement.
- No roll required; automatic success at treaty site.
- Creates *Coiled Blood* Front (8 segments) tracking compressed hostility.

Epic Hook: Passive escalation leading to worse conflict when truce breaks.

10.6 Magic System Integration

Lore-heavy backgrounds integrate seamlessly with Fate's Edge's magic systems, creating unique synergies between knowledge and supernatural power.

10.6.1 Rites and Pact Magic Integration

Rite-Bound Scholar:

- Use relevant Skills (Heraldry, Utaran Law) to improve Rite effectiveness.
- Background Perks can mitigate Obligation costs or reduce Backlash risks.
- Signature Talents can be used in conjunction with Rite effects for combined impact.

Example: A Lantern-Law Advocate using *Jurisdiction on the Tide* with Gate Patron Rites could create legally binding magical boundaries.

Pact Scholar Specialization:

- Lore Skills reduce SB costs for specific Outsider types.
- Background knowledge provides better Leash control for summoned entities.
- Cultural understanding helps navigate Patron relationships and Obligation management.

10.6.2 Freeform Casting Enhancement

Elemental Specialization:

- Regional skills provide DV reductions for thematically appropriate spells.
- Background Perks can mitigate Backlash for specific Element types.
- Cultural affinities grant +1 die when casting aligned with background themes.

Ritual Casting Advantages:

- Lore-heavy characters can serve as better ritual anchors or coordinators.
- Specialized knowledge reduces helper-cap requirements for complex rituals.
- Background talents can provide additional free successes in ritual contexts.

10.7 Social and Leadership Applications

10.7.1 Bardic Traditions

Court Bard:

- Uses *Inspire* to rally allies in social and combat situations.
- Heraldry Skill enhances *Inspire* effects with noble audiences.
- Utaran Law background provides Controlled position in legal contexts.
- Voice of the Moot background amplifies group decision-making influence.

Performance Integration:

- Use Performance to enhance social position through entertainment.
- Cultural knowledge allows for region-specific appeals and references.
- *Inspire* can be reflavored as epic recitations or stirring speeches.

10.7.2 Warleader and Command

Tactical Integration:

- Use *Inspire* before major combat actions to ensure allied advantages.
- Combine with mass combat rules to amplify army effectiveness.
- Margravine's Warrant background provides authority for larger-scale commands.
- Stone-Speaker background makes *Inspire* effects more potent in defensive scenarios.

Strategic Applications:

- Heraldry identifies enemy formations and predicts tactics.
- Monsoon-Reckoning enables weather-aware campaign planning.
- Geasa can bind military agreements and truces.

10.8 Advanced Skill Uses

10.8.1 Synergistic Skill Combinations

Stone-Tongue + Heraldry:

- Read historical events from stone to verify lineage claims.
- Identify ancient property boundaries or territorial disputes.
- Authenticate artifacts through geological and historical analysis.

Utaran Law + Geasa:

- Create legally binding magical contracts.
- Enforce imperial edicts through oath-based magic.
- Navigate legal loopholes using ritual precision.

Monsoon-Reckoning + Pilot's Mirror Glint:

- Perfect timing for maritime operations combining weather and law.
- Predict economic impacts of seasonal changes on trade routes.
- Coordinate complex naval maneuvers with environmental awareness.

10.8.2 Campaign-Scale Applications

Political Influence:

- Heraldry can shift faction relationships through marriage alliances.
- Utaran Law can rewrite regional governance through precedent.
- Voice of the Moot can unite disparate groups under common cause.

Economic Manipulation:

- Monsoon-Reckoning allows commodity market speculation.
- Pilot's Mirror Glint can secure favorable trade route concessions.
- Margravine's Warrant enables regional economic control.

Historical Revelation:

- Stone-Tongue can uncover lost civilizations or hidden histories.
- Echo-Walker's Step can resolve ancient mysteries or conflicts.
- Curse-Breaker background can lift region-wide afflictions.

10.9 Balance and Implementation

10.9.1 XP Cost Guidelines

Minor Talents (2–4 XP)

Small situational bonuses, limited uses.

Major Talents (5–8 XP)

Significant scene-impacting abilities.

Prestige Talents (9–15 XP)

Campaign-defining capabilities.

Epic Talents (16–20 XP)

Once-per-campaign reality-shaping effects.

10.9.2 Usage Limitations

Session-Based Limits:

- Most talents limited to once per session.
- Some allow additional uses at increased cost or risk.
- Prestige talents often have arc or campaign-level restrictions.

Narrative Constraints:

- Many talents require specific fictional positioning.
- Regional talents only function in appropriate locations.
- Cultural talents may require maintaining certain relationships or status.

Resource Costs:

- Some talents consume Boons or other resources.
- Epic talents often have permanent narrative costs.
- Maintenance requirements for ongoing effects.

10.10 Character Creation Examples

10.10.1 Lore-Heavy Starting Characters

Example 1: Aeler Sepulcher Adept (34 XP)

- **Attributes:** Body 2 (6 XP), Wits 2 (6 XP), Spirit 2 (6 XP) \Rightarrow 18 XP
- **Skills:** Stone-Tongue 2 (4 XP), Lore 1 (2 XP) \Rightarrow 6 XP
- **Talent:** Whisper of the Unquiet Dead (6 XP)
- **Asset:** Aeler Crypt Access (4 XP)
- **Total: 34 XP** (*uses enhanced-starting options cap*)

Example 2: Kahfagia Lantern-Law Advocate (34 XP)

- **Attributes:** Wits 3 (9 XP), Presence 2 (6 XP), Spirit 2 (6 XP) \Rightarrow 21 XP
- **Skills:** Utaran Law 1 (2 XP), Sway 1 (2 XP) \Rightarrow 4 XP
- **Talent:** Jurisdiction on the Tide (5 XP)
- **Asset:** Pilot's Guild Membership (4 XP)
- **Total: 34 XP**

Example 3: Acasia Curse-Breaker (34 XP)

- **Attributes:** Wits 3 (9 XP), Presence 2 (6 XP), Spirit 2 (6 XP) \Rightarrow 21 XP
- **Skills:** Investigate 1 (2 XP) \Rightarrow 2 XP
- **Talent:** Follow the Unspooled Thread (7 XP)
- **Asset:** Silkstrand Safehouse (4 XP)
- **Total: 34 XP**

10.10.2 Advanced Character Development

Tier II Progression (40–90 XP):

- Add complementary skills and secondary talents.

- Develop asset networks and faction relationships.
- Begin working toward prestige background requirements.

Tier III Mastery (90–150 XP):

- Acquire prestige talents and epic capabilities.
- Establish regional influence and legacy projects.
- Mentor younger characters in specialized traditions.

10.11 Guidance for Game Masters

10.11.1 Integrating Lore-Heavy Characters

Campaign Planning:

- Include scenes that showcase specialized knowledge.
- Create challenges that allow lore-heavy abilities to shine.
- Balance between spotlight moments and general play.

Challenge Design:

- Provide opportunities for skill synergies.
- Include regional and cultural elements in adventures.
- Create consequences for specialized knowledge failures.

Reward Structures:

- Award XP for using lore-heavy abilities creatively.
- Provide narrative rewards for maintaining cultural ties.
- Offer unique opportunities tied to specialized knowledge.

10.11.2 Balancing Specialized Content

Party Composition:

- Ensure each character has moments to contribute.
- Mix generalist and specialist abilities in the group.
- Create challenges that require multiple approaches.

Regional Focus:

- Rotate regional emphasis throughout the campaign.
- Allow characters to introduce their specialties.
- Balance deep cultural content with accessible elements.

Progression Pacing:

- Space out prestige talent acquisition appropriately.
- Ensure epic talents have meaningful campaign impact.
- Maintain challenge levels as capabilities grow.

Chapter 11

Tracking Tools and Resources

11.1 Introduction to Game Management

Practical tools for implementing Fate's Edge gameplay mechanics without complex bookkeeping. These resources help GMs and players track important game elements while maintaining narrative flow and minimizing administrative overhead.

11.2 Character and Campaign Tracking

11.2.1 Character Advancement Tracker

Track character growth and XP expenditure over time:

Session	Player 1	Player 2	Player 3	Player 4	Total XP
Session 1	4	5	3	6	18
Session 2	6	7	5	6	24
Session 3	8	6	7	9	30
Session 4	5	8	6	7	26
Session 5	7	9	8	8	32
Total	30	35	29	36	130

Usage Notes:

- Record XP earned each session.
- Track cumulative totals for tier progression.
- Note major talent acquisitions and milestones.
- Update between sessions during downtime.

11.2.2 Story Beat and Boon Tracker

Track the flow of narrative currency during sessions:

Player	SB Generated	SB Spent	Boons Earned	Boons Spent
Player 1	3	2	2	1
Player 2	5	3	3	2
Player 3	2	4	1	3
Player 4	4	3	2	1
Session Total	14	12	8	7

Management Tips:

- Reset SB totals at session start (base budget: **4 + character tier**).
- Trim Boons to 2 at scene endings.
- Track Boon conversion to XP (2 Boons → 1 XP, max 2 XP/session).
- Monitor SB spends to maintain appropriate challenge level.

11.3 Combat and Conflict Tools

11.3.1 Tactical Clock Tracker

Track persistent combat conditions and environmental hazards:

Clock Name	Size	1	2	3	4	5	6	Effect
Mob Overwhelm	6	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	−1 die per 2 segments
Fatigue Spiral	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			+1 Fatigue per segment
Morale Collapse	6	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	−1 die to social actions
Fire Hazard	6	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Harm 1 per segment

Usage Guidelines:

- Tick segments when triggered by narrative events.
- Filled clocks create significant scene changes.
- Multiple clocks can interact for complex situations.
- Reset appropriate clocks between major scenes.

11.3.2 Harm and Condition Tracking

Track character injuries and ongoing conditions:

Character	Minor Harm	Moderate Harm	Severe Harm	Conditions
Player 1	<input type="checkbox"/>			Fatigue 1
Player 2	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		Compromised Gear
Player 3			<input type="checkbox"/>	
Player 4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fatigue 2

Recovery Tracking:

- Minor harm clears with rest and basic care.

- Moderate harm requires medical treatment (DV 2).
- Severe harm needs extended care (DV 3).
- Critical harm requires major intervention (DV 4).

11.4 Magic System Tools

11.4.1 Obligation and Backlash Tracker

Track magical debts and consequences for spellcasters:

Patron/Element	1	2	3	4	5	6	Status	Backlash
Gate Patron	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Active	2 SB
Ikasha Patron	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Inactive	
Fire Element	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>			Active	1 SB
Fate Element	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ready	

Management Rules:

- Mark Obligation segments when using Rites.
- Clear 1–2 segments per downtime through service.
- Track Backlash SB for freeform casting.
- Note active/inactive patron status.

11.4.2 Summoning Leash Tracker

Track summoned entities and their service limits:

Spirit	Cap	Leash	1	2	3	4	5
Lesser Spirit	1	3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Greater Spirit	3	5	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Guardian	2	4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	

Leash Triggers:

- Spirit takes harm.
- Command against nature.
- Split focus (another action while spirit acts).
- Rival contests control.
- Quick movement between range bands.
- Crossing wards.

11.5 Travel and Exploration Tools

11.5.1 Supply and Fatigue Tracker

Track party resources and exhaustion during journeys:

Resource	Full	Low	Dangerous	Empty	Effects
Supply Clock	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	No penalties
Food/Water	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Fatigue at Dangerous
Ammunition	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Limited attacks
Gear Condition	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Penalties apply

Character	Fatigue 1	Fatigue 2	Fatigue 3	Fatigue 4	Effects
Player 1	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Re-roll success
Player 2	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Re-roll one success
Player 3	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Normal
Player 4	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Re-roll each success

Recovery Rules:

- Night's rest removes 1 Fatigue (with adequate Supply).
- Cannot clear Fatigue if Supply is Dangerous or Empty.
- Extended downtime clears all Fatigue.
- Supply resets in civilization or through successful foraging.

11.5.2 Travel Leg Progress Tracker

Track journey segments and complications:

Leg	Destination	Clock	1	2	3	4	5	6	Status
Leg 1	Silkstrand	6	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	In Progress
Leg 2	Aeler Gate	8	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Upcoming
Leg 3	Mistlands	6	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Future

Complication Tracking:

- Note drawn cards for each leg (Spade, Heart, Club, Diamond).
- Track SB generated during travel.
- Record environmental hazards and encounters.
- Mark completed legs and carryover effects.

11.6 Quick Reference Charts

Essential information for smooth gameplay decisions.

11.6.1 Difficulty Value Reference

DV	Difficulty	Typical Use Cases
2	Routine	Clear intent, modest stakes, controlled environment
3	Pressured	Time pressure, mild resistance, partial information
4	Hard	Hostile conditions, active opposition, precise timing
5+	Extreme	Multiple constraints, high precision, dramatic failure risk

11.6.2 Position and Effect Reference

Position	Consequence Severity	Typical Situations
Controlled	Minor complications	Advantageous position, surprise, preparation
Risky	Moderate consequences	Even odds, standard conflict situations
Desperate	Severe consequences	Disadvantaged, outnumbered, wounded

Effect	Impact Level	Examples
Limited	Minor impact	Scratch damage, slow progress, partial success
Standard	Expected impact	Normal damage, expected progress, full success
Great	Major impact	Significant damage, rapid progress, extra benefits

11.6.3 Story Beat Spend Menu

Quick reference for SB spending during gameplay:

SB Cost	Effect Scale	Examples
1 SB	Minor pressure	Noise, trace, +1 Supply segment, minor time loss
2 SB	Moderate setback	Alarm raised, lose position/cover, lesser foe appears
3 SB	Serious trouble	Reinforcements, key gear breaks, major complication
4+ SB	Major turn	Trap springs, authority arrives, scene shifts dramatically

11.6.4 Boon Usage Reference

Boon Cost	Effect	Limitations
1 Boon	Re-roll one die	Once per action
1 Boon	Activate on-screen Asset	Plausibility test required
1 Boon	Improve Position by 1 step	One step maximum per action
2 Boons	Convert to 1 XP	Once per session; max 2 XP via conversion
Var.	Power Rites/Abilities	As specified by talent or ability

11.7 Session Preparation Tools

11.7.1 Session Checklist

Pre-session preparation guide for GMs:

- **Review Previous Session**
 - Note unresolved complications and carried-over SB.
 - Check character conditions and ongoing effects.
 - Update faction status and relationship changes.
- **Prepare Current Session**
 - Set SB budget based on character tiers (4 + tier).
 - Prepare key scenes and opposition.
 - Set initial Position/Effect defaults.

- Have consequence ideas ready for common actions.
- **Post-Session Tasks**
 - Award XP based on session accomplishments.
 - Update character advancement trackers.
 - Note ideas for future sessions based on player choices.
 - Reset SB and trim Boons for next session.

11.7.2 Adventure Structure Template

Basic structure for session planning:

Opening Scene

Establish current situation and immediate goals.

Development Scenes

2–3 challenges advancing main objective.

Climax

Major conflict or resolution point.

Resolution

Consequences and setup for next session.

Downtime

Character advancement and resource management.

11.8 Digital Tool Recommendations

11.8.1 Virtual Tabletop Integration

Recommended approaches for online play:

- **Character Sheets:** Use customizable sheets with built-in trackers.
- **Token Status:** Implement status markers for conditions/harm.
- **Clock Widgets:** Use progress bars or custom tokens for clocks.
- **Card Decks:** Digital card implementations for travel and consequences.
- **Shared Notes:** Collaborative documents for faction tracking.

11.8.2 Mobile and App Tools

Useful applications for game management:

- **Note-Taking Apps:** For session notes and player records.
- **Spreadsheet Apps:** For character advancement tracking.
- **Map Tools:** For visual representation of travel and locations.
- **Randomizers:** For card draws and random element generation.
- **Communication Apps:** For between-session planning and discussion.

11.9 Troubleshooting Common Issues

Solutions for typical gameplay challenges.

11.9.1 Resource Management Problems

Issue: Players hoard Boons excessively

- Create compelling spending opportunities each scene.
- Implement time-limited Boon benefits.
- Demonstrate value through GM spending examples.
- Remind players of Boon carryover limits (trim to 2 per scene).

Issue: SB spending feels punitive

- Focus on narrative complications rather than pure penalties.
- Use SB to create interesting challenges, not just setbacks.
- Balance positive and negative consequences.
- Involve players in consequence choices when appropriate.

11.9.2 Tracking Overload Solutions

Issue: Too many clocks and conditions

- Focus on 2–3 most relevant trackers per session.
- Use simple tally marks instead of complex sheets for minor elements.
- Delegate tracking responsibilities to players when possible.
- Digital tools can automate some tracking tasks.

Issue: Game flow interrupted by administration

- Prepare trackers in advance.
- Use quick reference sheets to minimize lookups.
- Practice efficient tracking methods.
- Accept minor inaccuracies to maintain narrative momentum.

11.9.3 Balance and Pacing Adjustments

Issue: Combat runs too long or too short

- Adjust opposition based on player capabilities.
- Use tactical clocks to create natural endpoints.
- Vary Position/Effect settings to control challenge level.
- Be prepared to narratively conclude resolved conflicts.

Issue: Magic system feels too powerful or weak

- Ensure proper Obligation and Backlash application.
- Balance freeform casting DVs appropriately.
- Remember Rites limitations and costs.
- Adjust based on character tier and specialization.

These tools and resources provide practical support for implementing Fate's Edge mechanics while maintaining the game's narrative focus and collaborative spirit. The key is finding the right balance between useful organization and excessive bookkeeping.

11.10 TPK Resolution (GM One-Pager)

A Total Party Kill doesn't have to end the campaign. Use this page to convert a wipe into forward motion without hand-waving or dream resets.

Framing

- **Name the fork.** Before the lethal roll, say which option will resolve a wipe.
- **Pick one lane.** Don't stack options; choose the one that best fits stakes and tone.
- **Change the world.** Advance clocks, shift factions, mark maps. Make it matter.

Menu (with GM Dials)

Capture Consequences.

Overwhelmed rather than dead.

- *Base:* Strip 1–2 assets; apply 1 permanent Condition to 1–2 PCs; advance 1–2 relevant clocks +2.
- *Dials:* Add a CAPTIVITY 4/6 clock (escape or indoctrination). Offer a single bargain to drop a clock by 1.

Patron's Claim.

A Patron intervenes with non-negotiable terms.

- *Base:* Each PC accepts 1 term (Obligation +2, lose a Gift, sworn service).
- *Dials:* Escalate to 2 terms for a full rewrite of the front; or concentrate the price on one PC (crown of thorns).

Last Stand → Legacy.

Convert the wipe scene into heroic play, then pass the torch.

- *Base:* For remainder of scene: +1 Effect, ignore new Harm; each action generates 1 SB. After scene: PCs die.
- *Legacy:* Next party inherits 1 Relationship/Tool/Lesson per fallen PC.
- *Dials:* Let players bank 1 *Deed* each (a concrete change to a location/faction) in addition to inheritance.

Dramatic Exit Inheritance.

Players choose meaningful deaths that alter the situation now.

- *Base:* Resolve a threat, save innocents, or seal a breach. Inheritance as above.
- *Dials:* Allow a single surviving witness or squire to carry the story fragment into the next chapter.

Reprieve at a Price.

Buy back from death; the bill comes due.

- *Base:* Each PC marks Obligation +2 (or one steep Claim shared by all). Advance all scene clocks +1; introduce a new front tied to the price.
- *Dials:* Instead of Obligation, impose 1 permanent Condition on each PC *or* a faction Debt clock at 2/6.

New Torchbearers.

End the chapter cleanly; begin with a connected cast.

- *Base*: New PCs tied to the fallen (apprentices, kin, witnesses). Bring 1 open clock and 1 enemy forward unchanged.
- *Dials*: Hand each new PC one *Echo*: a rumor, token, or map fragment linked to the last scene.

Sample Patron Claims (Pick 1 per PC)

Chapter 12

Appendices

Appendix A

Quick Reference Sheets

A.0.1 Core Mechanic Quick Reference

1. **Approach:** Player states intent and method (Attribute + Skill combination).
2. **Execution:** Roll dice pool of d10s. Each 6+ is a success; each 1 generates 1 Story Beat.
3. **Outcome:**
 - **Basic** — Roll as-is; all 1s generate SB.
 - **Detailed** — Re-roll one die showing 1.
 - **Intricate** — Re-roll all 1s; add a positive flourish on success.

A.0.2 Attribute and Skill Summary

Attributes:

Body

Physical strength, endurance, athletic ability.

Wits

Perception, cleverness, quick thinking.

Spirit

Willpower, intuition, spiritual resilience.

Presence

Charm, command, social influence.

Skill Levels:

0 Untrained

Rely on raw Attribute only.

1 Familiar

Basic competence, occasional use.

2 Skilled

Reliable training, regular practice.

3 Expert

Professional mastery, notable ability.

4 Master

Renowned specialist, exceptional talent.

5 Legendary

Near-mythic capability, extraordinary.

A.0.3 Experience Point Costs

Improvement	Cost	Downtime
Attribute increase	New rating \times 3 XP	New rating days
Skill increase	New level \times 2 XP	New level days
On-Screen Follower	Cap ² XP	1–3 days
Minor Asset	4 XP	1 day
Standard Asset	8 XP	1 week
Major Asset	12 XP	1 month

Upkeep

Frequency. Pay upkeep once per Downtime period.

- **Efficient (Higher XP, Less Time).** *Cost:* Upkeep XP = $\max\left(1, \frac{\text{XP Acquisition Cost}}{3}\right)$. *Time:* Minimal; delegation/check-in.
- **Intensive (Lower XP, More Time).** *Cost:* 1 XP. *Time:* One dedicated Downtime action of significant personal attention.

Failure. If upkeep is not paid this Downtime, the resource degrades:

- *Follower:* becomes **Wary** (or **Seized** if already Wary).
- *Asset:* becomes **Neglected** (or **Compromised** if already Neglected).

Notes. Each follower/asset checks upkeep separately; a single Intensive action may cover a cohesive group if fiction supports it. Tie upkeep scenes to Patron themes for flavor, not discounts.

A.0.4 Difficulty Value (DV) Reference

DV	Difficulty	Typical Situations
2	Routine	Clear intent, modest stakes, controlled environment
3	Pressured	Time pressure, mild resistance, partial information
4	Hard	Hostile conditions, active opposition, precise timing
5+	Extreme	Multiple constraints, high precision, dramatic failure risk

A.1 Deck Usage Reference

A.1.1 Deck Types and Meanings

Travel Decks (regional, 52-card)

Used for journey content and location-based adventures.

- Spade = Place/Location
- Heart = Actor/Faction
- Club = Pressure/Complication
- Diamond = Leverage/Reward

Deck of Consequences (scene drama)

Used for immediate complications and narrative twists.

- Hearts = Social/Emotional fallout
- Spades = Harm/Escalation
- Clubs = Material cost/Resource drain
- Diamonds = Magical/Spiritual disturbance

Important: Never mix suit meanings across decks. Travel deck suits differ from Consequences deck suits.

A.1.2 Deck Usage Procedure

After a roll generating Story Beats:

1. **Direct Spend:** Translate SB into immediate consequences or clock ticks.
2. **Deck Draw:** Draw up to min(SB, 3) cards and synthesize a single twist.
3. Interpret cards based on suit meanings and highest rank.

A.1.3 Rank Severity Guide**Ace–3**

Minor inconvenience or flavor complication.

4–6

Moderate setback with narrative impact.

7–9

Significant consequence altering the scene.

10–King

Major fallout introducing new problems or lasting effects.

A.2 Magic System Quick Reference**A.2.1 Magic Paths Comparison**

Path	Requirements	Key Feature	Risk Type
Caster (Freeform)	Caster's Gift (2 XP)	Flexible improvisation	Backlash
Runekeeper (Rites)	Thiasos + Codex (6 XP)	Structured Rites	Obligation
Invoker (Symbols)	Patron's Symbol (4 XP)	Ritual precision	Symbol compromise

DV Reference Table

The following table shows the resulting DV for common Obligation Costs across Spirit scores and Rite Tiers. DV is always calculated as max(Obligation – Spirit, Tier).

Obligation Cost	Spirit 0	Spirit 1	Spirit 2	Spirit 3–4	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
1	1	1	1	1	1	2	3
2	2	1	1	1	1	2	3
3	3	2	1	1	1	2	3

Obligation Cost	Spirit 0	Spirit 1	Spirit 2	Spirit 3–4	Tier 1	Tier 2	Tier 3
4	4	3	2	1	1	2	3
5	5	4	3	2	1	2	3
6	6	5	4	3	1	2	3
7	7	6	5	4	1	2	3

How to Read.

- Left block: DV before applying the Tier floor.
- Right block: the minimum DV once Tier is considered.
- Example: A Rite with Obligation 4, Spirit 2, Tier 2 \rightarrow Base DV = 2, but Tier floor raises it to 2.

A.2.2 Casting Loop Summary

1. **Channel:** Wits + Arcana roll to gather Potential.
2. **Weave:** Wits + Art roll to shape spell effect.
3. **Backlash:** SB spent through thematic consequences.

A.2.3 Eight Elements of Magic

Earth

Solidity, stability, foundation.

Fire

Energy, transformation, destruction.

Air

Movement, speed, freedom.

Water

Fluidity, healing, adaptability.

Fate

Destiny, inevitability, causality.

Life

Vitality, creation, growth.

Luck

Chance, unpredictability, probability.

Death/Dreams

Endings, thresholds, subconscious.

A.3 Combat and Conflict Reference

A.3.1 Position States

Controlled

Advantageous position, minor consequences.

Risky

Standard situation, moderate consequences.

Desperate

Disadvantaged, severe consequences.

A.3.2 Harm Levels and Effects

Harm Level	SB Generation	Penalty	Recovery
Minor	1 SB on next 2 rolls	−1 die to related actions	Rest or basic care
Moderate	1 SB on next roll	−1 die to most actions	Medical treatment
Severe	2 SB on next roll	−2 dice to most actions	Extended care
Critical	3 SB on next roll	Incapacitated	Major intervention

A.3.3 Range Bands**Close**

Arm's length, grappling distance.

Near

Same room or immediate area.

Far

Visible but not immediately reachable.

Absent

Off-screen or out of current scene.

A.3.4 Movement Actions

- **1 Move:** Shift one range band (Close↔Near or Near↔Far).
- **Dash Action:** Shift two bands in one action.
- **Disengage:** Test to leave Close range when threatened.
- **Sprint:** Rapid movement across the battlefield.

A.4 Resource Management Reference**A.4.1 Story Beat Economy**

SB Cost	Effect Scale	Typical Effects
1 SB	Minor pressure	Noise, trace, time loss, +1 Supply segment
2 SB	Moderate setback	Alarm, lose position/cover, lesser foe appears
3 SB	Serious trouble	Reinforcements, key gear breaks, major complication
4+ SB	Major turn	Trap springs, authority arrives, scene shifts dramatically

A.4.2 Boon Usage Guide

Boon Cost	Effect	Limitations
1 Boon	Re-roll one die	Once per action
1 Boon	Activate on-screen Asset	Plausibility test required
1 Boon	Improve Position by 1 step	One step maximum per action
2 Boons	Convert to 1 XP	Once per session; max 2 XP
Variable	Power Rites/Abilities	As specified

Boon Limits:

- Hold maximum of 5 Boons at any time.
- Trim to 2 Boons at scene endings.
- Maximum 2 Boons from failures per character per scene.
- Conversion: 2 Boons = 1 XP (max 2 XP per session).

A.4.3 Supply Clock States

Full Supply (0)

No penalties; well-equipped.

Low Supply (2)

Minor narrative complications.

Dangerously Low (3)

Each character gains 1 Fatigue.

Out of Supply (4)

Severe penalties; starvation risk.

A.5 Travel and Exploration Reference

A.5.1 Travel Clock Sizes

4 segments

Short, straightforward journeys.

6 segments

Standard travel legs.

8 segments

Extended or complex journeys.

10 segments

Epic or highly dangerous travel.

A.5.2 Card Draw Procedures

Quick Hook (2 cards):

- Draw one Spade (place) and one Heart (actor).
- Use higher rank to set clock size.

Full Seed (4 cards):

- Draw until one card of each suit appears.

- Spade = location, Heart = faction, Club = pressure, Diamond = leverage.
- Highest rank sets main clock size.

A.6 Character Advancement Guide

A.6.1 Reputation Tiers

Tier I – Rookie (0–40 XP)

Local reputation; prestige locked.

Tier II – Seasoned (41–90 XP)

Regional notice; prestige may unlock.

Tier III – Veteran (91–150 XP)

National influence; second follower suggested.

Tier IV – Paragon (151–220 XP)

Movers and shakers; rivals emerge.

Tier V – Mythic (221+ XP)

Legendary status; kingdoms respond.

A.6.2 Player Archetypes

Solo

70–90% self investment; minimal followers/assets.

Mixed

50–65% self; balanced with followers/assets.

Mastermind

25–40% self; focuses on networks and followers.

A.7 Gamemaster Guidance

A.7.1 Session Preparation Checklist

- Review previous session notes and unresolved threads.
- Set initial SB budget (4 + character tiers).
- Prepare key scenes and opposition.
- Have consequence ideas ready for common actions.
- Check ongoing clocks and faction status.
- Prepare travel routes if journey expected.

A.7.2 Adjudication Principles

- **Fiction First:** Mechanics serve the narrative, not replace it.
- **Fail Forward:** Even failures should advance the story.
- **Player Agency:** Offer choices rather than impose outcomes.
- **Transparent Costs:** Clearly communicate risks and stakes.
- **Collaborative Spirit:** Work with players to create compelling fiction.

A.7.3 Pacing Tools

- Use clocks to create urgency and track progress.
- Vary scene intensity between high and low stakes.
- Include downtime for character development.
- Balance action, investigation, and social scenes.
- Use travel sequences for world-building and random encounters.

A.8 Common Rules Questions

A.8.1 Core Mechanic Clarifications

Q: Can players re-roll 1s to remove Story Beats?

A: No. Re-rolling 1s does not remove SB already generated. If re-rolled dice show 1 again, they generate additional SB.

Q: When does a miss or partial success award Boons?

A: Only when all three conditions are met: procedure followed, stakes stated, and consequence lands immediately.

Q: Can players assist each other on every action?

A: Yes, but total assist dice are capped at +3 from all sources combined.

A.8.2 Magic System Questions

Q: Can a character use multiple magic paths?

A: Yes, but each path has its own tracking (Backlash, Obligation, Symbol states). Specializing is more efficient.

Q: How does Crack the Seal work for Invokers?

A: Convert a ritual to instant casting by setting the Symbol to *Compromised* and marking +2/+3 Obligation.

Q: What happens when a Patron's Obligation clock fills?

A: The GM resolves the debt in-fiction through service demands, omens, or narrative consequences.

A.8.3 Combat and Conflict Questions

Q: How does the Over-Stack rule work?

A: If the party enters a scene with ≥ 3 structural advantages, either start one challenge at +1 difficulty *or* bank +1 SB.

Q: Can players spend Boons to improve Position?

A: Yes. 1 Boon improves Position by 1 step for the current action.

Q: How does harm recovery work?

A: Minor clears with rest; moderate requires medical treatment (DV 2); severe needs extended care (DV 3); critical requires major intervention.

A.9 Regional Quick Reference

A.9.1 Major Regions and Themes

Acasia

Broken marches, curses, lawless territory.

Aeler

Underground vaults, dwarven culture, engineering.

Ecktoria

Imperial remnants, bureaucracy, coinhouses.

Kahfagia

Maritime trade, lantern-law, convoys.

Mistlands

Bells, wards, supernatural boundaries.

Silkstrand

Trade hub, intrigue, Acasia's only major city.

Vhasia

Fractured sun, political fragmentation.

Viterra

Last kingdom, river-based power.

Valewood

Forest empire, natural magic.

Ykrul

Steppe nomads, wolf standards.

Zakov

Salt and serpent, criminal syndicates.

A.9.2 Key Geographical Features

- **Amaranthine Sea:** Western sea, major trade routes.
- **Dolmis Sea:** Inner sea, island networks.
- **Astroegro Straits:** Crucial maritime chokepoint.
- **Belworth River:** Major river system, boundary between regions.
- **Aelerian Mountains:** Extensive underground networks.

A.10 Campaign Management Tools**A.10.1 Session Log Template**

Session Element	Notes
Session Date	
Players Present	
Major Objectives	
Key Scenes	
Story Beats Generated	
Boons Awarded/Spent	
Clocks	Ad-
vanced/Completed	
XP Awards	
Downtime Activities	
Next Session Hooks	

A.10.2 Campaign Clock Examples

Faction Rivalry (8 segments)

Tracks escalating conflict between major powers.

Ancient Curse (6 segments)

Progress of a regional supernatural affliction.

Imperial Collapse (10 segments)

Decline of a major governing power.

Magical Cataclysm (8 segments)

Buildup to a reality-altering event.

Trade War (6 segments)

Economic conflict affecting multiple regions.

A.10.3 Adventure Structure Template

Standard Three-Act Structure:

1. **Introduction:** Establish situation; introduce key NPCs and locations.
2. **Development:** 2–3 challenges that advance the main objective.
3. **Climax:** Major confrontation or resolution point.
4. **Resolution:** Consequences and setup for future adventures.

Alternative Structures:

- **Hex Crawl:** Exploration-focused with multiple points of interest.
- **Mystery:** Investigation-driven with clue accumulation.
- **Siege:** Defense-focused with resource management.
- **Journey:** Travel-based with episodic encounters.

A.11 Troubleshooting Common Issues

A.11.1 Player Engagement Issues

Issue: Players are passive or hesitant

- **Solutions:** Use leading questions, offer clear options, create immediate stakes.
- Provide obvious hooks and direct incentives for action.
- Use NPCs to demonstrate active approaches.
- Reward proactive play with narrative advantages.

Issue: Rules discussions slow the game

- **Solutions:** Make quick rulings; note for later review; keep momentum.
- Establish “ruling now, researching later” policy.
- Designate one player as rules reference to minimize lookups.
- Use standardized procedures for common actions.

A.11.2 Balance and Challenge Issues

Issue: Encounters are too easy or too hard

- **Solutions:** Adjust opposition on the fly; use SB to modulate difficulty.
- Remember that Position and Effect can be adjusted situationally.
- Use environmental factors to change challenge levels.
- Allow creative solutions to bypass straight combat.

Issue: Magic feels overpowered or underpowered

- **Solutions:** Ensure proper Backlash and Obligation application.
- Remember that high-DV spells carry significant risks.
- Use countermagic and magical opposition when appropriate.
- Ensure non-magical characters have meaningful contributions.

A.11.3 Tracking and Administration Issues

Issue: Too much bookkeeping slows play

- **Solutions:** Simplify tracking to essential elements; delegate to players.
- Use abstract ranges and conditions rather than precise measurements.
- Focus on narrative consequences rather than numerical modifiers.
- Use index cards or digital tools for complex tracking.

Issue: Players forget abilities or resources

- **Solutions:** Provide quick reference sheets; use visual aids.
- Create character-specific reminder cards.
- Use recap sessions to review capabilities.
- Encourage players to maintain updated character sheets.

A.12 Advanced Play Techniques

A.12.1 Narrative-First Adjudication

- Ask “What happens next?” rather than “What’s the rule?”
- **Use the Fiction:** Let the narrative dictate mechanical outcomes.
- **Embrace Improvisation:** Create rulings that serve the story.
- **Collaborative World-Building:** Involve players in creating details.
- **Consequence-Driven Play:** Ensure every action has meaningful results.

A.12.2 Pacing and Rhythm Management

Scene Pacing:

- Vary intensity between high-action and quiet moments.
- Use clocks to create natural endpoints.
- Alternate between player-driven and GM-driven scenes.
- Include breather moments for character development.

Campaign Rhythm:

- Balance episodic adventures with ongoing arcs.
- Use downtime effectively between major events.

- Vary the scope of challenges (personal, local, regional, global).
- Include both planned and emergent story elements.

A.12.3 Player Spotlight Management

- **Rotate Focus:** Ensure each character gets meaningful scenes.
- **Personal Arcs:** Develop individual character stories.
- **Group Dynamics:** Create situations that require teamwork.
- **Specialization Respect:** Allow experts to shine in their domains.
- **Shared Moments:** Include scenes that develop group bonds.

Spell [TAGS] Reference

[TAG]	Category	Gated By	DV	Effect (summary)
BIND	Control/Restraint	Ritual: Gate; Skill: Command+Arcana	3–4	Fix target in place or to locus; may start/advance a <i>Leash</i> .
SEAL	Control/Boundary	Ritual: Wards; Talent: Sealwright	3–5	Close portal/container; lock threshold or suppress effect.
UNSEAL	Control/Boundary	Skill: Arcana+Wits	3–4	Open sealed thing without damage (if keyed).
COMMAND	Control/Will	Ritual: Dominion; Skill: Presence	3–5	Issue short imperative to lesser mind/spirit.
COMPEL	Control/Geas	Skill: Geasa; Ritual: Oath	4–5	Bind stated taboo/trigger (attach 4-second clock).
LEASH	Summoning Control	Ritual: Gate; Talent: Binder	2–4	Establish/advance control track for a summoned entity.
SEVER	Control/Break	Skill: Arcana or Fate	4–5	Cut tethers (Leashes, bindings, glamours).
WARD	Protection/Zone	Ritual: Wards; Skill: Runecraft	2–4	Block/filter entities/effects by tag. Outsiders: DV = Cap to cross.
UNWARD	Protection/Break	Skill: Arcana+Tools	3–4	Suppress/unpick a ward's key.
REFLECT	Protection/Meta	Talent: Counter-Circle	4–5	Turn next targeted effect back on source.
DISPEL	Meta/End Effect	Skill: Arcana; Ritual: Unravel	2–5	End ongoing magical effect (DV by scale).
COUNTER	Meta/Interrupt	Skill: Arcana (Reaction)	3–4	Interrupt casting/ritual in its window.
AMPLIFY	Meta/Boost	Talent: Focused Weave	+1 DV	Increase Effect one step on current working.
MITIGATE	Meta/SB Control	Talent/Asset: “Mitigate SB”	—	Convert up to 2 SB from this cast to strain clock.
EXTEND	Meta/Duration	Talent: Sustainer	+1 DV	Double default duration.
REWEAVE	Meta/Repair	Skill: Arcana	3–4	Patch/stabilize a faltering effect/clock.
LEVITATE	Movement/Air	Element: Air; Art: Kinesis	3–4	Lift/hold target or self at Near height.
PULL	Movement/Vector	Element: Air/Earth	2–3	Draw object/creature toward locus.
PUSH	Movement/Vector	Element: Air/Force	2–3	Shove/knockback one band.
ANCHOR	Space/Lock	Element: Earth/Fate	3–4	Fix object/zone; resists movement/banish.
TRANSPORT	Space/Move Many	Ritual: Passage; Art: Wayfinding	4–5+	Move targets across bands/locations.
TELEPORT	Space/Blink	Element: Fate/Air	5+	Instant relocate (LoS or keyed sigil).
SENSE	Perception	Skill: Insight/Arcana	2–3	Detect presence of a named tag/element.
REVEAL	Perception	Element: Light/Fate	3–4	Unveil hidden/glamoured things.
SCRY	Divination	Ritual: Sight; Skill: Lore	3–5	Observe distant place/target via focus.
DIVINE	Divination/Omens	Element: Fate	3–4	Ask likely outcome/path.
MARK	Tracking	Talent: Hunter's Sigil	2–3	Tag target for later SENSE/SCRY.

[TAG]	Category	Gated By	DV	Effect (summary)
PROTECT	Protection/Shield	Element: Water/Earth	2–4	Reduce/deflect next harm or tag.
FORTIFY	Protection/Buf	Element: Earth/Life	3–4	Boost resilience; improve Position/Effect.
ABSORB	Protection/Soak	Talent: Spellguard	4–5	Convert incoming harm to SB or Fatigue
HASTE	Time/Boost	Element: Air/Fate	3–4	Speed one ally; extra Move or +Effect.
SLOW	Time/Hinder	Element: Water/Fate	3–4	Impose drag; worsen Position or remove Move.
WEAKEN	Debuff	Element: Fate/Death	3–4	Lower Attribute/Skill effectiveness one step.
ENTANGLE	Debuff/Control	Element: Earth/Plant	2–3	Restrain; worsen Position or steal action.
SILENCE	Debuff/Nullify	Element: Air/Shadow	3–4	Suppress sound/casting words in zone/target.
BLIND	Debuff/Sense	Element: Shadow/Light	3–4	Obscure sight of target/zone.
IGNITE	Fire/Heat	Element: Fire	2–3	Set alight; create burning hazard.
DOUSE	Water/Quench	Element: Water	2–3	Extinguish, cool, suppress heat.
STONE	Earth/Shape	Element: Earth	3–4	Raise wall, seal crack, shape masonry.
SHOCK	Air/Lightning	Element: Air	2–4	Stun/overload; arc between targets.
FREEZE	Water/Cold	Element: Water	3–4	Ice over; slow or trap.
MELT	Fire/Heat	Element: Fire	2–3	Thaw/liquefy; clear FREEZE.
WIND	Air/Control	Element: Air	2–3	Gusts, deflect missiles, carry sound.
FLOOD	Water/Volume	Element: Water	4–5	Surge of water; zone hazard/knockdown.
DRAIN	Water/Void	Element: Water/Earth	3–4	Clear liquids/pressure from zone.
LIGHT	Radiance	Element: Fire/Light	2–3	Illuminate, reveal, or blind (high Effect).
SHADOW	Obscuration	Element: Shadow/Death	2–3	Deepen darkness; hide edges/tracks.
HEAL	Life/Repair	Element: Life	3–4	Mend living harm one step; stabilize.
RESTORE	Structure/Mend	Skill: Craft; Ritual: Repair	3–4	Remove COMPROMISED from gear/constructs.
CLEANSE	Purify	Element: Water/Life	2–3	Remove poisons/blights/marks.
CURSE	Bane	Ritual: Malediction; Skill: Hex	3–5	Attach hostile tag/clock to target.
BLESS	Boon	Ritual: Benediction	2–3	Grant favorable tag (luck, favor, ward-key).
BANISH	Spirit/Expel	Ritual: Gate; Skill: Exorcism	3–5	Drive outsider/spirit across threshold (DV = Cap).
SUMMON	Spirit/Call	Ritual: Gate	3–5	Call named class of entity; start <i>Leash</i> .
DREAM	Mind/Oneiric	Element: Death/Dreams	3–4	Enter/influence sleeping mind/realm.
WAKE	Mind/Counter	Skill: Medicine or Spirit	2–3	Break sleep/charm; end DREAM.
NIGHTMARE	Mind/Fear	Element: Death/Dreams	3–4	Inflict fear/visions; fill small clock.

[TAG]	Category	Gated By	DV	Effect (summary)
FATELOCK	Fate/Anchor	Element: Fate; Talent: Oaths	4–5	Fix outcome boundary (“this door will hold”).
LUCK	Fortune/Shift	Element: Luck	3–4	Tilt odds; convert 1 Miss to 1 Success (once).
OMEN	Fortune/Flag	Element: Fate/Luck	2–3	Mark looming twist the GM may cash later.
PROPHECY	Fate/Foretell	Ritual: Oracle	4–5	Declare true but costly future clause.
GLAMOUR	Illusion/Seeming	Element: Air/Shadow	3–4	Alter appearance/sound/scent; not substance.
VEIL	Illusion/Hide	Element: Shadow/Water	2–3	Hide subject/area from casual notice.
PHANTOM	Illusion/Construct	Talent: Image-Craft	3–4	Create interactive illusion (no weight).
NAME	Word/True Name	Talent: Name-Caller	4–5	Speak true name to compel or reveal.
OATH	Word/Binding	Skill: Geasa; Ritual: Pact	3–4	Bind parties to terms; create oath clock.
UNGEAS	Word/Release	Skill: Geasa+Utaran Law (or Ritual)	4–5	Lawful release or loophole clause.
BRIDGE	Terrain/Create	Element: Earth/Water/Air	3–4	Create traversable surface/path.
SHATTER	Terrain/Break	Element: Sound/Stone	3–4	Rupture brittle/strained matter.
SANCTIFY	Place/Threshold	Ritual: Consecration	3–4	Make area inhospitable to a named tag.
PROFANE	Place/Defile	Ritual: Desecration	3–4	Flip sanctity; empower rival forces.
TETHER	Utility/Link	Element: Fate	2–3	Link two objects for later PULL/SENSE.
STORE	Utility/Charge	Talent: Capacitor	3–4	Bank 1–2 successes in a vessel (once).
TRANSFER	Utility/Hand-off	Skill: Arcana+Tools	3–4	Move an ongoing effect between hosts.

Usage Notes

- **DV guidance:** 2 small/local, 3 scene-scale, 4 big swing, 5+ set-piece/ritual.
- **Duration defaults:** Buffs \approx 3 beats; areas 1 beat. Sustaining costs 1 Fatigue/beat.
- **Costs:** “SB” = Story Beats generated/at risk; *Obligation* applies to **Ritual** sources; some tags list sustain/asset ticks.
- **Counters:** A listed counter doesn’t auto-succeed—resolve with the appropriate action (often COUNTER, DISPEL, or fiction).
- **Gating:** “Gated By” lists *typical* prerequisites—swap in specific Patrons, Arts, or Talents to taste.

A.13 Quick Reference: Fatigue & Harm

Fatigue Track

Boxes Body

Clear on Short Rest (-2), Full Night (all), or [HEALED] (all)

Overflow

Trigger	Result	Then
Fatigue track fills	Harm +1 level	Clear all Fatigue

Obligation → Fatigue

Severity	Fatigue	Note
Low	+1	Nagging strain
Standard	+2	Significant cost
High	+3	Brutal, only for dire rites

Appendix B

Weapons & Armor Quick Reference

B.1 Weapons by Weight Class

Costs & Baselines

- **Light (4 XP)** — quick, concealable.
- **Medium (8 XP)** — balanced, battlefield mainstays.
- **Heavy (12 XP)** — punishing, slow to bring to bear.

Melee Modifiers (by Range Band)

Weight	Close	Near	Notes
Light	+2 dice	+1 die	Fast in tight quarters
Medium	+1 die	+2 dice	<i>Set</i> once/scene or -1 die on first attack
Heavy	-1 die	+3 dice	<i>Set</i> once/scene or -2 dice on first attack

Ranged Modifiers & Tempo

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

Tempo shorthand (see §9.6):

- **Fast** — Move *and* Shoot; reload is incidental. Risky at Close while Engaged.
- **Standard** — *Move or Shoot*; partial-turn reload. May *Aim* for +1 die or +1 Effect.
- **Slow** — Requires *Set/Brace*; full-turn reload; cannot Move and Shoot same round.

Common Examples (Non-exhaustive)

- **Light Melee:** dagger, hatchet, cudgel, short-spear, main-gauche.
- **Medium Melee:** arming sword, war pick, mace, battle-axe, spear.
- **Heavy Melee:** greatsword, poleaxe, maul, glaive, long-spear.

- **Light Ranged (Fast):** throwing knives, javelins, sling, shortbow.
- **Medium Ranged (Standard):** warbow, hand crossbow, light crossbow.
- **Heavy Ranged (Slow):** greatbow, arbalest, pavise-rest crossbow.

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

Reach

Ignore Engage cost once/round; foes suffer +1 DV at Close.

Close

No penalty at grappling distance; safer to draw in melee.

Accurate

+1 die when you *Aim*.

Brutal

+1 Effect on a 6+, but the roll generates +1 SB if any **1** appears.

Hook

On hit, may shift target to worse Position instead of extra Effect.

Concealable

No penalty to smuggle; draw is incidental.

Quickdraw

First attack you make this scene is +1 die.

Two-Handed

Stronger leverage; cannot benefit from shields.

Off-Hand

When dual-wielding, +1 die to one *Attack* per round.

B.2 Shields (Optional)

Shield	XP	Benefit (per round)	Tradeoff
Buckler	4	+1 die to <i>Defend</i> vs melee <i>or</i> +1 DV once	Off-hand occupied
Heater	8	+1 die to <i>Defend</i> and convert 1 Harm→1 Fatigue once	-1 die to your Ranged attacks
Pavise	12	<i>Plant</i> (action): heavy cover cone; allies may use	Slow to move; counts as bulky

B.3 Armor

Armor converts incoming Harm into Fatigue (see §9.7). Choose one suit.

Armor	XP	Conversion	Penalties
Light	4	Up to 1 Harm → 1 Fatigue	—
Medium	8	Up to 2 Harm → 1 Fatigue	-1 die to physical skills
Heavy	12	Up to 3 Harm → 2 Fatigue	-2 dice to physical skills; no sprint in rough

Notes:

- Apply conversion before marking Fatigue. If this fills the Fatigue track, resolve Fatigue→Harm conversion and clear Fatigue (see §9.7).
- Conversion is per incoming instance of Harm; you may still *Resist* to reduce level first.

B.4 Condition & Upkeep

Neglected

Weapons: -1 die until maintained. Armor: conversion reduced by 1 step (Light=0; Medium treats 2→1F; Heavy treats 3→2F).

Compromised

Weapons: -1 die on your first attack each exchange. Armor: no conversion.

Maintenance: A Short Rest with tools removes **Neglected**. A scene of work or a Smith removes **Compromised**.

B.5 At-a-Glance Options (Ranged)

- **Aim:** +1 die *or* +1 Effect next shot (lost if you Move or are disrupted).
- **Volley:** Spend extra ammo for +1 die (max +2).
- **Suppress:** Zone under fire; foes there act at -1 die or Limited Effect until they shift cover.
- **Overwatch:** Ready a Risky shot on a clear trigger crossing your line.

Appendix C

The Whispered Grimoire (Rituals)

The Ritual of Exorcism

When possession takes root, when the shadow has grown too deep, there remains one path to salvation: the Ritual of Exorcism. But know this—exorcism is not a simple spell cast and forgotten. It is warfare. It is negotiation. It is sometimes surrender.

Purpose: To forcibly remove a possessing entity from a possessed subject

Primary Caster: Spirit 3+, Lore 3+, Insight 2+

Helpers: 1+ participants with relevant skills (Lore, Spirit, Insight, Command, Presence)

The Exorcism Encounter:

Exorcism functions as a special encounter with its own contested clock mechanics. The ritual creates a contested space where the caster's will battles the possessing entity for control of the subject's soul.

Exorcism Clock: 2 + Subject's Tier in segments (minimum 4 segments, maximum 8 segments)

Each segment represents a phase of spiritual combat requiring:

1. **Invocation Phase (Spirit + Lore):** Primary caster and helpers invoke sacred power and knowledge
2. **Confrontation Phase (Presence + Insight or Command):** Direct mental/spiritual assault on the possessing entity
- 3.
4. **Binding Phase (Wits + Relevant Skill):** Reinforce wards, maintain circle, counter the entity's responses

Entity Resistance: During each phase, the possessing entity resists with a DV based on its Tier:

- **Tier I-II Entities:** DV 2
- **Tier III-IV Entities:** DV 3
- **Tier V+ Entities:** DV 4+

Entity Response Actions: When the entity accumulates successes equal to or greater than the caster's total successes in a phase, it may attempt a response action that, if not resisted, advances the Exorcism Clock by one segment:

- **Whispers of Doubt (Social):** Tempt/corrupt a participant (Wits + Sway vs. DV 2-4)
- **Physical Manifestation (Physical):** Cause harm to participants/subject (Wits + Melee vs. DV 2-4)

- **Spiritual Assault (Mental):** Drain participant (Wits + Spirit vs. DV 2-4)
- **Reality Distortion (Supernatural):** Create illusions/confusion (Wits + Arcana vs. DV 2-4)

All participant rolls to resist entity actions are made at Risky Position. Failure on resistance rolls generates 1 SB for the GM.

Defensive Support: Non-participating allies may provide defense:

- Provide +1 die to one resistance roll per defender per phase
- Defenders cannot take other actions during that phase

Ritual Failure: If the Exorcism Clock fills completely before the ritual succeeds, the exorcism fails with severe consequences:

- The possessing entity grows stronger (+1 die to all future possession attempts by this entity)
- The subject suffers additional corruption (advance Harm by one level or equivalent)
- All participants suffer Fatigue 2 from spiritual exhaustion
- The entity gains temporary influence over the location (start a Haunting clock [6])

Ritual Success: If the caster achieves three consecutive phases where total successes exceed the entity's resistance DV by 2+, the entity is expelled:

- The possessing entity is banished from the subject
- The subject stabilizes but requires extended care (Harm 2 recovery)
- Caster and helpers suffer Fatigue 1 per Tier of the entity
- Mark 1 XP for major spiritual conflict resolved

For Player Characters: When a PC becomes possessed and exorcism fails, they gain ongoing complications:

- **Tier I-II Entities:** 1 SB banked each session from the entity's influence
- **Tier III-IV Entities:** 2 SB banked each session from the entity's influence
- **Tier V+ Entities:** 3 SB banked each session from the entity's influence

These banked SB represent the entity's ongoing influence and may manifest as:

- Compulsive behaviors or speech patterns
- Nightmares or visions that provide the entity information
- Uncontrolled moments where the entity acts through the character
- Social consequences as others notice the character's changed nature

Rukhir shivers, and I realize his feathers have gone dull. "Even I," he says quietly, "have felt the touch of things that would wear me like a glove. The difference, Veyla, is that I chose to be worn."

Player Agency Preservation: While possessed characters suffer ongoing complications, their players must always retain meaningful agency:

- Players choose when to resist the entity's influence
- Major character decisions remain with the player
- The entity cannot force the character to betray core relationships without resistance
- Redemption paths should always remain possible, however difficult

The Ritual of Exorcism is not merely about casting spells—it is about the fundamental struggle between light and shadow, freedom and control, self and other. Approach it with the gravity it deserves, and remember that sometimes, the greatest mercy is to help a friend find peace, even if

that peace requires them to let go of everything they were.

Duration: Variable encounter time, typically 10-15 minutes of game time per segment

Casting Time: Extended ritual requiring continuous focus and participation

Mist-Road Veil

Draws a low fog that dulls footfalls and blurs silhouettes along a chosen path

Purpose: Create concealing mist that aids stealthy movement along a specific route

Primary Caster: Wits 3+, Arcana 2+, Survival 2+

Helpers: 1-2 participants with Survival or Stealth skills

Channel Phase (Wits + Survival):

1. Gather water sources and cooling materials (damp cloth, morning dew, etc.)
2. Trace the path where mist is desired with light touch
3. Roll Wits + Survival for primary caster, relevant skills for helpers

Weave Phase (Wits + Arcana):

1. Channel moisture into the air along the designated path
2. Whisper words of concealment in the local tongue
3. Roll Wits + Arcana for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 SB:** Mist is patchy or reveals more than it conceals; -1 die to Stealth rolls
- **3-4 SB:** Mist attracts unwanted attention from creatures that hunt in fog; 2 SB added to next encounter
- **5+ SB:** Mist becomes supernaturally thick, disorienting even the caster; party suffers -2 dice to navigation for Significant Time

Effect:

- Creates concealing fog along a path up to 100 yards long for Significant Time
- Party members moving along the path gain +2 dice to Stealth rolls
- Sound is muffled by 50% within the mist
- Non-magical tracking becomes nearly impossible within the affected area

Duration: Significant Time (approximately 1 hour)

Casting Time: Some Time (10-15 minutes of preparation and ritual)

Bell of Truce

Rings a hospitality note that compels all within earshot to parley before violence

Purpose: Create a magical compulsion for peaceful negotiation before combat

Primary Caster: Presence 4+, Spirit 3+, Command 2+

Helpers: 1-2 participants with Sway or Performance skills

Channel Phase (Spirit + Command):

1. Obtain a bell or chime of significant quality
2. Focus on the concept of hospitality and peaceful resolution
3. Roll Spirit + Command for primary caster, relevant skills for helpers

Weave Phase (Presence + Performance):

1. Ring the bell with specific intent and rhythm
2. Speak words of truce in the old tongue
3. Roll Presence + Performance for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 SB:** The compulsion is weak or easily resisted; -1 die to Sway rolls for next social encounter
- **3-4 SB:** The bell's influence extends beyond intended area, affecting neutral parties; GM banks +2 SB for use in the next crowd-related encounter
- **5+ SB:** The compulsion backfires, making the caster appear weak or cowardly; -2 dice to Command rolls for one session

Effect:

- All intelligent beings within 200 yards must make Spirit + Resolve (DV 3) to initiate violence for Some Time
- Those who successfully resist the compulsion gain +1 die to subsequent Sway rolls with the caster's party
- Failure to parley first creates 2 SB backlash when violence finally erupts
- The bell's tone marks a sacred space of temporary sanctuary

Duration: Some Time (approximately 30 minutes)

Casting Time: Some Time (ritual ringing and proclamation)

Lantern Weir

Stitches light into a soft fence that guides crowds and resists panic surges

Purpose: Create a barrier of light that guides movement and prevents chaotic rushes

Primary Caster: Wits 3+, Arcana 3+, Performance 2+

Helpers: 2-3 participants with Performance or Command skills

Channel Phase (Wits + Performance):

1. Gather multiple light sources (lanterns, candles, etc.)
2. Arrange participants in a line or curve to form the barrier
3. Roll Wits + Performance for primary caster, relevant skills for helpers

Weave Phase (Presence + Arcana):

1. Weave the light sources together into a unified barrier
2. Speak words of guidance and protection
3. Roll Presence + Arcana for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 SB:** The light barrier flickers or has gaps; -1 die to Crowd management rolls
- **3-4 SB:** The barrier attracts attention from the wrong crowd; GM banks +2 SB for use in the next social encounter
- **5+ SB:** The light becomes blinding rather than guiding; all within 50 yards suffer -1 die to perception rolls

Effect:

- Creates a 50-foot barrier of soft, guiding light for Significant Time
- Crowd movement is directed and calmed; +2 dice to Crowd management rolls
- Panic effects are reduced by 2 SB for those within the barrier
- The barrier provides dim illumination equivalent to moonlight

Duration: Significant Time (approximately 1 hour)

Casting Time: Some Time (15-20 minutes of arrangement and ritual)

Oath of Shared Breath

Binds the party's rhythm; fatigue spreads thinly among all who consent

Purpose: Distribute fatigue and minor harm among willing party members

Primary Caster: Presence 4+, Spirit 3+, Sway 2+

Helpers: All willing party members (2+ participants required)

Channel Phase (Spirit + Sway):

1. All participants join hands or touch in a circle
2. Each participant speaks their willingness to share the burden
3. Roll Spirit + Sway for primary caster, Spirit + Resolve for helpers

Weave Phase (Presence + Command):

1. Weave the participants' life forces together through ritual words
2. Create a shared rhythm of breath and heartbeat
3. Roll Presence + Command for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 SB:** The sharing is uneven, favoring some over others; one participant suffers +1 Fatigue
- **3-4 SB:** The bond creates unwanted emotional connections; party suffers -1 die to social rolls with outsiders for Significant Time
- **5+ SB:** The sharing becomes too intimate; participants can sense each other's thoughts and emotions for one hour

Effect:

- Creates a bond among willing participants for Significant Time
- Total Fatigue among participants is divided equally (rounded up)
- When one bonded participant would take Harm 1, the group may choose to distribute it: each participant takes 1 Fatigue instead
- Participants can sense each other's general health (well/rested/wounded) and location within 100 yards

Duration: Significant Time (approximately 1 hour)

Casting Time: Some Time (10-15 minutes of ritual bonding)

The Bonding Ceremony

A ritual to strengthen connections between companions

Purpose: Create a permanent bond between party members that provides mechanical and narrative benefits

Participants: All willing party members (3-5 helpers maximum)

Channel Phase (Wits + Sway):

1. Each participant holds an object representing their connection to the group
2. Perform a shared activity (sharing a meal, telling stories, etc.) while focusing on the bond
3. Roll Wits + Sway skill for each participant

Weave Phase (Presence + Sway):

1. Participants speak words of commitment to each other
2. Create a physical symbol of the bond (knotting cords, mixing earth from homelands, etc.)
3. Roll Presence + Sway for the primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 SB:** Temporary tension between bonded members (-1 die to cooperative actions for Significant Time)
- **3-4 SB:** The bond creates unwanted attention from external forces; party generates 2 SB whenever they act as a group for the next session
- **5+ SB:** All existing bonds between party members are temporarily severed; party suffers -2 dice to all social rolls for Significant Time

Effect:

- Bonded members gain +1 die when aiding each other for one arc
- Can sense each other's general emotional state across any distance for one arc
- One "bond-mate" can be called upon for aid once per session (counts as Cap 3 follower for that action)

Duration: One full arc, renewable with simpler weekly reaffirmation

Casting Time: Significant Time (ritual requires shared meal and ceremony)

The Sanctuary Consecration

A ritual to create a safe haven from supernatural threats

Purpose: Establish a protected area that repels hostile supernatural entities

Primary Caster: Spirit 4+, Lore 3+

Helpers: 2-3 participants with relevant skills (Lore, Presence, Arcana)

Channel Phase (Spirit + Lore):

1. Gather materials sacred to the caster's beliefs or relevant to the threats faced
2. Consecrate the space through prayer, meditation, or ritual preparation
3. Roll Spirit + Lore for each participant

Weave Phase (Wits + Arcana):

1. Perform the consecration ceremony within the designated area
2. Create permanent wards using blessed/sacred materials
3. Roll Wits + Arcana for the primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 SB:** The sanctuary attracts the attention of other supernatural entities; 2 SB added to next supernatural encounter

- **3-4 SB:** The protection creates a vulnerability elsewhere; choose one party member who becomes more susceptible to supernatural influence for one session
- **5+ SB:** The ritual backfires, making the area supernaturally dangerous; the space becomes a beacon for hostile entities

Effect:

- Area becomes sanctified ground (Sanctity +2) against specified supernatural threats for one month
- Hostile entities of the specified type suffer -2 dice to actions within the area
- Area provides +1 die to resistance rolls against specified supernatural effects for one month
- Party members resting within the sanctuary recover 1 additional Fatigue per night

Duration: One month, renewable with weekly maintenance (10 minutes of ritual work)

Casting Time: Significant Time (requires preparation and ceremony)

The Memory Reconstruction

A ritual to recover lost or suppressed memories

Purpose: Retrieve information from a participant's suppressed or forgotten memories

Primary Caster: Wits 4+, Arcana 3+

Helpers: 1-2 participants with Insight or Lore skills

Channel Phase (Wits + Arcana):

1. Participant enters a deep meditative state
2. Primary caster prepares scrying tools or ritual components
3. Roll Wits + Arcana for primary caster, Wits + Insight/Lore for helpers

Weave Phase (Spirit + Insight):

1. Guide the participant through their memories using guided visualization
2. Use ritual tools to stabilize recovered memories
3. Roll Spirit + Insight for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 SB:** Recovered memories are fragmented or unreliable; information may be misleading
- **3-4 SB:** The ritual triggers traumatic memories causing temporary psychological effects; participant suffers -1 die to social rolls for Significant Time
- **5+ SB:** Participant becomes obsessed with recovered memories; must make Spirit + Resolve (DV 2) rolls to act against the memory's implications for one session

Effect:

- Recover one specific memory or set of memories from the participant's past (immediate)
- Memory clarity depends on success margin (partial recall vs. complete recovery)
- Participant gains +2 dice on related knowledge rolls for this scene
- GM reveals one piece of information that connects the recovered memory to current events

Duration: Memory effects last for this scene; knowledge benefits last for this session

Casting Time: Some Time (requires deep meditation and guided ritual)

The Shadow Passage

A ritual to travel through the Ways Between

Purpose: Transport the party across great distances through shadow-realm shortcuts

Primary Caster: Wits 5+, Arcana 4+, Spirit 3+

Helpers: All party members (spiritual support during the journey)

Channel Phase (Spirit + Arcana):

1. Create a circle of shadow-conductive materials (obsidian, black candles, etc.)
2. Each participant contributes a drop of blood or lock of hair to the circle
3. Roll Spirit + Arcana for primary caster, Spirit + Resolve for helpers

Weave Phase (Wits + Arcana):

1. Perform the opening ceremony to breach the shadow-realm
2. Lead the party through the passage while maintaining the connection
3. Roll Wits + Arcana for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 SB:** The journey takes longer than expected, arriving at an inconvenient time (advance relevant clocks by 1 segment)
- **3-4 SB:** The party arrives in a slightly different location than intended; position for first action is Risky instead of Controlled
- **5-6 SB:** Something follows the party back from the shadow-realm; introduce a persistent supernatural threat that tracks the party
- **7+ SB:** The party finds themselves in the Ways Between.

Effect:

- Transport party instantly across great distances (anywhere on the same continent) for this scene
- Arrival position is Controlled for planned destinations, Risky for improvised ones
- +1 effect on the first action after arrival (momentum from the journey)
- Party is immune to fatigue from the travel itself
- Cannot be used more than once per week without increasing backlash severity

Duration: Instantaneous travel with lingering effects for this scene

Casting Time: Significant Time (complex ritual requiring careful preparation)

The Geas of Binding

A ritual to create unbreakable oaths or compulsions

Purpose: Bind a willing or unwilling target to a specific course of action

Primary Caster: Presence 4+, Spirit 4+, Lore 3+

Helpers: 1-2 participants with relevant cultural or religious knowledge

Channel Phase (Spirit + Lore):

1. Prepare the binding materials according to cultural tradition
2. Research the target's nature and vulnerabilities
3. Roll Spirit + Lore for primary caster, relevant skill for helpers

Weave Phase (Presence + Command):

1. Perform the binding ceremony with the target present
2. Speak the terms of the geas in the appropriate ritual language
3. Roll Presence + Command for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 SB:** The geas has unintended loopholes or consequences; target finds creative ways to technically fulfill the geas while undermining its intent
- **3-4 SB:** The caster becomes partially bound by the same geas; must also follow a related constraint for Significant Time
- **5+ SB:** The binding creates a spiritual debt that attracts unwanted supernatural attention; 3 SB added to next supernatural encounter involving the caster

Effect:

- Target is compelled to follow the terms of the geas or suffer spiritual consequences for one arc
- Breaking the geas requires a successful Spirit + Resolve roll (DV 4+) each time
- Failure to follow the geas causes 1 SB per day of violation
- Geas can be complex but must be clearly defined (no "be good" - specify actions)
- Willing targets suffer reduced backlash; unwilling targets may resist with opposed roll

Duration: One full arc, permanent unless specifically countered by equal magic

Casting Time: Significant Time (formal ceremony requiring proper ritual components)

The Communion of the Ancients

A ritual to speak with the spirits of the dead

Purpose: Contact and communicate with deceased individuals or ancestral spirits

Primary Caster: Spirit 4+, Lore 3+, Presence 2+

Helpers: 1-2 participants with spiritual sensitivity or relevant cultural knowledge

Channel Phase (Spirit + Presence):

1. Prepare the ritual space according to cultural traditions for contacting the dead
2. Offer appropriate sacrifices or prayers to the spirits
3. Roll Spirit + Presence for primary caster, Spirit + Lore for helpers

Weave Phase (Wits + Lore):

1. Open the channel to the spirit realm
2. Guide the summoned spirit toward communication
3. Roll Wits + Lore for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 SB:** The contacted spirit is confused or unhelpful; information provided is vague or misleading
- **3-4 SB:** Other, less welcome spirits are drawn to the ritual; 2 SB added to next supernatural encounter
- **5+ SB:** The ritual creates a permanent spiritual connection that cannot be easily severed; caster suffers -1 die to all social rolls involving living beings for one session

Effect:

- Communicate with one specific deceased individual or type of ancestral spirit for Some Time

- Spirit can provide information, advice, or warnings about specified topics
- Spirit's knowledge is limited by their mortal understanding and perspective
- Communication lasts for a number of minutes equal to the success margin
- Spirit may request a favor or service in return for their cooperation

Duration: Some Time (ritual communication period)

Casting Time: Significant Time (preparation and ceremony required)

The Ward of Protection

A ritual to create lasting magical defenses

Purpose: Establish permanent or semi-permanent protective wards

Primary Caster: Wits 4+, Arcana 3+, relevant cultural skill

Helpers: 2-3 participants with Craft, Engineering, or cultural ritual skills

Channel Phase (Wits + Arcana):

1. Gather materials appropriate to the type of protection desired
2. Prepare the location where wards will be placed
3. Roll Wits + Arcana for primary caster, relevant skills for helpers

Weave Phase (Wits + Craft):

1. Inscribe, construct, or otherwise create the physical components of the wards
2. Activate the wards through ritual consecration
3. Roll Wits + Craft for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 SB:** The wards have a minor vulnerability or require specific activation conditions; wards function at -1 effectiveness until properly calibrated
- **3-4 SB:** The wards attract the attention of entities they're designed to repel; 2 SB added to next encounter with specified threat type
- **5+ SB:** The wards backfire, creating the opposite effect or affecting unintended targets; wards harm allies instead of protecting them for Significant Time

Effect:

- Create wards that provide +2 dice to defense against specified threats for one month
- Wards can cover an area, protect specific individuals, or guard objects
- **Duration:** One month, renewable with monthly maintenance rituals
- Wards can be complex (multiple effects) but each additional effect increases backlash risk
- Wards can be detected by those with appropriate skills and may reveal the caster's presence

Duration: One month, renewable with weekly maintenance

Casting Time: Significant Time (complex construction and consecration process)

The Veil of Misdirection

A ritual to conceal the party's true nature and intentions

Purpose: Create illusions and false impressions that mask the party's activities

Primary Caster: Wits 4+, Arcana 3+, Deception 2+

Helpers: 2-3 participants with Performance, Deception, or cultural masking skills

Channel Phase (Wits + Deception):

1. Prepare illusion components (cosmetics, costumes, symbolic objects)
2. Each participant contributes a personal item that represents their true self
3. Roll Wits + Deception for primary caster, relevant skills for helpers

Weave Phase (Presence + Performance):

1. Perform the masquerade ritual, weaving false identities around each participant
2. Create shared illusion patterns that reinforce the group's fabricated story
3. Roll Presence + Performance for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 SB:** The illusions have minor flaws or inconsistencies; -1 die to social rolls when under scrutiny
- **3-4 SB:** The false identities begin to influence the participants' behavior; party members must make Wits + Resolve (DV 2) rolls to act against their assumed personas for Significant Time
- **5+ SB:** The ritual creates a feedback loop where the false identities become partially real; participants suffer identity confusion and -2 dice to rolls involving their true skills for one session

Effect:

- Party assumes completely fabricated identities that are believable to casual observers for one session
- Each participant gains +2 dice to Deception and Performance rolls related to their assumed identity
- Social interactions start Controlled when the false identities are relevant
- Magical detection of true identities suffers -2 dice for Significant Time
- Party can coordinate complex deceptions as a group action with +1 effect

Duration: One full session, requiring daily renewal (10 minutes of ritual work)

Casting Time: Significant Time (elaborate preparation and group ceremony)

The Art of Listening

In the Tulkani tradition, we say that the greatest magic is not in speaking, but in hearing what others dare not say. The rituals in this chapter will teach you to listen to the whispers that exist in the spaces between words, to read the truth in a person's eyes, and to gather secrets that would make emperors tremble.

The Listening Shadow

A ritual to hear distant conversations

Purpose: To hear conversations from great distances, particularly those that the speakers believe are private

Primary Caster: Wits 4+, Arcana 3+, Insight 2+

Helpers: 1 participant with Insight skill

Channel Phase (Wits + Arcana):

1. Light a black candle at the darkest hour of night, when even the moon has set
2. Take a raven's feather and whisper into it the name of the person whose words you wish to hear
3. Bury the feather beneath your doorstep, or in the earth beneath a window where your target might pass
4. Roll Wits + Arcana for primary caster, Wits + Insight for helper

Weave Phase (Spirit + Insight):

1. For three nights, you must dream of shadows dancing. Do not fight these dreams - embrace them
2. On the fourth night, perform the final scrying
3. Roll Spirit + Insight for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 SB:** You hear fragments of many conversations, making it difficult to isolate the target; -1 die to subsequent Investigation rolls for one scene
- **3-4 SB:** You hear one conversation that you desperately wish not to hear; GM introduces a disturbing piece of knowledge that burdens the caster
- **5+ SB:** The target becomes aware they are being spied upon; they gain +2 dice against the caster in all future social interactions

Effect:

- Hear a specific conversation involving your target for Significant Time
- Gain the ability to distinguish truth from lies in any spoken word for the duration, but only while holding your breath
- Information gathered provides +2 dice to related Investigation or Social rolls for this session

Duration: Significant Time (approximately 1 hour of eavesdropping)

Casting Time: Extended (requires 4 nights of preparation, final casting on fourth night)

Price: You will hear one conversation that you desperately wish not to hear. This knowledge will burden you until you either act upon it or deliberately forget it.

Warning: Do not use this ritual to spy upon those who are innocent of wrongdoing. The Patron favors those who seek justice, not those who indulge in cruelty.

The Cleansing Fire

A ritual to purify corrupted places and objects

Purpose: Remove curses, malevolent enchantments, or spiritual contamination

Primary Caster: Spirit 4+, Arcana 3+, Lore 2+

Helpers: 2-3 participants with Spirit or relevant cultural skills

Channel Phase (Spirit + Lore):

1. Gather purifying materials (sacred herbs, blessed water, salt, etc.)
2. Research the nature of the corruption to be cleansed
3. Roll Spirit + Lore for primary caster, Spirit + relevant skill for helpers

Weave Phase (Presence + Arcana):

1. Perform the cleansing ceremony with fire as the central element
2. Speak words of purification in the appropriate ritual language

3. Roll Presence + Arcana for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 SB:** The cleansing is incomplete; the corruption is reduced but not eliminated, returning at half strength in one day
- **3-4 SB:** The ritual agitates the corruption, causing it to manifest more aggressively before it can be cleansed; 2 SB added to next encounter with the corruption
- **5+ SB:** The cleansing fire turns inward, affecting the caster instead; caster suffers Harm 1 and gains a new minor curse related to fire or purification

Effect:

- Remove one curse, enchantment, or spiritual contamination from a person, object, or area
- Affected area or object becomes spiritually clean for one month
- Beneficiaries gain +1 die to resistance rolls against similar corruptions for Significant Time
- If used on a possessed person, the entity suffers -1 die to all actions for the rest of the scene

Duration: Immediate effect with lingering benefits for one month

Casting Time: Significant Time (requires preparation and ceremony)

The Dreaming Stone

A ritual to send messages through dreams

Purpose: Communicate with a specific person through their dreams

Primary Caster: Spirit 4+, Arcana 3+, Insight 2+

Helpers: 1 participant with Insight or Lore skill

Channel Phase (Spirit + Insight):

1. Obtain a personal item from the target or something they have touched recently
2. Prepare the dream-sending stone or crystal
3. Roll Spirit + Insight for primary caster, Wits + Insight/Lore for helper

Weave Phase (Wits + Arcana):

1. Focus on the target's essence through the personal item
2. Shape the dream-message using symbolic imagery
3. Roll Wits + Arcana for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 SB:** The message is distorted or misinterpreted; -1 die to related social rolls when the message is delivered in waking life
- **3-4 SB:** The target's subconscious fights back, invading the caster's dreams; caster suffers Fatigue 1 and vivid nightmares for Significant Time
- **5+ SB:** The dream-bridge becomes two-way; the target can now send dream-messages to the caster or even attempt to possess them in dreams

Effect:

- Send a specific message or image to the target's dreams for one night
- Message clarity depends on success margin (symbolic hints vs. clear communication)
- Target gains +2 dice to related rolls if the dream-message provides useful information or warning

- Can be used to plant suggestions (with target's resistance roll) or provide comfort/encouragement

Duration: One night (message delivered during target's next sleep)

Casting Time: Some Time (requires meditation and focus)

The Forge of Names

A ritual to create or bind true names

Purpose: Discover, create, or bind true names for magical working

Primary Caster: Wits 5+, Lore 4+, Arcana 3+

Helpers: 1-2 participants with Lore or cultural naming knowledge

Channel Phase (Wits + Lore):

1. Gather materials representing the subject (hair, blood, significant possession, or symbolic representation)
2. Research the subject's history, connections, and essence
3. Roll Wits + Lore for primary caster, Wits + Lore for helpers

Weave Phase (Spirit + Arcana):

1. Perform the naming ceremony, speaking the syllables as they are revealed
2. Bind the true name to a physical token or within the caster's memory
3. Roll Spirit + Arcana for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 SB:** The name is incomplete or has a minor flaw; using it provides only half the normal benefits
- **3-4 SB:** The subject becomes aware their true name has been discovered; they gain +1 die to resist any magic using their name for one arc
- **5+ SB:** The naming ritual backfires, revealing the caster's own true name to the subject or to malevolent forces listening

Effect:

- Discover or create the true name of a person, place, or thing
- True name can be used for various magical effects (control, banishment, enhanced understanding)
- Having a true name provides +2 dice to any magic specifically targeting that subject
- Subject suffers -1 die to resist magic from the caster who knows their true name
- Name can be bound to a token, making it usable by others who possess the token

Duration: Permanent (true name is forever linked to the subject)

Casting Time: Significant Time (extensive research and ceremony)

The Mirror's Gaze

A ritual to see through the eyes of others

Purpose: Temporarily perceive through the senses of a willing or unwitting subject

Primary Caster: Wits 4+, Arcana 3+, Insight 2+

Helpers: 1 participant with Insight skill

Channel Phase (Wits + Arcana):

1. Prepare a reflective surface (mirror, pool of water, polished metal)
2. Establish connection to the target through a personal item or direct line of sight
3. Roll Wits + Arcana for primary caster, Wits + Insight for helper

Weave Phase (Spirit + Insight):

1. Gaze into the reflective surface while focusing on the target
2. Merge consciousness with the target's senses
3. Roll Spirit + Insight for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 SB:** The connection is unstable; vision is blurred or intermittent for the duration
- **3-4 SB:** The target senses the intrusion; if unwilling, they gain +2 dice to any rolls to detect or resist the caster's presence for one session
- **5+ SB:** Consciousness becomes trapped in the target's mind; caster's body falls into a coma while spirit remains lost in the target's perception

Effect:

- See through the eyes of the target for Some Time
- Gain access to the target's immediate sensory input (sight, hearing, etc.)
- If target is willing, gain +1 die to related Investigation or Stealth rolls using their perspective
- Can be used to guide a lost target or scout dangerous areas remotely

Duration: Some Time (approximately 30 minutes of shared perception)

Casting Time: Some Time (requires focus and preparation)

The Bloodbound Pact

A ritual to create magical agreements enforced by mutual consequence

Purpose: Create a binding agreement where breaking the pact harms all parties involved

Primary Caster: Presence 4+, Spirit 4+, Lore 3+

Helpers: All parties involved in the pact (minimum 2 parties)

Channel Phase (Spirit + Lore):

1. Each party must contribute a drop of blood to the pact vessel
2. Define the exact terms of the agreement in precise language
3. Roll Spirit + Lore for primary caster, Spirit + Resolve for each participating party

Weave Phase (Presence + Command):

1. Speak the terms of the pact in the old tongue while mixing the blood
2. Each party must swear the oath and accept the consequences
3. Roll Presence + Command for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 SB:** The pact has minor loopholes or ambiguities; parties may find legalistic ways to avoid true compliance
- **3-4 SB:** The magical enforcement is stronger than intended; even minor infractions trigger harsh consequences
- **5+ SB:** The pact becomes contagious, drawing unrelated parties into its terms or consequences

Effect:

- Create a magically binding agreement between all participating parties
- If any party breaks the pact, all parties suffer Harm 1 per severity level of the breach
- Pact remains active for one arc or until fulfilled/voided through specific counter-ritual
- Parties gain +1 die to cooperative actions related to fulfilling the pact terms
- Breaking the pact creates 2 SB that can be spent by the GM to complicate the breaker's future actions

Duration: One full arc, or until pact is completed/voided

Casting Time: Significant Time (formal ceremony requiring all parties)

The Stone's Memory

A ritual to read the history imprinted upon objects or locations

Purpose: Perceive significant events associated with an object or location

Primary Caster: Spirit 4+, Insight 3+, Lore 2+

Helpers: 1-2 participants with Insight or Investigation skills

Channel Phase (Spirit + Insight):

1. Hold or place hands upon the object/location to be read
2. Clear the mind and open the spirit to receive impressions
3. Roll Spirit + Insight for primary caster, Wits + Insight/Investigation for helpers

Weave Phase (Wits + Lore):

1. Focus on specific questions or time periods if desired
2. Allow the memories to flow through consciousness
3. Roll Wits + Lore for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 SB:** The memories are fragmented or confusing; -1 die to subsequent Investigation rolls for one scene
- **3-4 SB:** The caster becomes overwhelmed by traumatic memories; suffers Fatigue 1 and -1 die to social rolls for Significant Time
- **5+ SB:** The caster becomes trapped in a memory loop, reliving the object's history; requires external intervention to break the connection

Effect:

- Witness 1-3 significant events associated with the object/location (based on success margin)
- Events are experienced as vivid sensory impressions rather than clear narrative
- Gain +2 dice to related Investigation or Lore rolls for this session
- Can detect if the object/location is currently under magical influence

Duration: Some Time (approximately 20-30 minutes of memory viewing)

Casting Time: Some Time (requires meditation and focus)

The Wind's Whispers

A ritual to gather information from the environment

Purpose: Collect news, rumors, and information carried by natural elements

Primary Caster: Wits 4+, Arcana 3+, Investigation 2+

Helpers: 1-2 participants with Investigation or Survival skills

Channel Phase (Wits + Investigation):

1. Position yourself in an area where information might naturally gather (crossroads, market,)
2. Prepare listening tools (horn, focusing crystal, etc.) if available
3. Roll Wits + Investigation for primary caster, Wits + Investigation/Survival for helpers

Weave Phase (Presence + Arcana):

1. Cast the spell during a time of natural transition (dawn, dusk, changing weather)
2. Speak words to call the information-bearing winds
3. Roll Presence + Arcana for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 SB:** The information gathered is mostly gossip or irrelevant; -1 die to subsequent Investigation rolls for one scene
- **3-4 SB:** The ritual attracts unwanted attention from those who prefer their secrets stay hidden; 2 SB added to next social encounter involving the caster
- **5+ SB:** The caster becomes overwhelmed by the volume of information; suffers Fatigue 1 and -2 dice to all mental actions for Significant Time

Effect:

- Gather recent news, rumors, and information from the surrounding area for the past week
- Information is received as fragmented whispers, requiring interpretation
- Gain +2 dice to related Social or Investigation rolls for this session
- Can specifically target information about one subject at the cost of overall breadth

Duration: Information gathering occurs over Significant Time (approximately 1 hour)

Casting Time: Some Time (requires positioning and brief ceremony)

The Heart's True Measure

A ritual to determine the alignment and intentions of others

Purpose: Assess the moral character and current intentions of a person or group

Primary Caster: Spirit 4+, Insight 3+, Presence 2+

Helpers: 1 participant with Insight or Sway skill

Channel Phase (Spirit + Insight):

1. Observe the target(s) from a distance for at least one hour
2. Prepare ritual materials (candle, incense, focus crystal)
3. Roll Spirit + Insight for primary caster, Wits + Insight/Sway for helper

Weave Phase (Presence + Insight):

1. Perform the assessment ritual while maintaining focus on the target(s)
2. Interpret the signs and omens that reveal true nature
3. Roll Presence + Insight for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 SB:** The assessment is partially clouded by the target's own self-deception; -1 accuracy in reading their current intentions
- **3-4 SB:** The target becomes aware they are being scrutinized; they gain +1 die to resist future social manipulation by the caster for one session
- **5+ SB:** The ritual reveals uncomfortable truths about the caster's own nature; -2 dice to social rolls for one session as inner conflicts surface

Effect:

- Determine the general moral alignment of the target(s) (Lawful/Chaotic, Good/Evil, or Neutral variants)
- Gain insight into the target's current intentions and motivations
- Receive a sense of whether the target is lying or concealing information
- Gain +1 die to all Social rolls against the target(s) for this session based on understanding their nature

Duration: Assessment is valid for this session

Casting Time: Significant Time (requires extended observation and ceremony)

The Chain That Binds

A ritual to create sympathetic connections for remote influence

Purpose: Establish a magical link to a person or object for remote sensing or minor influence

Primary Caster: Wits 4+, Arcana 3+, Lore 2+

Helpers: 1 participant with Lore or Tinker skill

Channel Phase (Wits + Lore):

1. Obtain a significant personal item from the target or a piece of the target itself
2. Prepare linking materials (chain, cord, matched objects)
3. Roll Wits + Lore for primary caster, Wits + Lore/Tinker for helper

Weave Phase (Spirit + Arcana):

1. Perform the binding ceremony, linking the target item to the caster's focus
2. Seal the connection with a drop of the caster's blood or essence
3. Roll Spirit + Arcana for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 SB:** The connection is weak or intermittent; -1 die to all effects using the link for one session
- **3-4 SB:** The target becomes aware of the connection; they gain +1 die to resist any influence attempts through the link for one arc
- **5+ SB:** The connection becomes parasitic, draining the caster's energy; suffer Fatigue 1 per day the link remains active

Effect:

- Create a sympathetic link to the target for one arc
- Sense the target's general health and emotional state across any distance
- Inflict 1 Fatigue on the target to restore 1 Fatigue to the caster (once per day)
- Gain +1 die to any divination magic specifically targeting the linked subject

- Can be used to send simple sensations or warnings to the target (if willing)

Duration: One arc, renewable with daily 5-minute maintenance ritual

Casting Time: Some Time (requires careful preparation and ceremony)

The Veil of Years

A ritual to obscure or age objects and appearances

Purpose: Alter the apparent age of objects or beings, or hide their true nature

Primary Caster: Wits 4+, Arcana 3+, Tinker 2+

Helpers: 1-2 participants with Tinker or Craft skills

Channel Phase (Wits + Tinker):

1. Examine the object or person to be altered in detail
2. Gather materials appropriate to the desired aging effect (dust, patina agents, temporal focus)
3. Roll Wits + Tinker for primary caster, Wits + Tinker/Craft for helpers

Weave Phase (Presence + Arcana):

1. Apply the aging/veiling effect through touch and ritual words
2. Shape the temporal illusion to achieve the desired appearance
3. Roll Presence + Arcana for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 SB:** The effect is superficial or temporary; ages normally within one day
- **3-4 SB:** The aging process affects the caster as well; suffer 1 Fatigue and appear slightly older for one session
- **5+ SB:** The temporal manipulation goes awry; the target ages rapidly (or de-ages) one year for every hour the spell was meant to last

Effect:

- Age or de-age an object by 10-100 years per success level
- Alter a person's apparent age by up to 20 years (if willing)
- Hide magical auras or true nature of objects from casual inspection
- Gain +2 dice to Deception rolls involving the altered object/person for this scene
- Effect can be made permanent with additional ritual work

Duration: Scene (unless made permanent through extended ritual)

Casting Time: Some Time (15-20 minutes of careful work)

The Song of Shifting Tides

A ritual to influence luck and probability in small ways

Purpose: Bend chance and probability to favor the caster's intentions

Primary Caster: Wits 4+, Arcana 3+, Performance 2+

Helpers: 2-3 participants with Performance or Luck-based skills

Channel Phase (Wits + Performance):

1. Begin a performance or chant that resonates with the desired outcome
2. Focus the group's intent on the specific area of luck to be influenced

3. Roll Wits + Performance for primary caster, Presence + Performance for helpers

Weave Phase (Presence + Arcana):

1. Weave the performance into a magical pattern that influences probability
2. Direct the flow of chance toward favorable outcomes
3. Roll Presence + Arcana for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 SB:** The luck evens out; an equally beneficial coincidence occurs for an enemy or situation arises for an ally
- **3-4 SB:** The probability manipulation creates a paradox; -1 die to all rolls involving chance for Significant Time
- **5+ SB:** Fortune turns against the caster; all rolls involving chance suffer -2 dice for one session

Effect:

- Influence minor probability for one scene (re-roll 1s on all dice pools for the party)
- Grant one significant stroke of luck to a willing party member (GM discretion)
- Cause one minor mishap or inconvenience to an enemy or obstacle
- Gain +1 effect on one action that relies on timing or favorable circumstances

Duration: One scene (approximately 30 minutes of influenced events)

Casting Time: Some Time (requires coordinated performance)

The Anchor of Souls

A ritual to protect against death and spiritual harm

Purpose: Create a magical safeguard that can return a soul from the brink of death

Primary Caster: Spirit 5+, Lore 4+, Presence 3+

Helpers: 2-3 participants with Spirit or religious/cultural skills

Channel Phase (Spirit + Lore):

1. Prepare the soul-anchor (precious stone, blessed metal, or sacred relic)
2. Perform the consecration rites specific to the caster's tradition
3. Roll Spirit + Lore for primary caster, Spirit + relevant skill for helpers

Weave Phase (Presence + Command):

1. Bind the anchor to the intended recipient through ritual words and touch
2. Establish the conditions under which the anchor will activate
3. Roll Presence + Command for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 SB:** The anchor's activation conditions are too broad or narrow; it may activate when not needed or fail when needed most
- **3-4 SB:** The anchor draws attention from entities that feed on near-death experiences; 2 SB added to next supernatural encounter
- **5+ SB:** The anchor becomes cursed, drawing the recipient toward dangerous situations to test its power; -1 die to rolls to avoid obviously perilous actions

Effect:

- Create a soul-anchor that activates when the recipient would otherwise die
- Upon activation, the recipient is stabilized at 1 Health point and teleported to the anchor's location
- Anchor remains active for one month or until used
- Recipient gains +1 die to all resistance rolls against death effects while anchor is active
- Anchor can be set to protect against specific types of death (magical, physical, spiritual)

Duration: One month or until activated

Casting Time: Significant Time (elaborate ceremony requiring rare materials)

The Web of Whispers

A ritual to create a network of informants and information gathering

Purpose: Establish a magical network for gathering information across a region

Primary Caster: Wits 4+, Arcana 3+, Sway 3+

Helpers: 3-5 participants with Social or Investigation skills

Channel Phase (Wits + Sway):

1. Recruit willing participants to serve as nodes in the information network
2. Provide each participant with a token or signal for communication
3. Roll Wits + Sway for primary caster, Presence + Sway/Investigation for helpers

Weave Phase (Presence + Arcana):

1. Link the participants together through a shared magical pattern
2. Establish protocols for information gathering and reporting
3. Roll Presence + Arcana for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 SB:** The network is inefficient or prone to misinformation; -1 die to all information gathering through the network for one week
- **3-4 SB:** The network attracts unwanted attention from authorities or rival organizations; 2 SB added to next social encounter involving information trading
- **5+ SB:** The network becomes compromised, with enemies infiltrating as false nodes; all information from the network is suspect for one session

Effect:

- Create an information network spanning a significant geographical area
- Gain access to local news, rumors, and gossip from all network nodes
- Can request specific information about topics or individuals within the network's range
- Network provides +2 dice to Investigation or Social rolls involving information gathering for one month
- One participant per week can be called upon for a significant favor related to information

Duration: One month, renewable with weekly 15-minute maintenance ritual

Casting Time: Significant Time (requires recruitment and coordination)

The Forge of Elements

A ritual to transmute base materials into other substances

Purpose: Transform one type of material into another through magical means

Primary Caster: Wits 5+, Arcana 4+, Tinker 3+

Helpers: 2-3 participants with Tinker, Craft, or Engineering skills

Channel Phase (Wits + Tinker):

1. Gather the base materials to be transformed and the catalyst substances
2. Prepare the transmutation array or forge according to elemental principles
3. Roll Wits + Tinker for primary caster, Wits + Tinker/Craft for helpers

Weave Phase (Presence + Arcana):

1. Apply magical energy to reshape the material's fundamental structure
2. Speak the words of transformation in the language of creation
3. Roll Presence + Arcana for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 SB:** The transmutation is imperfect; the resulting material has flaws or reduced quality
- **3-4 SB:** The transformation process is unstable; 2 SB added to next crafting or tinkering action involving the caster
- **5+ SB:** The transmutation triggers a chain reaction, affecting unintended materials in the vicinity; area suffers 1 segment of environmental damage clock

Effect:

- Transform up to 10 pounds of base material into another substance of equal or lesser value per success level
- Can create alloys, treat materials for specific properties, or purify substances
- Gain +2 dice to subsequent Tinker or Craft rolls involving the transmuted materials
- Complex transmutations (precious metals, magical materials) require higher success margins and increase backlash risk
- Effect can be made permanent with proper sealing rituals

Duration: Permanent (unless reversed by specific counter-ritual)

Casting Time: Significant Time (requires specialized setup and careful procedure)

The Mirror of Fates

A ritual to glimpse possible futures and their consequences

Purpose: Peer into potential future outcomes based on current decisions

Primary Caster: Wits 5+, Arcana 4+, Insight 3+

Helpers: 1-2 participants with Insight or Lore skills

Channel Phase (Wits + Insight):

1. Define the specific decision or action to be examined
2. Prepare the scrying medium (mirror, pool, crystal ball)
3. Roll Wits + Insight for primary caster, Wits + Insight/Lore for helpers

Weave Phase (Spirit + Arcana):

1. Focus magical energy through the scrying medium to pierce the veil of time
2. Observe the branching paths and their potential outcomes
3. Roll Spirit + Arcana for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 SB:** The visions are cloudy or metaphorical; -1 die to subsequent Investigation rolls related to future planning for one scene
- **3-4 SB:** The caster becomes fixated on one possible future; -1 die to rolls involving alternative approaches for Significant Time
- **5+ SB:** The ritual reveals a catastrophic future that cannot be easily forgotten; caster suffers Fatigue 1 and -2 dice to all rolls for one session due to despair or obsession

Effect:

- Glimpse 1-3 possible futures stemming from a specific decision or action
- Futures are shown with varying degrees of clarity based on success margin
- Gain +2 dice to rolls involving planning or preparation based on the visions for this session
- Can specifically request to see consequences of one particular course of action
- GM may reveal one crucial detail that changes the interpretation of all futures shown

Duration: Visions last for this scene; knowledge benefits last for this session

Casting Time: Some Time (requires deep concentration and scrying preparation)

The Bond of Life

A ritual to share life force between willing participants

Purpose: Transfer health and vitality between bonded individuals

Primary Caster: Spirit 4+, Presence 3+, Lore 2+

Helpers: All willing participants (minimum 2, maximum 6)

Channel Phase (Spirit + Presence):

1. All participants join hands or touch in a circle
2. Each participant must willingly offer a portion of their life force
3. Roll Spirit + Presence for primary caster, Spirit + Resolve for helpers

Weave Phase (Presence + Command):

1. Weave the life forces together through ritual words and shared breath
2. Establish the conditions under which the bond will activate
3. Roll Presence + Command for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 SB:** The life force sharing is inefficient; more energy is lost in the transfer than gained by the recipient
- **3-4 SB:** The bond creates unwanted empathy; participants suffer -1 die to rolls involving personal desires that conflict with the group's needs for Significant Time
- **5+ SB:** The life force exchange becomes uncontrolled; all participants suffer Harm 1 as energy flows chaotically between them

Effect:

- Create a life-bond between all participating members for one session

- Any participant can transfer 1 Health point to another bonded member as a reflexive action
- If one bonded member would die, they can draw 1 Health point from each other bonded member (maximum transfer equal to number of other participants)
- All participants gain +1 die to resistance rolls against death or life-draining effects while the bond is active
- Participants can sense each other's general health and location within 500 yards

Duration: One session, renewable with 10-minute daily reaffirmation ritual

Casting Time: Some Time (requires circle formation and shared ceremony)

The Key of Locked Gates

A ritual to unlock magical seals and bypass barriers

Purpose: Open magically sealed doors, containers, or passages

Primary Caster: Wits 4+, Arcana 4+, Tinker 2+

Helpers: 1-2 participants with Tinker or Lore skills

Channel Phase (Wits + Arcana):

1. Examine the sealed object or barrier to understand its nature
2. Gather tools and components appropriate to the type of seal
3. Roll Wits + Arcana for primary caster, Wits + Tinker/Lore for helpers

Weave Phase (Presence + Tinker):

1. Apply magical and physical techniques to unravel the seal
2. Speak words of opening in the language appropriate to the barrier's creation
3. Roll Presence + Tinker for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 SB:** The seal is only partially opened or will relock quickly; -1 die to subsequent attempts to keep the passage open
- **3-4 SB:** The unlocking triggers security measures or alarms; 2 SB added to next encounter in the area
- **5+ SB:** The seal was a containment ward; whatever it was holding back begins to escape

Effect:

- Unlock or bypass one magical seal, ward, or barrier
- Effect strength based on success margin (simple locks vs. complex wards)
- Gain +2 dice to subsequent Tinker or Arcana rolls involving lock/ward analysis for this session
- Can create a temporary key or passcode that works for one day
- Complex seals may require multiple castings or additional components

Duration: Immediate effect with potential for temporary bypass (1 day)

Casting Time: Some Time (10-20 minutes depending on complexity)

The Feast of Shadows

A ritual to draw power from darkness and despair

Purpose: Gain strength by feeding on negative emotions or dark environments

Primary Caster: Spirit 4+, Arcana 3+, Presence 2+

Helpers: 1-2 participants with Spirit or Intimidation skills

Channel Phase (Spirit + Arcana):

1. Position yourself in an area of darkness, fear, or despair
2. Prepare to channel the negative energy through ritual focus
3. Roll Spirit + Arcana for primary caster, Spirit + Intimidation for helpers

Weave Phase (Presence + Command):

1. Draw the negative emotions or ambient darkness into yourself
2. Transform the darkness into usable magical energy
3. Roll Presence + Command for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 SB:** The power drawn is tainted; -1 die to all social rolls for one session as negative emotions cling to the caster
- **3-4 SB:** The ritual attracts entities that feed on the same darkness; 2 SB added to next supernatural encounter
- **5+ SB:** The caster becomes addicted to the dark power; must make Spirit + Resolve (DV 3) rolls to resist using the ritual again within one week

Effect:

- Gain temporary magical power based on the level of darkness/despair present
- Restore 1 Fatigue per success level, up to maximum Fatigue capacity
- Gain +1 die to all rolls for Significant Time (duration based on power drawn)
- Can enhance one magical effect per level of power drawn
- Power fades gradually over several hours unless sustained by continued exposure

Duration: Temporary boost lasting 1-3 hours based on power drawn

Casting Time: Some Time (requires immersion in dark environment)

The Crown of Seasons

A ritual to attune oneself to natural cycles and weather patterns

Purpose: Gain power and insight aligned with natural cycles and seasonal changes

Primary Caster: Spirit 4+, Lore 3+, Survival 3+

Helpers: 2-3 participants with Survival, Lore, or Nature skills

Channel Phase (Spirit + Lore):

1. Meditate outdoors and observe the current natural conditions
2. Gather seasonal materials (flowers, leaves, stones, water)
3. Roll Spirit + Lore for primary caster, Wits + Survival/Lore for helpers

Weave Phase (Presence + Survival):

1. Weave the seasonal materials into a crown or ceremonial focus
2. Align your spirit with the current season's power
3. Roll Presence + Survival for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 SB:** The attunement is imperfect; gain only half the normal benefits for this season
- **3-4 SB:** The ritual attracts the attention of local nature spirits who demand tribute; 1 SB added to next encounter with natural creatures
- **5+ SB:** The caster becomes too attuned to nature, losing touch with civilization; -1 die to all social rolls involving urban environments for one session

Effect:

- Gain seasonal attunement for one week (effects vary by season)
- Spring: +1 die to healing and growth-related magic, +1 to all recovery rolls
- Summer: +1 die to fire and light-based magic, resistance to heat effects
- Autumn: +1 die to divination and knowledge magic, enhanced perception
- Winter: +1 die to ice and preservation magic, resistance to cold effects
- Gain +1 die to Survival rolls while in natural environments

Duration: One week, renewable with daily 5-minute meditation

Casting Time: Significant Time (requires outdoor ceremony and material gathering)

The Vessel of Echoes

A ritual to store and replay magical effects or memories

Purpose: Capture a magical effect, memory, or experience for later use

Primary Caster: Wits 4+, Arcana 4+, Lore 2+

Helpers: 1 participant with Lore or Insight skills

Channel Phase (Wits + Arcana):

1. Prepare the storage vessel (crystal, vial, focus object)
2. Determine what specific effect, memory, or experience to capture
3. Roll Wits + Arcana for primary caster, Wits + Lore/Insight for helper

Weave Phase (Spirit + Lore):

1. Channel the target into the prepared vessel through focused will
2. Seal the vessel with appropriate binding rituals
3. Roll Spirit + Lore for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 SB:** The storage is unstable; the captured effect has a 50% chance of failing when replayed
- **3-4 SB:** The vessel leaks energy; 1 SB added to next magical encounter as residual magic attracts attention
- **5+ SB:** The vessel becomes cursed, replaying the captured effect at random times; caster suffers unexpected activation once per day

Effect:

- Store one magical effect, memory, or experience in a prepared vessel
- Stored effect can be replayed once by anyone holding the vessel
- Memories can be shared with others through the vessel (as if experiencing them firsthand)
- Complex effects may require multiple vessels or increase backlash risk
- Vessel remains active for one month or until used

Duration: One month or until activated

Casting Time: Some Time (15-30 minutes of careful preparation)

The Thread of Fates

A ritual to glimpse the connections between people and events

Purpose: Perceive the invisible threads that bind individuals to each other and to destiny

Primary Caster: Wits 5+, Arcana 4+, Insight 3+

Helpers: 1-2 participants with Insight or Investigation skills

Channel Phase (Wits + Insight):

1. Gather personal items or samples from all individuals to be examined
2. Prepare the divination space with thread, yarn, or similar materials
3. Roll Wits + Insight for primary caster, Wits + Insight/Investigation for helpers

Weave Phase (Spirit + Arcana):

1. Cast the threads across the divination space, allowing them to settle naturally
2. Interpret the patterns formed by the threads' connections
3. Roll Spirit + Arcana for primary caster

Backlash:

- **1-2 SB:** The connections shown are partially obscured or misleading; -1 die to subsequent Investigation rolls for one scene
- **3-4 SB:** The caster glimpses connections they would rather not see; suffer Fatigue 1 and -1 die to social rolls for Significant Time
- **5+ SB:** The ritual reveals a connection that puts the caster in danger; GM introduces a threat linked to one of the revealed connections

Effect:

- Visualize the major connections between 2-5 specified individuals
- See 1-2 significant past events that connect these individuals
- Gain insight into one potential future connection or meeting
- Identify one hidden relationship or secret bond between the subjects
- Gain +2 dice to Investigation or Social rolls involving the connected individuals for this session

Duration: Vision lasts for this scene; knowledge benefits last for this session

Casting Time: Some Time (requires setup and meditation)

The Ending

These rituals represent the known arts of the Tulkani tradition as recorded in the surviving fragments. Many more surely existed, lost to time, war, or deliberate destruction.

The path of magic is ever one of discovery and rediscovery. What was once known may be found again, and what was never known may yet be revealed to those brave enough to seek beyond the veil.

Use these rituals as a foundation for your own explorations. Each caster must find their own way through the intricate paths between the worlds, learning what works and what warns them away through experience.

Remember always that magic is not without cost. The greatest powers demand the greatest sacrifices, and even the smallest rituals leave their mark upon both caster and world.

May your paths be safe, your intentions clear, and your wisdom greater than your ambition.

Appendix D

Disabling Traps and Wards

Traps are mechanical devices designed to either act as a [BARRIER] or do damage (+Fatigue for poison, or +Harm). Wards are traps encoded in magic: a binding, sensor, or anchored effect. Treat them like any obstacle: **state the fiction**, **set Position**, and **resolve against DV**. This subsection expands the SRD example with GM-facing tools: how to set DV from fiction, what good/bad results look like, and how to keep the scene moving.

D.0.1 Structure (at the table).

- Step 1: Name the Ward.** What does it sense (heat, oath-breaking, Patron presence)? What does it do (alarm, bind, blast, invert gravity)? Where is the *anchor* (sigil, keystone, idol, threshold)?
- Step 2: Reveal Handles.** Offer at least two fictional levers: the arcane pattern (*Arcana*), the mechanism/anchor (*Tinker*), and the approach route (*Agility/Move*). Tools, components, or Patron symbols count as handles.
- Step 3: Set Position → DV.** Use the ladder as defaults; shift for scale/urgency.
- **Controlled** (time, tools, clear access): **DV2**.
 - **Risky** (pressure, partial access): **DV3**.
 - **Desperate** (activating, hostile field): **DV 4–5+**.
- Step 4: Declare Stakes.** What happens on Partial/Miss? Name the *Ward Clock* and the *Alert Clock* up front if relevant.

D.0.2 Common Ward Types Anchors.

Type	Trigger	Anchor Examples
Sentry	Crossing a threshold, line of sight, sound cadence	Lintel sigil, eye-gem, bell filament
Binding	Handling an item, touching a seal, oath breach	Wax seal, chain knot, iron brand
Punitive	Trespass + time window, named rival, taboo action	Idol tooth, ash sigil under rug, curse knot
Displacement	Path inversion, gravity twist, dream-step	Floor mandala, mirrored post, sleep pin
Anti-Magic	Casting in zone, symbol presence, boon use	Null plate, cold-iron frame, void ampoule

D.0.3 Approaches Aids (examples).

- **Wits + Arcana:** analyze glyph grammar; ground the loop with salt/ink; counter-frequency hum.
- **Wits + Tinker:** wedge the keystone; snip hair-thin filament; re-route power to a safe sink.
- **Body + Agility:** thread the safe arc; pin the pressure plate; time the chime cadence.
- **Teamwork:** one character steadies Position with tools while another rolls; assistants may accept **1 SB** to grant +1d once.
- **Talents/Tools:** lockpicks, ward-ink, tuning forks, mirror-shards; Patron symbols might improve Position if thematically aligned.

D.0.4 Clocks that Matter.

Ward Integrity (4):

how close the binding is to disarming *or* rupturing. On Partial, tick 1; on Misses, tick 2.

Alerted Attention (4):

nearby guardians, spirits, or owners notice tampering.

Escalation (4/6):

punitive effects ramp (more Harm, broader area, additional tags).

D.0.5 Outcomes Palette (use or adapt).

- **Strong Hit:** Ward disabled/redirected cleanly; optionally *bank a tell* (learn its signature for later).
- **Mixed:** Suppressed but *unstable*; pick one: tick ALERTED ATTENTION +1, apply minor Backlash by element/Patron, or leave a trace (future complication).
- **Miss:** Ward holds or triggers; GM may (a) advance WARD INTEGRITY toward rupture, (b) trigger a reduced effect now, (c) spend SB to introduce a hard complication.

Counter-Ward (Arcana Focus; optional). On a Success, choose one: (1) **Suppress** for a scene; (2) **Disarm** permanently (mark +1 Obligation or expend rare material); (3) **Invert** (redirect first trigger to a designated sink; start UNINTENDED ECHO 1/4).

D.0.6 Difficulty Dials.

- **Scale:** Large areas or ancient wards add +1 DV or an extra clock.
- **Haste:** Rushed attempts worsen Position one step.
- **Right of Names:** Knowing the warder's true name improves Position one step or grants +1d.
- **Wrong Patron:** Symbols from an opposed Patron impose -1d or +1 DV (GM call).

D.0.7 Fiction First Hooks.

- Show sensory tells (ozone, cold breath, hair standing) before rolls.
- On Partial, change the room: new cover lines, heat shimmer, dead zones for boons.
- On Miss, give a choice: suffer a lesser effect now to avoid full trigger later, or press on and risk rupture.

Worked Mini-Example. *Vault Sentry (DV 3, Risky)*. Anchor: eye-gem in an idol. The crew uses Wits+Tinker with ward-ink and a mirror shard. Mixed result: WARD INTEGRITY+1, ALERTED ATTENTION+1, but the beam is shunted for this scene. Later a rival recognizes the mirror signature—payoff for the trace left behind.

Appendix E

Poison as Story Beats (Narrative ↔ Mechanics)

Poison is best when it *pushes scenes forward* rather than only dealing damage. This module frames poison as **Fatigue-forward**, with **Story Beats (SB)** powering escalation.

Core Model

- **Primary Effect:** Poison applies **Fatigue** (not Harm) unless it explicitly says otherwise.
- **Escalation:** The GM may **spend 1 SB** created in the scene to upgrade a poison instance: *Fatigue* (→) *Condition* (→) *Harm*. *Not the fiction of the escalation (spasms, fever spike, airway closing)*.
- **Clocks:** Use a named clock per poison (e.g., NEUROTOXIN LOAD 1/4). Ticks convert into Fatigue/Conditions at thresholds.
- **Resist:** Players may Resist poison normally; strong fiction (antidote, mask, purge rite) can reduce Position or cancel a tick.

Delivery & Position

Route	Base DV	Position Cues
Contact	2	Sweat, numbness, rashes; Controlled with gloves/time.
Ingested	3	Bitter note, wine film; Risky at table, Controlled in lab.
Inhaled	3–4	Perfume cloud, dust motes; Desperate in confined spaces.
Injury/Venom	3–4	Fanged strike, tainted blade; Risky unless braced/prepared.

Outcomes Palette

Strong Hit.

Avoid or purge: clear POISON CLOCK by 1 and ignore the current instance.

Mixed.

Mark **Fatigue +1** or take a minor **Condition** (DIZZY, SHAKING). GM may tick the POISON CLOCK +1.

Miss.

Mark **Fatigue +1** and tick POISON CLOCK +1–2. The GM may spend SB to apply a stronger

Condition *or* escalate to **Harm 1**.

Conversion & Interactions

- **Fatigue** → **Harm**. Normal Fatigue overflow still converts per your health rules (see §9.7).
- **Armor**. Armor rarely helps vs. contact/ingested poisons; vs. *injury* delivery, apply armor before poison unless the blade is **Barbed/Venomous** (tag), which bypasses one step of conversion.
- **Rites**. *Purge* (§??) clears 1–2 ticks or downgrades Condition → Fatigue (GM sets Obligation).
- **Patrons**. Poison from a Patron-aligned source may trigger thematic backlash or Claims when resisted.

SB Dials for GMs

- **Pressure Valve (soft)**. Spend SB to *delay* catastrophic onset: tick clock instead of immediate Harm, but widen the threat.
- **Spike (hard)**. Spend SB to *frontload* impact: apply a named Condition now (BLIND, CRAMPING) or force a risky reposition.
- **Echo**. Bank 1 SB to trigger a delayed complication (e.g., relapse during negotiations).

Sample Poisons

Name	Primary Effect (on hit)	SB-Driven Escalation
Bitterglass	Fatigue +1; breath tastes like copper.	1 SB: DIZZY. 2 SB: Harm 1 (air hunger).
Widowroot	Fatigue +1; numb grip.	1 SB: drop held item. 2 SB: SHAKING.
Dream-Marrow	Fatigue +1; slow recall.	1 SB: FOGGED (–1 to memory). 2 SB: ASLEEP unless shaken.
Serpent’s Borrow	Fatigue +1; swelling puncture.	1 SB: CRAMPING. 2 SB: Harm 1 unless pressure bandaged.
Courtier’s Kiss	Fatigue +1; sweet aftertaste.	1 SB: SWAYED (–1 vs. social manipulation). 2 SB: BLURRED VISION.

Worked Micro-Example

Gala Balcony. Inhaled perfume trap (DV 3, Risky). Mixed: PC marks Fatigue +1; GM ticks POISON CLOCK+1. Later, during the toast, the GM spends 1 SB to apply DIZZY; the PC chooses to lean on a friend (creating a bond) rather than push through and risk Harm.

Summary

Poison leans on **Fatigue** first. **SB** lets the GM pace escalation as the scene demands. Name the clock, show the tells, and let fiction lead the effect.

Appendix F

Boss Generator

F.1 Core Concept

A deck-based tool to quickly create compelling, thematically rich boss encounters with built-in mechanical scaling and narrative hooks. The GM uses the draws as a foundation and then applies their knowledge of the setting, party, and desired challenge level to finalize the boss.

F.2 Deck Structure

F.2.1 Standard Deck (52 Cards)

Suits Define Core Aspects:

- **(Spades - Structure):** The boss's physical form, defenses, and core mechanics.
- **(Hearts - Drive):** The boss's motivations, goals, and psychological core.
- **(Clubs - Complication):** The boss's signature hazards, environmental effects, and unique challenges it introduces.
- **(Diamonds - Reward):** The boss's unique loot, knowledge, or narrative currency the players gain by defeating it (can also be a "Twist" reward that changes the story).

Ranks Define Scale/Intensity (Modified for Bosses):

- **2-5 (Minor):** A challenging elite enemy or minor boss. 4-segment "Phase" clock.
- **6-10 (Standard):** A significant boss encounter. 6-segment "Phase" clock.
- **J, Q, K (Major):** A major set-piece boss. 8-segment "Phase" clock.
- **A (Pivotal):** An epic, campaign-defining boss. 10-segment "Phase" clock.

Color Influence:

- **Black Suits (♠, ♣):** Physical, tangible threats and defenses.
- **Red Suits (♥, ♦):** Psychological, social, or intangible aspects.

F.3 Deck Categories & Examples

F.3.1 Spades - Structure (Form, Defenses, Core Mechanics)

- **2-5:** Augmented Body (Cybernetics, armor plating), Swarm Core (Controls lesser units), Fragile Shell (Weak physical form, relies on other defenses).

- **6-10:** Massive Construct (High Body, area attacks), Adaptive Core (Changes tactics/defenses), Phased Form (Intangible/invulnerable at certain times).
- **J/Q/K:** Living Weapon (Its body IS its weapon), Reality Anchor (Negates certain magic/effects in its zone), Hive Mind (Shares health/pool with minions).
- **A:** Titan (Massive scale, environmental effects just by existing), Conceptual Entity (Exists partially outside normal reality), World-Soul (Bound to the location itself).

F.3.2 Hearts - Drive (Motivation, Goals, Psychology)

- **2-5:** Greed (Wants treasure/resources), Survival (Will do anything to stay alive), Guarding (Protecting something/someone).
- **6-10:** Domination (Seeks control/power over others), Corruption (Spreads decay/evil), Restoration (Trying to fix/revive something, even destructively).
- **J/Q/K:** Vengeance (Driven by a specific past wrong), Ascension (Seeks to transcend current form/state), Preservation (Wants to prevent change or end the world).
- **A:** Cosmic Hunger (Consumes to fuel its existence), Paradox Incarnate (Embodies a fundamental contradiction), The Inevitable (Its goal is preordained, unstoppable).

F.3.3 Clubs - Complication (Hazards, Environment, Unique Challenges)

- **2-5:** Overheating Systems (Condition clock that worsens attacks if filled), Unstable Terrain (Difficult/unsafe ground), Reactive Defenses (Traps triggered by player actions).
- **6-10:** Environmental Collapse (Clock ticking towards a disaster), Phased Attacks (Must be attacked in a specific sequence), Debilitating Field (Ongoing condition for players).
- **J/Q/K:** Minion Control (Commands powerful followers), Reality Distortion (Rules of physics/magic are bent), Soul Drain (Attacks also sap resolve/resources).
- **A:** Apotheosis Trigger (Defeating it the “wrong” way makes it stronger), Causality Loop (Actions have delayed, paradoxical effects), Domain Authority (The battlefield itself is hostile).

F.3.4 Diamonds - Reward/Twist (Loot, Knowledge, Narrative Shift)

- **2-5:** Valuables (Riches, rare materials), Useful Tool (Minor artifact, key, helpful item), Tactical Knowledge (Insight into a related threat).
- **6-10:** Powerful Artifact (Significant magic item), Forbidden Lore (Dangerous but valuable information), Faction Favor (Gain status with a group).
- **J/Q/K:** Soul Bargain (Power at a cost), Command Obedience (Gain control over something related), Rewriting Fate (Undo a past failure or gain a major advantage).
- **A:** Worldly Truth (Reveals a major plot point), Shifting Balance (Fundamentally alters the power structure), Divine Spark (A step towards mythic status for a PC).

F.4 GM Usage Procedure

1. **Define Scope:** Decide the general tier/impact of the boss (Minor encounter to Pivotal climax).
2. **Draw Cards:** Draw one card from each suit. The highest rank determines the base **Phase Clock Size** (4/6/8/10 segments).

3. **Interpret Core:** Read the four cards as a cohesive whole. What kind of boss does this combination suggest?
 - *Example: 6 Massive Construct, J Vengeance, Q Reality Distortion, A Worldly Truth.*
 - *Interpretation: A vengeful, colossal war construct whose very presence warps reality. Defeating it reveals a crucial truth.*
4. **Theme & Flavour:** Use the core concept to tie the boss to the setting, the party's story, or the current location. What *is* this Massive Construct? Who is it seeking Vengeance against?
5. **Set Base Stats:** Use the party's Tier and the boss's scale (rank) to determine a base dice pool.
 - *Guideline: Tier I (Rookie/Seasoned): Boss Base 6-7 dice. Tier II (Veteran): 7-8 dice. Tier III (Paragon): 8-9 dice. Tier IV/V (Mythic): 9+ dice.*
6. **Mechanize the Cards:**
 - **Structure:** Defines base form, resistances, and primary attack modes. *Massive Construct* = High Body, area attacks, maybe [COMPROMISED] resistance.
 - **Drive:** Influences behavior and special actions. *Vengeance* = Targeted attacks on specific PC/ally, bonus against those who "wronged" it.
 - **Complication:** Create a named clock or ongoing effect. *Reality Distortion* = "Warp Field" clock [6]. When filled, the laws of physics in the zone shift dramatically for a round.
 - **Reward/Twist:** Plan the narrative outcome. *Worldly Truth* = Defeating it reveals the location of a hidden vault or the true identity of a patron.
7. **Define Phases:** Based on the clock size, break the fight into 2-3 phases. As the main "Phase Clock" fills, the boss gains +1 die per phase (or other escalating effects) and may trigger its Complication clock or introduce new elements.
8. **Tie to Story Beats:** Remember, the boss generates Story Beats (SB) on 1s. Use the Drive and Complication to guide how SB are spent. *Vengeance* SB might target the PC it's after. *Reality Distortion* SB might trigger environmental weirdness.
9. **Run the Encounter:** Use the established framework, but narrate freely. Let player actions and SB spends influence the specific details within the established parameters.

F.5 GM Guidance & Theming Advice

- **Start Simple:** For a first boss, use fewer complications or a straightforward phase structure. Add complexity as you get comfortable.
- **Tie to the Party:** Use the Drive to connect the boss to the PCs. A boss driven by *Vengeance* is more impactful if it's specifically targeting one of the players or their homeland.
- **Make the Environment a Character:** Use the Complication to make the fight location dynamic. The boss doesn't just exist *in* the environment; it *is* part of the environment or actively manipulates it.
- **Reward Narrative Investment:** The Reward/Twist is crucial. It shouldn't just be loot; it should advance the story or give players a meaningful choice.
- **Use Clocks Liberally:** The boss's Phase Clock, its Complication Clock, and environmental clocks (like Self-Destruct) are fantastic tools for pacing and adding tension. Name them evocatively.

- **Embrace Failures:** A “Miss” for the boss or a player isn’t a dead end. It’s an opportunity for a complication (SB spend) that makes the story more interesting.
- **Scale the Fight:** Don’t be afraid to adjust on the fly. If the boss is too easy, spend SB to make it nastier. If it’s too hard, let a fortunate player action create an opening.

F.6 Example: The Tyrant-Engine

- **Draw:** 8 Adaptive Core, K Domination, Q Reality Distortion, K Rewriting Fate. Highest rank K (Major) -> **8-segment Phase Clock**.
- **Theme:** A war machine fused with a corrupted intelligence, driven to impose order through force, capable of warping the battlefield.
- **Stats:** Tier II party base (8 dice).
- **Mechanics:**
 - **Adaptive Core:** Gains resistance tags or minor condition immunities. Changes primary attack mode (melee/ranged/area) based on who is most threatening.
 - **Domination:** Focuses attacks on the perceived leader or most defiant PC. Gains bonuses when enemies are impaired/frightened.
 - **Reality Distortion:** “Warp Field” clock [6]. Fills via SB spends or when boss takes significant damage. When full: Range bands shift, gravity flickers, or a zone becomes [WARD] against certain actions for one round.
 - **Rewriting Fate:** Defeating it reveals a command code or core logic that can be used to control other similar constructs, or rewrite the narrative of how this fortress fell (ally survived, different outcome).
- **Phases:** 3 phases (0-2/3-5/6-8 segments on Phase Clock) granting +0/+1/+2 dice respectively.
- **SB Spends:** Tie to (targeting defiant PCs) and (triggering minor warp effects, environmental hazards).

This system provides a structured spark for creativity, ensuring bosses are not just stat blocks but integral, dynamic parts of the narrative, perfectly aligned with Fate’s Edge’s core principles.

Closing Thoughts

Every roleplaying game is, at its heart, a shared act of imagination. FATE'S EDGE offers rules and structures, but the real magic happens between players and game master, in the pauses between dice rolls and the sparks that leap across the table. The mechanics are not a cage—they are a scaffold, meant to support the story you want to tell.

You will not find every answer written in these pages, nor should you. The best sessions arise when the table embraces uncertainty: when a Story Beat pulls the tale in an unexpected direction, when a character's flaw drives the narrative forward, when laughter follows disaster. The system gives you tools; the table gives those tools meaning.

If you remember nothing else, carry these three principles into play:

- **Fiction First.** Let the world breathe, and let the rules bend to the needs of the story.
- **Every Choice Matters.** Risk, consequence, and reward shape characters as surely as dice.
- **Build Together.** Collaboration turns scenes into sagas and mechanics into myth.

The rules are here to help you weave drama, not to constrain it. Use them generously, ignore them when they slow the story, and trust your table to improvise with honesty and care. Above all, let the edges of fate guide you not toward certainty, but toward possibility.

May your journeys be bold, your dice fall true, and your stories echo long after the table is cleared.

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