

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:** Dominant | Controlled | Desperate (affects success/failure texture).

Chapter 2

Core Mechanics

2.1 Adjudicating Rolls: The Core Resolution Cycle

When a player rolls, they are not simply trying to *beat a number*. They are engaging the world through risk, consequence, and discovery. This section walks through the full cycle.

2.1.1 Step-by-Step Roll Resolution

1. **Declare Action & Approach:** Player states intent, Attribute + Skill.
2. **Set Difficulty Value (DV):** Based on narrative stakes, not just mechanics.
3. **Roll Pool of d10s.**
4. **Count: Successes (6+) and Story Beats (1s).**
5. **Check Against DV:** Apply the Outcome Matrix. Note: **each 10 counts as 2 successes.**
6. **Spend SB:** GM spends/banks Story Beats or draws from the Deck of Consequences.

| | DV | Typical Case |
|---------------------|----|---|
| [Difficulty Ladder] | 3 | Routine: clear intent, modest stakes, controlled setting |
| | 4 | Pressured: time limits, mild resistance, partial info |
| | 5 | Hard: hostile conditions, active opposition, precision required |
| | 6+ | Extreme: stacked constraints, dangerous failure, high drama |

Difficulty Values (DV) by Tier

Guideline. The base Difficulty Value (DV) for an opposed or environmental test scales with Tier:

$$DV = \text{Tier} + 2 + \text{Modifiers}$$

Typical DVs.

| Tier | Base DV | Example Challenge |
|------|---------|-----------------------------|
| I | 5 | Local threat / novice test |
| II | 6 | Veteran foe or skilled task |
| III | 7 | Elite / magical challenge |
| IV | 8 | Mythic or cosmic threat |

Positional Modifiers.

- **Desperate:** +2 **Risky:** +1 **Controlled:** +0 **Dominant:** -1

Use $DV = \text{Tier} + 2$ as the default; adjust for environment, advantage, or narrative pressure.

A DV should measure narrative weight as much as difficulty. Scaling a wall is routine. Scaling it while lantern-wardens pursue is pressured—or worse.

| | Result | GM Guidance |
|------------------|--------------------|--|
| [Outcome Matrix] | $S \geq DV, C = 0$ | Clean Success: Grant intent, no added friction. |
| | $S \geq DV, C > 0$ | Success & Cost: Intent achieved; GM spends SB for complications. |
| | $0 < S < DV$ | Partial: Progress <i>proportional</i> to hits; intent advances but with gaps or Player gains 1 Boon. |
| | $S = 0$ | Miss: No progress. GM escalates with SB/Clocks. Player gains 2 Boons |

2.2 Fail Forward: Every Roll Matters

Partials are the most common form of “success.” They always move the fiction forward in proportion to the progress rolled.

One success on DV 4: “The lock is stubborn. You think you can get it if you keep trying.” *Three successes on DV 4:* “The lock springs open with a loud clank—you’re sure the guards heard.” (Upgrade to Success & Cost; add 2 SB).

Misses fuel escalation but always generate player resources: 2 Boons and a consequence. A roll is *meaningful* if:

1. The standard procedure is followed (intent + DV + roll).
2. Stakes are stated up front (what changes on success, what bites on failure).
3. Real consequences occur now (SB spent, condition applied, or thread advanced).

2.2.1 Important Notes

- Rolling a 1 always creates SB for the GM. Rerolls do not erase SB.

- No Boons for rehearsal, trivial probes, or repeating an identical approach without changing fiction.
- Controlled tests with no bite give positioning/info, not Boons.

2.2.2 Anti-Fishing Measures

- **Cap:** At most 2 Boons from failures per character per scene (further misses still make SB).
- **Repetition Rule:** Same action + same stakes in the same scene can't grant another Boon.

2.2.3 Example

Lockpicking under watch (*Desperate*, DV 3). **Miss:** GM spends 2 SB to start *Guards Incoming [6]*. Player earns 2 Boons. **Partial (2 successes):** Door opens halfway; guard footsteps approach. Player earns 1 Boon.

2.2.4 Boon Sharing

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

- **Bonded Allies:** Up to 2 Boons gifted per scene.
- **Assistance:** Shared Boons can enhance an ally's roll.
- **Campaign Events:** Major milestones may generate party-wide Boons.

GM Note: Encourage gifts with roleplay beats, but balance generosity with potential dependency or group tension.

Critical Success & GM Heat

Rule Summary. A *Critical Success* represents a decisive shift in control, while *GM Heat* measures the world's reaction to the heroes' growing dominance.

Crit Effect.

On a Critical Success, immediately **raise your Position** by one step:

Desperate → Risky → Controlled → **Dominant**.

If already at *Dominant*, gain **+1 Success** instead.

Each Crit also adds **+1 Heat** to the GM's pool.

Dominant Position.

Dominant is the highest attainable Position, representing decisive advantage. While Dominant:

- All actions begin with one automatic success.
- Further Crits add +1 Success per excess tier.
- Any Complication, Consequence, or GM Heat spend immediately lowers Position by one step.

GM Heat.

Heat reflects rising narrative tension. It resets to 0 at the end of each scene.

- **Gain 1 Heat:** Whenever any player scores a Crit.
- **Spend 1 Heat:**
 - Degrade a PC's Position by one tier.
 - Introduce a Complication or Clock tick.
 - Mirror or escalate a previous Story Beat.
- **Spend 2 Heat:** Manifest a major twist, environmental hazard, or factional response.

Balance and Flow. • Spending *Momentum* or invoking a Rite while Dominant consumes your edge, returning Position to Controlled.

- GM Heat ensures rising power is met with proportional world response, maintaining narrative tension.

Result Bands.

| Result | Effect | Position Shift |
|-----------------------------|------------------------------|----------------|
| Miss (1–3) | Failure + Cost | ↓ 1 tier |
| Weak Hit (4–6) | Success + Consequence | — |
| Strong Hit (7–9) | Clean Success | — |
| Crit (10 or 2 at 8+) | Position Bump + +1 Heat (GM) | ↑ 1 tier |
| Crit while Dominant | +1 Success + +1 Heat (GM) | — |

Design Intent. This rule transforms Crits from “bigger wins” into shifts in control and tension. Players' momentum raises their Position, while GM Heat keeps the narrative world responsive, ensuring ebb and flow without trivializing challenge.

2.3 SB Spend Menu

2.3.1 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.

2.3.2 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.

2.3.3 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.

2.3.4 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.

2.3.5 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.

2.3.6 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**.

2.4 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.

2.4.1 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.

2.4.2 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.

2.4.3 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.
- Spotlighting character flaws or complications.

2.4.4 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.

2.4.5 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.

2.4.6 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.

2.4.7 Practical Examples

- **Boons Awarded:** Picking a lock under watch (Desperate, 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.

2.5 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.

2.5.1 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.

2.5.2 Position

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

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

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

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

2.6 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.

2.6.1 Initiative and Turn Order

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

- **Narrative Fiat:** The GM frames spotlight order based on circumstances, tension, and narrative flow.
- **Player Input:** Players may suggest acting when it makes sense in the fiction.
- **Surprise:** Ambushers act first; targets respond after the opening exchange.

- **Flexibility:** Spotlight may shift mid-scene if fictionally appropriate (e.g., reacting to a falling ceiling, seizing a moment).

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

2.6.2 Turn Economy (Quick Rules)

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

2.7 Experience Point Economy

2.7.1 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

2.7.2 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

2.7.3 Complication Dividend

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

2.7.4 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).

2.8 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.

2.9 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.

2.9.1 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.

2.9.2 Fatigue

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

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

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

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

2.9.3 Fear Effects Table

When a character escalates on the Fear Track (Shaken → Frightened → Panicked), roll on the following table or choose an appropriate effect. These results apply primarily to NPCs, though PCs may adopt them as narrative guidance.

| d10 | Effect | Magic Tags |
|-----|---|-------------------|
| 1 | Freeze: Cannot act this round, staring or trembling. | Silence, Stasis |
| 2 | Flee: Must move at full speed away from the source of Fear. | Movement, Wind |
| 3 | Drop: Character drops what they are holding. | Disarm, Break |
| 4 | Beg: Character pleads or bargains incoherently. | Compulsion, Voice |
| 5 | Hide: Seeks cover, concealment, or allies to cling to. | Shadow, Illusion |
| 6 | Attack in Panic: Lashes out wildly at the nearest target. | Rage, Fire |
| 7 | Blunder: Stumbles into danger (trap, hazard, off balance). | Chaos, Trickery |
| 8 | Obey: Instinctively follows a simple command from the fear-causer. | Command, Charm |
| 9 | Break Down: Sobs, prays, or becomes useless until aided. | Curse, Despair |
| 10 | Catatonia: Becomes unresponsive, requiring intervention. | Sleep, Dream |

2.9.4 War Mount Examples

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

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

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

Summary. The War Mount grants mobility and offensive momentum:

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

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

Note. At GM discretion, results may escalate with each step of the Fear Track: - *Shaken*: Apply minor versions (hesitation, lost die, startled). - *Frightened*: Roll normally. - *Panicked*: Apply severe or exaggerated results (e.g., 2 = reckless flight, 6 = attack allies).

2.9.5 Maximum die pool

An individual can have a max die pool of 10d10. All extra are converted to auto-successes.

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.

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 | Require- |
|-------------------------|------------------|--------------------|--|----------|
| | | | ments | 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.

4.9 Locations Lore and Generators

4.10 Acasia — “Broken Marches”

Elite (Margravine of the Broken March)

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

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

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

Famine & Ambition

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Quick use notes

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

Additional Features

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

Decline & Patronage

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

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

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

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

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

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

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

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

Major Turns (4+ SB)

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

Region-Specific SB Options

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

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

Acasia — The Olde Tavern

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

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

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

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

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

External Clocks Threat: “The Dowry Wakes”; Community: “Guild Panic”; Anchor: “The Inn’s Safe Conduct.”

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

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

Escalation Beat The poster adds a PC's portrait.

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

Faction Entanglements

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

Cross-Regional Ties

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

Trade Goods & Consequences

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

Patron Networks

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

Diplomatic Favor & Reputation Echoes

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

Decline & Patronage

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

Boss Archetypes in Acasia

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

Boss Mechanics Notes

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

4.11 Aelaerem (Halflings) — “Hearth & Hollow”

Elite (Apple-Matron)

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

Commoner (Miller and his watch-geese)

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

Hearth & Hollow

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

J (Blessing/Help) Apple-Matron's blessing—hands help unseen when you ask no coin.

Q (Justice/Privacy) Private moot under the Oak; elders hear you alone, precedent sticks.

K (Protection/Authority) Thresher-King's guard—six red-hooded harvesters escort you; doors open.

A (Otherworld/Invisibility) Pale Shepherd's clause—once, the Hollow will not notice you; pass uncounted.

Quick use notes

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

Additional Features

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

Hearth Magic

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

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

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

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

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

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

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

Major Turns (4+ SB)

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

Region-Specific SB Options

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

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

Aelaerem — Strangers Hired for a Job

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Faction Entanglements

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

Cross-Regional Ties

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

Trade Goods & Consequences

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

Patron Networks

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

Diplomatic Favor & Reputation Echoes

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

Boss Archetypes in Aelaerem

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

geased tasks.

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

Boss Mechanics Notes

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

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

Elite (Vault-Queen of a crownland)

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

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

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

Crowns & Under-Vaults

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Quick use notes

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

Additional Features

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

Stone & Sovereignty

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

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

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

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

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

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

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

Major Turns (4+ SB)

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

Region-Specific SB Options

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

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

Aeler — Under-Vault Tensions

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Faction Entanglements

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

Cross-Regional Ties & Soft Power

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

Trade Goods & Consequences

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

Patron Networks (Below and Beyond)

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

Survival-Horror Procedures (Use Often)

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

Diplomatic Favor & Reputation Echoes

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

Boss Archetypes in Aeler

Systemic / Economic / Conspiracy

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

Survival Horror (Environment as Boss)

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

Undead / Fallen Kingdom / Eldritch / Demonic

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

Boss Mechanics Notes

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

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

Elite (Stone Prince of Aelinnel)

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

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

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

Stone, Bough, and Bright Things

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

fetch tea.

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

Quick use notes

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

Additional Features

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

Courtesies of the Green Gate

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

Numbers & Nature

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

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

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

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

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

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

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

Major Turns (4+ SB)

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

Region-Specific SB Options

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

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

Aelinnel — Tidal Bargains

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Faction Entanglements

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

Cross-Regional Ties & Soft Power

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

Trade Goods & Consequences

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

Patron Networks (Patterns & Thresholds)

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

Field Procedures (Use At the Table)

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

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

Diplomatic Favor & Reputation Echoes

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

Boss Archetypes in Aelinnel

Court & Courtesy (Fae Sovereigns)

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

Threshold & Hunt (Environment that Judges)

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

Numbers & Glamour (Logical Anomalies)

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

Market & Oath (Contract Tricksters)

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

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

Stone & Memory (Ancestral Hazards)

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

Boss Mechanics (Use 2–3 levers)

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

4.14 Black Banners — “Condotta & Crowns”

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

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

Commoner (Veteran sergeant who counts scars like coins)

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

Condotta & Crowns

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Quick use notes

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

Additional Features

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

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

Center the dial by a symbolic act—repaying arrears, returning prisoners, or honoring a broken writ.

Mercenary Realpolitik

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

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

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

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

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

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

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

Major Turns (4+ SB)

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

Region-Specific SB Options

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

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

Black Banners — Condotta Crossroads

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Escalation Beat The banners swap colors in wind.

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

Faction Entanglements

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

Cross-Theater Ties & Soft Power (Optional Hooks)

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

Trade Goods & Consequences

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

Patron Networks (Optional, if in play)

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

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

Field Procedures (Use at the Table)

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

Diplomatic Favor & Reputation Echoes

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

Boss Archetypes in Black Banners

Contract & Command (Human Adversaries)

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

Tribe & Tactic (Field Sovereigns)

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

Faith & Fear (Camp Powers)

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

The Unquiet Field (Supernatural Front)

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

Boss Mechanics (Pick 2–3 dials)

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

4.15 Dungeon — “Living Infrastructure”

Elite (Dungeon’s Creator)

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

Commoner (Scholar-Prisoner)

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

Theme & Atmosphere

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

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

Spades — Places (categories)

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

Q Vault of Whispers — Books exhale when opened; vowels crawl up the spine and into the ear.

K Chamber of Seasons — Air flips from pollen-sweet to knife-cold; breath ghosts, sweat beads, leaves skitter.

A The Heart Chamber — Mortar smells like blood, light like fever; floor hums to your pulse then sets its own.

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

Hearts — People & Factions (categories)

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

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

Clubs — Complications/Threats (categories)

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

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

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

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (categories)

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

Quick use notes

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

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

Additional Features

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

Patronage & Power

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

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

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

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

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

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

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

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

Major Turns (4+ SB)

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

Region-Specific SB Options

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

Dungeon — Living Infrastructure

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Anchors at Risk Camp cache; a mapping apprentice.

Escalation Beat The stairwell adds a step every circuit.

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

Plug-in Expedition Layer

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

Interfaces & Entanglements (use what fits your campaign)

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

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

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

Salvage, Haul, & Conversion

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

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

Table Prompts (d6 each, fast prep)

Echo Questions

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

Find the Organ

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

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

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

Plug-in SB Conversions (use with any dungeon)

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

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

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

Oculus Warden (many-eyed sentry)

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

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

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

Digestive Array (cube-that-crawls)

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

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

Ledger Lich (archivist revenant)

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

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

Protocol Titan (stone sentinel)

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

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

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

Mimetic Colony (door-that-eats)

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

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

Sluice Dragon (steam & acid wyrm)

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

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

Crawl Procedures (Quick, Crunchy Options)

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

Wandering Signs & Encounters (d12)

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

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

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

Treasure & Upgrade Hooks (d8 hoard seeds)

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

Boss Build Template (one-minute prep)

1. **Name & Nature:** What organ of the dungeon is this boss the face of?
2. **Phase Clock:** 6/8/10 with 2–4 titled phases.
3. **Three Moves:** One space-control, one resource-tax, one identity/knowledge twist.
4. **Two Lair Actions:** Environmental toggles keyed to this lair.
5. **Counters:** A courtesy, a tool, a sacrifice. (Players should be able to *learn* these.)
6. **Drop:** A Diamond (from §4.15) or bespoke boon tied to the organ.

Dungeon Boss: The Heart Itself (set-piece)

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

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

4.16 Ecktoria — “Marble & Fire”

Elite (Grand Magistrate)

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

Commoner (Ferrymaster who knows which banners pay late)

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

Theme & Atmosphere

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

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

Spades — Places (categories)

2. **Petition Steps** — Milk-stone steps where dawn petitions are pinned.
 3. **Tally-Ford Ferryhouse** — Rope-drums thrum all day; 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.

Extensions (Plug-in)

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

Monuments as Mechanics (opulence with teeth)

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

Plug-in SB Conversions (Ecktoria flavor)

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

Hidden Orders & Ancient Conspiracies (d12 hooks)

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

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

Conspiracy Clocks (drop-in)

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

Cults & Mystery Rites (d10)

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

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

Cult Tokens (Diamonds, pick one)

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

Religious Schisms & Trials

The Everflame Divide (choose a live schism)

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

Schism Mechanics (table-facing)

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

Schismatic SB Conversions (use in Ecktoria scenes)

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

Boss Seeds (Cults & Conspiracies)

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

Diamonds: Forbidden Leverage (add to §4.16)

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

Cross-Contamination (fast ties)

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

4.17 Linn — “Skerries & Storm-Oaths”

Elite (High Jarl)

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

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

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

Theme & Atmosphere

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

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

Spades — Places (categories)

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

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

Hearts — People & Factions (categories)

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

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

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

Clubs — Complications/Threats (categories)

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

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

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (categories)

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

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

Quick use notes

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

Additional Features

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

Patronage & Power

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

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

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

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

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

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

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

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

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

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

Major Turns (4+ SB)

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

Region-Specific SB Options

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

Linn — Skerry Stormcall

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Extensions (Plug-in)

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

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

- **Faction Entanglements During Travel:**

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

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

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

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

Oath Geometry (infrastructure with teeth)

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

Raven Office (intelligence, gossip, reckoning)

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

play.

Plug-in SB Conversions (Linn flavor)

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

Ancient Conspiracies & Tide-Schisms (Plug-in)

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

Cult Signs & Tells (d6, quick read)

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

Mysteries of the Fog Template (5 beats)

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

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

Evidence Tags (pick 3 at start)

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

Counters & Rites (one-scene tools)

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

Boss Seeds (three-phase foes)

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

Investigation Scenes (drop-in prompts)

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

Two Mystery Starters (table-ready)

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

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

Schism Pressure (Linn flavor SB conversions)

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

4.18 Mistlands — “Bells, Salt, and Breath”

Elite (Legate of Mists)

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

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

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

Theme & Atmosphere

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

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

Spades — Places (categories)

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

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

Hearts — People & Factions (categories)

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

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

Clubs — Complications/Threats (categories)

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

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

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (categories)

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

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

Quick use notes

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

Additional Features

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

Patronage & Power

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

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

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

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

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

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

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

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

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

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

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

Major Turns (4+ SB)

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

Region-Specific SB Options

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

Mistlands — Bells and Breath

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Escalation Beat The river exhales.

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

Extensions (Plug-in)

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

4. *Pilgrims' Hour*: Procession on the levee; parley starts one step safer, movement one step worse.
5. *Inspector's Tour: Rite-Purge* advances once unless placated with procedure (Mykkiel/Law leverage helps).
6. *Ninth Rumor*: Whispers of the forbidden note; the GM may cash any 2 SB as *Ninth Bell Echo* (see below).

- **Oath-Works & Infrastructure (with teeth):**

- *Bell-Book Concord*: Reconciling Legate writs with ringbooks cancels the first *Protectorate Interdiction* this session; on a miss, start *Names Disputed*.
- *Salt-Share Muster*: Donating a pan's output clears 1 segment from *Ward-Salt Short*; mark *Marsh-Quake* +1 as labor shifts.
- *Breath-Toll Bridges*: Paying in breath (Breath Chit) lets one PC ignore *Witchlight Count* for a crossing; the bridge “remembers” and will not accept that PC's breath again this arc.

- **Bell Office (signals, gossip, reckoning):**

- At each new leg, roll 1d6:
 1. *Mirror Drift*: Codeleaf is a day out of date; -1 die to evade patrols unless updated at a Pall tower.
 2. *Salt Theft*: Pans struck overnight; accept delay to assist repairs (earn 1 *Ward Salt*) or start *Salt Audit*.
 3. *Quiet Ferry*: A *Ghost-Ferry Slip* runs under curfew; cross free once, then tick *Protectorate Interdiction*.
 4. *Warden Wake*: Bells toll names you carry; reveal a concealed identity or begin *Names Disputed*.
 5. *Linn Smoke*: reed-line signals of a raid; +1 Position to avoid it or +1 Effect to intercept (choose).
 6. *Dire Breath*: the Weeping Gate exhales; introduce *Tide-Mist* at controlled strength for this scene.

- **Plug-in SB Conversions (Mistlands flavor):**

- Any 1 SB → *Fog Thickens*: visibility band worsens one step for *everyone*.
- Any 2 SB → *Bell Miscount*: a posted code is wrong this scene; cancel one enemy assist or void one writ.
- 3+ SB → *Ninth Bell Echo*: a forbidden overtone opens a side path *or* calls something through; GM advances *Ninth Peal* once.

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

- *Bell-Trusted*: First levee checkpoint begins one step safer; clerks scrutinize coin-ledgers (treat first commerce action one step worse).
- *Salt-Steady*: +1 Effect calming crowds on causeys; *Rite-Purge* starts at +1 if you snub Aeler procedure in public.
- *Breath-Kind*: Once/session negate a name-taking consequence for an NPC; mist remembers the debt (GM adds a future call-in).

Direwood Horrors (Undead Ecology, Plug-in)

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

Undead Signs (d6)

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

Counters (one-scene rites)

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

Fae Oddness Across the Aberderrin (Plug-in)

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

Fae Complications (swap-in for any scene)

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

Bridging Rite

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

Linn Raid Cycle (Skerry Pressure, Plug-in)

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

Aeler Stewardship & Protection (Standards & Relief)

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

Boss Seeds (three-phase foes)

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

Two Scenario Starters

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

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

Start-of-Night Undead Table (1d6)

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

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

Plug-in SB Conversions (Theme Mix)

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

4.19 Silkstrand — “City of Bridges & Dyewater”

Elite (The Matron)

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

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

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

Theme & Atmosphere

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

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

Spades — Places (categories)

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

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

Hearts — People & Factions (categories)

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

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

Clubs — Complications/Threats (categories)

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

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

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (categories)

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

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

Quick use notes

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

Additional Features

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

Patronage & Power

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

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

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

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

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

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

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

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

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

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

Major Turns (4+ SB)

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

Region-Specific SB Options

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

Silkstrand — Bridges and Dyewater

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Anchors at Risk A weaver lover; an apprentice crew.

Escalation Beat The canal runs the wrong color.

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

Extensions (Plug-in)

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

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

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

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

The Weft-Curse (citywide, slow-blooming)

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

Curse Symptoms (d8, sprinkle lightly)

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

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

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

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

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

- *Weavers-by-Night*: integrate curse-thread into civic banners to “anchor” it (opens gates, but ticks *Weft-Curse* +1).
- **The Matron’s Inner Loom** (*palazzo faction*): claims a ward-wide remedy—actually a throttle: they can lift *Curse Awakened* from allies and press it onto enemies’ routes.

Curse Geometry (how it bites at the table)

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

Boss Seeds (three-phase foes)

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

Scenario Starters (plug-and-play)

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

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

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

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

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

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

Schism Mechanics (Basilica of Azerin)

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

Plug-in SB Conversions (Curse flavor)

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

Reputation Echoes (curse-aware)

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

4.20 Theona — “Three Greens, No Ninth”

Elite (Matron of Wells)

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

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

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

Theme & Atmosphere

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

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

Spades — Places (categories)

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

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

Hearts — People & Factions (categories)

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

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

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

Clubs — Complications/Threats (categories)

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

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

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (categories)

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

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

Quick use notes

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

Additional Features

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

Patronage & Power

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

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

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

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

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

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

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

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

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

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

Major Turns (4+ SB)

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

Region-Specific SB Options

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

Theona — No Ninth

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Escalation Beat Grass stands up against the wind.

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

Extensions (Plug-in)

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

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

The Hidden Ninth (citywide, slow-blooming)

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

Subtle Symptoms (d8, sprinkle lightly)

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

Cults, Conspiracies, & Schisms

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

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

Ninth Geometry (how it bites at the table)

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

Green Courts (fae procedure, fast)

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

Ritual Counters (anyone can attempt, 1/scene)

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

Boss Seeds (three-phase, Theona style)

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

Scenario Starters (plug-and-play)

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

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

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

Cross-Region Threads

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

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

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

Plug-in SB Conversions (Ninth flavor)

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

Reputation Echoes (who you are to the Greens)

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

4.21 Thepyrgos — “City of a Thousand Stairs”

Elite (The Archon)

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

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

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

Theme & Atmosphere

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

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

Spades — Places (categories)

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

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

Hearts — People & Factions (categories)

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

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

Clubs — Complications/Threats (categories)

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

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

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (categories)

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

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

Quick use notes

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

Additional Features

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

Patronage & Power

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

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

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

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

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

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

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

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

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

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

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

Major Turns (4+ SB)

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

Region-Specific SB Options

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

Thepyrgos — City of Stairs

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Escalation Beat The city adds a stair to the sky.

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

Extensions (Plug-in)

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

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

The Magic Colleges (at the University)

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

Campus Spades (drop-in sites)

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

Campus Hearts (fellows, foes, and strays)

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

Campus Diamonds (papers/rights)

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

The Witch-Hunter Province

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

Hunter Hearts (factions & faces)

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

Hunter Clubs (pressures & sweeps)

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

Hunter Diamonds (leverage & reprieve)

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

Detection & Denial (fast procedures)

Scry & Deny (evade the tests)

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

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

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

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

Start-of-Scene Campus Bells (1d6)

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

Cross-Region Hooks (optional draws)

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

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

Plug-in SB Conversions (Colleges & Hunters)

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

Scenario Starters (plug-and-play)

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

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

4.22 Ubral — “The Stone Between Spears”

Elite (Lady of Tor)

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

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

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

Theme & Atmosphere

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

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

Spades — Places (categories)

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

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

Hearts — People & Factions (categories)

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

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

Clubs — Complications/Threats (categories)

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

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

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (categories)

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

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

Quick use notes

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

Additional Features

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

Patronage & Power

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

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

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

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

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

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

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

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

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

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

Major Turns (4+ SB)

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

Region-Specific SB Options

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

Ubral — Stone Between Spears

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Escalation Beat The cairn grows a new stone.

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

Extensions (Plug-in)

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

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

Boss Hooks (Field Lords & Oathbreakers)

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

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

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

Boss Loot & Boons (pick 1 on victory)

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

Legendary Sites & Trials

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

Bounties & Prestige Tracks

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

Cross-Region Boss Entanglements

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

Boss Procedure (quick frame)

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

4.23 Valewood — “Empire Under Leaves”

Elite (Hazel Queen)

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

Commoner (Pathweaver who knots safe routes into cord)

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

Theme & Atmosphere

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

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

Spades — Places (categories)

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

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

Hearts — People & Factions (categories)

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

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

Clubs — Complications/Threats (categories)

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

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

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (categories)

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

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

Quick use notes

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

Extensions (Plug-in)

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

3. *Mirror Drip*: **Dew-Mirror** free use but **Court Tithe** starts at 1.
4. *Root Push*: terrain shifts in your favor once; buildings dislike you (locks complicate).
5. *Bird Parliament*: a rumor arrives true; one plan becomes public knowledge.
6. *Star-Tingle*: star-road easier (+1d to wake) but every \Diamond *hereafter* risks **Ward-Trap** on 1 – 2.

- **Plug-in SB Conversions (Valewood flavor):**

- 1 SB → *Sweet Wind Shift*: reposition an approach vector; -1d unless you adjust method (Rhyme/Count/Gift/Listen).
- 2 SB → *Obligate Courtesy*: immediate small gift or truth required; refuse and tick *Name Leverage* +1.
- 3+ SB → *Empire Echo*: add a patrolling **Echo-Legionary** cohort or activate a dormant mechanism that reframes the scene.

- **Reputation Echoes:**

- *Guest-Faithful*: once/session, downgrade **Ring Claim** to simple hospitality; next refused invitation spawns **Oath-Magnet**.
- *Path-Favored*: +1 Position on *Path-Logic* legs; any shortcut taken owes a *token or tale*.
- *Truth-Bearer*: +1d with Hazel court when presenting facts; -1d with Alder when declining obligation.

- **Quick Cross-Region Hooks:**

- *Kahfagia Lanes* ↔ *Star-Roads*: a **Mirror Warrant** can stand in for **Shard Key** once.
- *Mistlands Bells* ↔ *Path-Logic*: paying **Ward-Salt** counts as *Gift* approach with +1d.
- *Aelinnel Math* ↔ *Proper Footfall*: *Counting Etiquette* grants +1 Position on **Star-Road Procedure**.

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

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

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

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

Boss Loot & Boons (pick 1 on victory)

- *Antler Shortcut:* once/arc, declare a safe mid-scene cut; clear 1 segment on *True Way*.
- *Dry Cap:* ignore one **Ring Claim** this session; next hospitality breach starts at +1 *Court Tithe*.
- *Bronze Tally:* treat an imperial *Juridical Recall* as *controlled* once.
- *Edited Chisel:* swap the cost of a success (gear \leftrightarrow memory) one time.
- *Hazel Seal:* once/session, speak a precise exception; cancel **Oath-Magnet** for a clause.
- *Dusk Ledger Slip:* pay an owed Favor Twig in advance; erase 1 tick of *Name Leverage*.

Legendary Sites & Trials

- **Glyphed Bridge Ordeal** — speak a hard truth to pass dry; lie, and the bridge demands a memory tithe (mark *Name Leverage* +1, gain *Bridge’s Favor* only if confessed).
- **Moon-Cistern Vigil** — watch someone else’s sky until the owl calls; success grants a single **Dew-Mirror** charge, failure spawns **Mirror Rain**.
- **Valeheart Spiral** — climb stairs that return to start; map with verse, gift, count, listen (all four once) to unlock a **Between-Places** shortcut.

Bounties & Prestige Tracks

- **Court Favors** (prestige): keep twigs/marks from Hazel or Alder. At 3 of one court, treat one **Hazel Audience**/**Alder Writ** as automatic; lose 1 if you snub the opposite court publicly.
- **Echo Quietus** (bounty): each laid-to-rest patrol shade adds 1; at 3, the **Echo Centurion** appears to “thank” or test you (GM choice).

Cross-Region Boss Entanglements

- *Kahfagia Signal Leak:* defeating the **Huntsman** by Mirror tricks starts *Light Shift* when you next sail a beacons lane.
- *Mistlands Bell Trespass:* binding the **Hazel Advocate** with bell-law triggers *Rite-Purge* [2] back along the levees.

- *Linn Feud Echo*: slaying **Redcap Captain Rill** on a truce-day begins *Feud Token* [2] with a nearby strand (they liked his “hospitality”).

Boss Procedure (quick frame)

1. **Stage the Place:** pick a site Tag (*Star-Road*, *Court Ring*, or *Living Ruin*) and one ambient **Clubs**.
2. **Offer the Lever:** place an attainable \diamond (*Way – Cord*, *HazelToken*, *City – Shard*).
2. **Name the Cost:** declare what the wood will remember if the party cheats (start *Name Leverage* [2] or *Court Tithe* [2]).
3. **Let the Forest React:** on any miss, the scene may re-path once (swap lanes or approaches per your Path-Logic mini-game).

4.24 Vhasia — “The Fractured Sun”

Elite (Two Crowns)

“The sun may be fractured, but our authority is absolute within our domains. Every coin minted here carries our blessing, and every law written bears our seal – the rest is just politics.”

Commoner (Road warden with dented badge and honest horn)

“I’ve served under three different banners on this same stretch of road, and the only constant is that someone always wants to collect tolls. My horn calls honest warning – best heed it.”

Theme & Atmosphere

Vhasia is a realm of broken coronations and split loyalties. Once a proud province of the Utar empire, the unified Sun-court shattered like its heraldic sunburst, leaving rival dukes, abbesses, and parlements to claim the light. Everywhere, signs of fracture: chipped sun-discs on milestones, worn tabards bearing half a crown, coins minted in rival cities with different suns. In Vhasia, legitimacy is as fragile as a mirror, and every oath risks breaking along the fault lines of politics, faith, and fortune.

(Château/Cathedral/Forest) Wayside shrine with pilgrims tacking petitions to scorched sun-disc; vine-terraced clos above millstream with napping watchmen.

Spades — Places (categories)

2. **Wayside Shrine** — Pilgrims tack petitions to scorched sun-disc; each parchment curls in different winds.
 3. **Vine-Terrace** — Clos above millstream; watchmen nap, halberds traded for bottles.
 4. **Bastide Square** — Neat as canray board; merchants pay homage to different “hours” of Sun.
 5. **Royal Forest** — Antler posts mark laws no king remembers; poachers still hang.
 6. **Pont-du-Tithe** — Toll-bridge flanked by chapels and crossbows; chains blessed by rival bishops.
 7. **Great Fair** — Outside chartered town; counting sheds ring like bells, rumors louder still.
 8. **Salt Pans** — Wind-pumps on estuary; gulls own law, smugglers own night.
 9. **Siege-Château** — Hoardings patched, cistern low, banners cut into ragged suns.
 10. **Cathedral Yard** — Cranes creak, stones fly, scaffolds bristle with rival masons’ marks.
- J **Parlement Hall** — Hung with faded tapestries; sunbursts spliced and re-stitched by claimants.
- Q **Queen’s Causeway** — Mile-long oath paved in quarried stone; half-sunk each spring.
- K **Sun Palace** — Lence shuttered mirrors, brambled gardens; courtiers playing at kingship.
- A **King’s High Road** — Mile-stones chipped of crowns; yet every army still marches it.

(Lord/Court/Company) Road warden with dented badge and honest horn; vintner-guild syndic counting saints’ days as credit terms.

Hearts — People & Factions (categories)

2. **Road Warden** — Dented badge, honest horn; ignored by both crowns but knows the roads.
 3. **Vintner Syndic** — Counts saints’ days as credit terms, vintages as treaties; wine as diplomacy.
 4. **Abbess-Chatelaine** — Rules fortress-convent with iron accounts and sharper scripture.
 5. **Routier Captain** — Scarred and mercenary; prefers ransoms to loyalty; coin as conscience.
 6. **Duchy Constable** — Splendid armor, empty coffers, pride swollen as banner; glory over gold.
 7. **Parlement Clerk** — Drowns foes in procedure, fishes them out for fealty; law as weapon.
 8. **Salt-Farmer** — Gabelle lessee with cudgels, writs, river-chart no crown has; tax as tyranny.
 9. **Trouvère** — Scandalous lay about last Sun-king brings knives to tavern doors.
 10. **Marshal-Exile** — Sun-court’s hammer; now wielded by whoever pays in silver.
- J **Heretic Perfect** — Preaching peace while tucking hidden daggers into parchment margins.
- Q **Queen-Mother** — Riverside keep; weaves alliances as if they were dowries.
- K **Two Crowns** — Rival dukes, each “crowned” in rival cathedrals, neither whole.
- A **Last Dauphin** — Rumor with birthmark; armies march for whispers alone.

(**Chevauchée/Law/Church**) Chevauchée burning loyalty oaths as well as barns; interdict falls on county; bells silenced, trade stalls.

Clubs — Complications/Threats (categories)

2. **Chevauchée** — Raiders burn loyalty oaths as well as barns; smoke curls like scripture.
 3. **Interdict** — Falls on county; bells silenced, trade stalls, heretics prosper.
 4. **Forest Law** — Venison becomes treason; poachers hang on antler posts.
 5. **River Spate** — Ferries chained, bridges drowned, pilgrims stranded mid-prayer.
 6. **Coin Debasement** — Three mints, three suns, no trust; soldiers demand silver alone.
 7. **Parlement Divided** — Siege laid on parchment before walls; war by paperwork.
 8. **Company Mutiny** — Unless arrears paid—in blood or coin; mercenaries as time bomb.
 9. **Relic Dispute** — Two abbeys claim same saint’s bones; mobs answer with stones.
 10. **Harvest Blight** — Bread locked behind pikes; bakers guarded as lords.
- J **Tournament “Accident”** — Hides assassination; your favor now evidence.
- Q **Royalist Restoration** — Sunburst badges painted overnight on doors and graves.
- K **Feudal Levy** — Lords demand levies in days, not months, with three days’ bread.
- A **Winter Campaign** — Roads to mud, hooves to ice, armies to ruin.

(**Charter/Patent/Right**) Safe-conduct sealed by duke or abbey; honored only once, on one road; burgess charter for market ward.

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (categories)

2. **Safe-Conduct** — Sealed by duke or abbey; honored only once, on one road.
3. **Burgess Charter** — Market ward; walls, watch, and revenue at your call.

4. **Bridge Farm** — Tolls at Pont-du-Tithe for season, if you can hold it.
 5. **Paréage Charter** — Shared rule with monastery—half justice, half rent, no peace.
 6. **Wardship** — Over minor heir; lands obey you “for now.”
 7. **Gabelle Lease** — Salt-tax rights; lucrative, hated, and dangerous.
 8. **Letters Patent** — Raise free-company under your banner; army as business.
 9. **Remission** — Of feudal dues for village; they’ll march when called.
 10. **Low-Justice** — Grant (stocks, fines, gallows) in troublesome hamlet.
- J **Confiscation Writ** — Against royalist estate—if you can seize it first.
- Q **Queen’s Audience** — Private with Queen-Mother; whisper becomes policy.
- K **Sunburst Warrant** — Of fallen court—most still bow if shown boldly.
- A **General Pardon** — Temporary: rebels absolved if they bend the knee.

Quick use notes

- Draw until you have all four suits: Spade = place, Heart = actor, Club = pressure, Diamond = leverage. Highest rank sets the main Clock (2–5 → 4, 6–10 → 6, J/Q/K → 8, A → 10).
- Diamonds are codified outcomes (charters/patents/rights) that change position rather than call for a roll.
- If any A appears, echo **fractured sun** motif—light that splinters, oaths that crack like glass.

Additional Features

- **Fractured Seals:** When brandishing writ/badge/charter tied to Sun-court claimant, step **Position** up one step for scene’s next interaction at gate/court/checkpoint. Each use advances **Legitimacy (4)** clock linked to claimant; when fills, rivals challenge authority on sight.
- **Parlement Games:** If scene touches petitions/guild disputes/feudal appeals, first **Diamond** played becomes *policy lever*: treat as two Diamonds toward swaying decision/rewriting custom. Afterward, start/advance **Whispered Precedent** clock; when resolves, backlash spreads as other courts cite case against you.
- **Gabelle Knife-Edge:** At bridges/fairs/salt depots, convert **Diamonds** tied to tolls/leases/safe-conducts into immediate passage/tariff relief for company (no roll). Each conversion ticks **Resentment (4)** clock for locale; when completes, expect boycotts/ambush rumors/audit by rival officials.

Patronage & Power

In Vhasia, power flows through the remnants of imperial authority, fractured legitimacy, and the careful manipulation of legal and religious institutions. Former Utar provincial structures still provide framework for governance, but competing claimants to the Sun-court have created a complex web of overlapping jurisdictions and conflicting loyalties. The true power lies with those who can navigate this legal maze and maintain the appearance of legitimate authority. **For the GM:** Patronage in Vhasia revolves around legitimacy, legal documents, and the ability to command respect from institutions that no longer have a clear central authority. Rewards often take the form of charters, writs, and official positions that can be leveraged into greater influence. To emphasize this:

- Tie rewards to visible symbols (seals, badges, writs) that can be challenged, stolen, or voided.
- Let rival claimants issue conflicting authorities, forcing players to choose whose favor matters more.
- Use the parlements, cathedrals, and châteaux as arenas for social contests, where knowledge of law and custom determines success.

In Vhasia, your papers are your power, and your power determines whether you rule or are ruled.

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

- **Exposure:** Your actions draw unwanted attention from **rival officials or court guards**.
- **Noise:** Sounds of your actions alert nearby **parlement clerks or routier patrols**.
- **Trace:** Evidence of your passage marks your route for **trackers or tax collectors**.
- **Delay:** A brief but meaningful setback costs you **time or favorable legal window**.
- **Supply Strain:** Mark +1 segment on a relevant **resource clock**.

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

- **Alarm Raised:** **Duchy constable or abbess-chatelaine** becomes aware and begins responding.
- **Position Lost:** You lose advantageous ground/cover/stealth due to **legal challenge or road closure**.
- **Foe Appears:** A **rival claimant or free-company** arrives on scene.
- **Gear Trouble:** A piece of equipment becomes **Compromised/Neglected**.
- **Lock/Barrier:** A simple obstacle now requires a test to overcome.

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

- **Reinforcements:** Additional **routiers, parlement guards, or rival ducal forces** arrive.
- **Key Gear Breaks:** A crucial tool/weapon becomes temporarily unusable.

- **Major Twist:** The situation fundamentally changes - **writ voided/interdict declared/levy called**.
- **Rail Tick:** Advance a relevant campaign/front clock by 1 segment.
- **Condition Applied:** Mark **Fatigue 1/Harm 1/Condition** appropriate to fiction.

Major Turns (4+ SB)

- **Trap Springs:** A prepared danger activates with full effect.
- **Authority Arrival: Two Crowns, Queen-Mother, or Marshal-Exile** intervenes.
- **Scene Shift:** The environment changes dramatically - **chevauchée hits/river floods/parlement erupts**.
- **Patron Omen:** Divine/arcane forces take notice - **omen appears/blessing lost/curse manifests**.
- **Narrative Pivot:** The story takes an unexpected turn that reframes objectives.

Region-Specific SB Options

- **Vhasia (Fractured Authority):** Seals break mid-signing, legal papers rewrite themselves, badges refuse to be honored.
- **Vhasia (Legal Warfare):** Court decisions reverse without warning, precedents are cited against you, writs expire at crucial moments.
- **Vhasia (Sun Symbolism):** Sun-discs crack underfoot, light splits into contradictory shadows, oaths shatter like glass.

Vhasia — Fractured Sun

Starting Location: The Pont-du-Tithe, its golden arches catching fire in the sunset as pilgrims chant from both banks.

“In Vhasia, faith and empire march together—and both leave ash in their wake.”

In... A Pont-du-Tithe, a Duchy Constable offers letters patent. “The Chevauchée burns,” he says. “And two Crowns march to meet it.”

Regional Motifs Processional bridges, crusade echoes, split sovereignty, tithe-law.

Whispers to Offer “Take both patents,” “Confiscate a relic,” “Call a levy early.”

External Clocks Threat: “Chevauchée”; Community: “Tithe Unrest”; Anchor: “Bridge Peace.”

Complications Relics demand oaths; the bridge groans; pilgrims arm themselves.

Anchors at Risk A parish cook; a field hospital.

Escalation Beat Sunlight burns in the rain.

Relief Unite the Crowns for one march; return relics to neutral ground; tithe from the GM’s favorite NPC purse.

Extended Features

- **Viterran Holdings:** Much like Plantagenet France, Viterra holds extensive lands, castles, and abbeys in northern Vhasia. These estates complicate every allegiance—dukes and abbesses may be Vhasian in name but Viterran in loyalty. Any Diamond tied to land or charter risks being overridden by Viterran claim.
- **Faction Entanglements:** When traveling through Vhasia, allegiance matters. Declaring for a duke, abbey, or parlement modifies *Position* one step in dealings with rivals. Silence may itself be treated as tacit support.
- **Church Corruption:** Echoing a Three Musketeers era, bishops and abbesses play as much at politics as prayer. Relic disputes, indulgence sales, and cathedral building races create Complications that rival armies cannot ignore. Any Diamond tied to church authority is a double-edged blade.
- **Trade Goods and Strains:**
 - Vhasian wine is currency of diplomacy: spilled casks advance a *Resentment* clock in rival duchies.
 - Salt leases at Pont-du-Tithe ripple into Ubral and Kahfagia—granting passage but attracting bandits.
 - Stamped coins circulate with rival suns; carrying mixed purses invites suspicion and bribe demands.
- **Diplomatic Currency:** Introduce *Favor of the Sun* as a minor track (like Boons). Earned by resolving conflicts between claimants without bloodshed, it can be spent to ease crossings or dismiss levies. Each use risks sparking a rival *Legitimacy Challenge*.
- **Reputation Echoes:** Gaining reputation with one claimant carries weight in others: rumors precede you across bridges, fairs, and shrines. This grants +1d to engagement rolls where prior deeds are known, but increases SB cost by +1 when foes exploit your divided loyalties.
- **Processions and Parlements:** Add a special draw during travel: one extra card may be pulled to represent a festival, procession, or parlement session. This can invert Complications into Leverage (e.g., a Parlement Divided scene producing a sudden Diamond policy lever).
- **Relic and Rite Pressure:** Any Diamond tied to relics, patents, or charters may be stolen, voided, or challenged in public. Such leverage always risks escalation—treat rival claims as a hidden SB cost the GM may reveal later.

Cross-Regional Connections

- **To Thepyrgos:** Synod indulgences can temporarily suspend Vhasian interdicts, but doing so creates precedent cited in Thepyrgos later (*Whispered Precedent* clock).
- **To Ubral:** Salt leases and bridge tolls turn into feud fuel; clans see them as foreign intrusion, advancing feud clocks when overused.
- **To Kahfagia:** Wine routes and salt flows are lifeblood of coastal trade; a Kahfagian coracle-mark can substitute for Safe-Conduct once, but rivals may brand it smuggling.
- **To Valewood:** Relics from Vhasia sometimes vanish into fae courts; a Diamond spent on relic control may instead draw fae interest.
- **To Viterra:** Viterran dukes, abbots, and condottieri are ever-present; any travel seed through Vhasia may be claimed by Viterran authority. Safe-Conducts are fragile—Viterra treats them as favors, not guarantees.

GM Guidance

- Treat Vhasia as a region of *contested legitimacy*: every writ, token, or badge is both leverage and liability.
- Complications should echo fracture: factions pulling players in opposite directions, symbols splitting under stress, oaths that cannot be held by all sides.
- Rewards should feel conditional: charters, patents, and safe-conducts that are powerful but precarious, always subject to rival interpretation.
- Intrigue should echo musketeer romances: duels in cathedrals, midnight meetings under abbey arches, letters seized at river fords. Every move risks scandal as much as war.

Boss Hooks (Crowns, Courts, & Companies)

- **Cardinal-Regent of the Broken Sun** (scarlet gloves, seal that never quite matches) — *Tells*: candlelight splits into two shadows; choirs fall half a note apart. *Moves*: *Interdict Blade* (silence bells; social actions tied to church begin one step worse), *Seal Both Ways* (any writ played may be read against you), *Confessional Leak* (turns one secret into crowd rumor). *Levers*: **Queen's Audience** cancels *Interdict Blade* once; **Synod Indulgence** (from Thepyrgos) treats a church check as controlled for one scene. *Concession*: restore a relic to neutral ground or sponsor bread for a fast day.
- **Marshal-Exile, the Sun's Hammer** (tabard stitched over old loyalties) — *Tells*: hoofbeats keep parade time; pennons fray into sunrays. *Moves*: *Chevauchée Call* (advance **Chevauchée**), *Banner Turn* (flip one mercenary cohort if underpaid), *Lists to War* (convert a **Duel** into battlefield stakes). *Levers*: **Letters Patent** buys one round of obedience; **General Pardon** lets a unit stand down. *Yield Terms*: arrears in hard silver or a public honor at a bastide.
- **Abbess-Chatelaine of Pont-du-Tithe** (ring of keys, ring of scripture) — *Tells*: toll chains hum psalms; river mist smells of incense. *Moves*: *Tithe Tripled* (raise tariffs mid-scene), *Sanctuary or Snare* (declare bridge holy—violence spawns *Royalist Restoration* +1), *Relic Audit* (void a rival's \Diamond unlesspubliclysworn). *Levers*: **Paréage Charters** split her power for one exchange; **Bridge Farmco**
- **Parlement Spider** (chief clerk; quills like daggers) — *Tells*: writs reorder themselves; sand on ink forms little sunbursts. *Moves*: *Motion to Delay* (freeze a \Diamond for one scene), *Counter-Citation* (increase DV by 1 unless yo
- **Routier King** (mercenary captain of captains; coins bite back) — *Tells*: camp songs use three anthems; dice show suns. *Moves*: *Company Mutiny* (threatens your hirelings), *Pay in Plunder* (reprice a scene—progress costs coin or goods), *Switch the Colors* (your escort turns neutral). *Levers*: **Letters Patent** + **Remission** shifts one company to your side; **Gabelle Lease** buys supply favor but starts *Resentment*. *End*: oath on pay-chest or duel in the ring.
- **Queen-Mother of Lence** (widow's veil, iron arithmetic) — *Tells*: courtiers speak in dowry weights; gardens prune themselves. *Moves*: *Dowry Gambit* (reassigns an NPC ally by marriage pact), *Nursery Claim* (summon **Last Dauphin** rumor as leverage), *Mirror Progress* (reflect a success as her policy). *Levers*: **Queen's Audience** lets you set a single term; **Wardship** can counter *Nursery Claim*. *Concession*: secure a neutral marriage or return a hostage.
- **The Two Crowns** (rival dukes; one herald, two trumpets) — *Tells*: sunlight splits; banners double; oaths echo out of sync. *Moves*: *Contradictory Edicts* (any public action risks *Parlement Divided*), *Levy in Hours* (push **Feudal Levy**), *Coin Trial* (force silver only—void mixed purses). *Levers*: **Sunburst Warrant** + public mass unites them for one scene; **General Pardon** calms levy unrest once. *End*: force a joint signature on **Queen's Causeway**.
- **The Last Dauphin (or Not)** (boy with birthmark; truths disagree) — *Tells*: dogs kneel; saints'

windows tear up. *Moves: Miracle or Mischief* (invert one Complication into Leverage—or vice versa), *Pilgrim Surge* (crowd becomes shield or trap), *Sign of the Sun* (coins of your foes heat to the touch). *Levers: Safe-Conduct* grants private parole; a **Trouvère’s** lay can “prove” either way, stabilizing or exploding the scene. *Exit Price*: choose which crown he blesses—gain a favor, earn an enemy.

Boss Loot & Boons (pick 1 on victory)

- *Broken Sun Seal*: once/arc, treat a rival seal as supporting yours; then tick *Legitimacy* +1 against you.
- *Marshal’s Baton*: command obedience from one free-company for a single order.
- *Tithe Key*: ignore one toll or tax at Pont-du-Tithe per session.
- *Spider’s Docket*: cancel *Motion to Delay* once; afterwards, *Whispered Precedent* advances.
- *Queen-Mother’s Favor*: swap any *◊tied to land for a superior local right* once.
- *Dauphin’s Token*: one crowd counts as *assist dice pool* for a public scene; on use, spawn *Royalist Restoration*.

Trials & Legendary Scenes

- **Tournament Ordeal** (Bastide Square or Sun Palace lists) — Declare *Purse, Patent, or Pardon* as stakes. Win to cash a matching *◊*; lose and spawn *Tournament “Accident”*.
- **Cathedral Scaffold Assize** — Argue law atop creaking beams; each “good point” moves Position up; each slip marks *Exposure*. A **Paréage Charter** lets you call a recess once.
- **Pont-du-Tithe Vigil** — Keep the bridge peaceful through dusk: clear 3 segments on *Bridge Peace* by feeding pilgrims, quieting relic zeal, and paying one tithe from your purse.

Prestige & Bounties

- **Favor of the Sun** (prestige): at 3, treat one **Safe-Conduct/Sunburst Warrant** as unquestioned; then advance *Legitimacy Challenge* once.
- **Company Letters**: each paid company adds 1; at 3, the **Routier King** arrives to collect “back favors.”
- **Relic Quietus**: each resolved relic dispute adds 1; at 3, the **Cardinal-Regent** intervenes in person.

Cross-Region Boss Entanglements

- *Thepyrgos Synod Leak*: defeating the **Parlement Spider** with ladder-law citations starts *Whispered Precedent* in Thepyrgos.
- *Ubral Feud Echo*: killing the **Routier King** on guest ground spawns *Feud Rekindled* along the border roads.
- *Mistlands Bell Trespass*: using church bells to bind the **Cardinal-Regent** triggers *Rite-Purge* [2] near the levees.
- *Kahfagian Salt War*: cashing **Gabelle Lease** to outbid corsair lanes adds *Market Knives* [4] in Silkstrand or on coastal quays.

Boss Procedure (quick frame)

1. **Stage the Venue:** choose *Parlement*, *Bridge*, or *Procession* tag, plus one ambient **Clubs**.
2. **Offer a Lever:** place a reachable \diamond (*Safe – Conduct*, *LettersPatent*, *SunburstWarrant*).
2. **Name the Legitimacy Cost:** on any public humiliation or forged paper, tick *Legitimacy* [4] or *Resentment* [4].
3. **Let Symbols Fracture:** on a miss, split a boon in two (half-value to two sides) or crack a seal (downgrade a \diamond *untilmended*).

4.25 Vilikari — “Laurels & Longhouses”

Elite (Federate King)

“We are the bridge between empire and wilderness, the marriage of law and custom. Our strength lies not in choosing one path but in walking both with equal surety.”

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

“The old ways and new laws both have their place at our table. Serve the right mead to the right guest, honor the proper customs, and you’ll find we’re better hosts than most kings.”

Theme & Atmosphere

The Vilikari are the agrarian peoples straddling the frontiers of and , tillers and treaty-makers who balance survival between empire, steppe, and sea. In a three-way war with the and the Black Banners, they live by the cleverness of their diplomacy, the leverage of their markets, and the shifting weight of oaths. Their halls are longhouses raised over ruined forums; their laws carved on both oak and marble; their loyalties braided like the braids of their war-maidens’ hair.

(**March Town/Villa-Fort/Old Road**) Longhouse Quarter tucked into old forum with hearth-smoke under broken eaves; Milefort XVII with earth bank and faded eagle.

Spades — Places (categories)

2. **Longhouse Quarter** — Tucked into old forum; hearth-smoke under broken eaves.
3. **Milefort XVII** — Earth bank, stone gate; faded eagle over fresh knotwork.
4. **Stone Ford** — Plank-palings and customs table at knee-height; border as bureaucracy.
5. **Villa Granary** — Barracks with tile roof; spear racks where olives once slept.
6. **Twin Court** — Mallus ring beneath oak, basilica bench across lane.
7. **Blackwood Road** — Milestones re-carved in runes and Latin both.
8. **Staple Market** — Frontier where Ykrul horses meet Vilikari iron.
9. **Burial Field** — Ship-ridge mounds beside tiled mausolea, both garlanded.
10. **Repaired Bridge** — Arch of stone, Vilikari trestle stitched on; past and present joined.
- J **Hill Amphitheater** — Lord’s hall raised in old arena’s curve; power in architecture.
- Q **New Raivon** — March capital; grid-streets colliding with wandering lanes.
- K **Dux’s Palace** — Purple awnings, wolf-hides, law tablets on wall.
- A **Foedus Stone** — Crossroads; every treaty carved, every hand weighed.

(**Federate/Mixed Court/Diaspora**) Hearth-Mother with guest-cup and wergild chest key; Shield-Brother with oaths braided into hair.

Hearts — People & Factions (categories)

2. **Hearth-Mother** — Guest-cup and wergild chest key; hospitality as power.

3. **Shield-Brother** — Comitatus oaths braided into hair; loyalty as bond.
 4. **March Notary** — Utar-trained; writes three scripts without blinking.
 5. **Horse-Reeve** — Rations pasture between plows and warbands.
 6. **Ykrul Envoy** — Riding under safe-conduct; speaks debts in proverbs.
 7. **Old Legionary** — Drill-master for Vilikari levies; Rome in muscle memory.
 8. **Ecktorian Factor** — Vilikari blood; coins flow where ledger points.
 9. **Kahfagian Pilot** — Lantern-law chit and clan tattoo; sea-law on land.
 10. **Marcher-Lord** — Iron-nail crown, Vilikari law in pocket; frontier king.
- J **War-Maiden** — Oath-braid names dead and owed; vengeance as memory.
- Q **Queen of Marches** — Consort-regent; smiles like precedent.
- K **Federate King** — Rex-Dux sworn to forms, sung by his own.
- A **Elder of Elders** — Thing-council speaker; nod can unmake clan.

(**Two Laws/Two Fronts/Old Grudges**) Annona late—grain stipend misses comitatus; tempers quicken; jurisdiction tangle of mallus vs basilica writ.

Clubs — Complications/Threats (categories)

2. **Annona Late** — Grain stipend misses comitatus; tempers quicken like flint.
 3. **Law Tangle** — Mallus verdict vs basilica writ—whose seal bites?
 4. **Raid Rumor** — Ykrul boyar; levies panic plowlands.
 5. **Bridge Levy** — Doubled for road-works; caravans balk, fists rise.
 6. **Succession Feud** — Wolf-brother claim vs purple-charter heir.
 7. **Foedus Recall** — Prefecture resettlement “requested”; homes bristle.
 8. **Coin Talk** — Debasement; pay demanded in salt, hides, hostages.
 9. **Grave Offense** — Burial field disturbed; omens ride with news.
 10. **Port Clash** — Lantern-law vs street-law; confiscations bloom.
- J **Warband Flip** — Colors mid-pay; hostage protocol snaps shut.
- Q **Restoration Preacher** — Stirs crowds against “barb king in purple.”
- K **General Levy** — March closed; markets freeze into spears.
- A **Spring Melt** — Eats Wolf Road; proofs, plans, armies bog.

(**Charter/Right/Escort**) Foedus Renewal Seal for settlement and stipends; Mallus Bench-Right to hold court under oak.

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (categories)

2. **Foedus Seal** — Settlement and stipends confirmed for season.
3. **Mallus Right** — Hold court under oak and be obeyed.
4. **Stipend Arrears** — Paid in salt and grain; portable, persuasive.
5. **Utaran Patent** — Citizenship-style privilege; doors open, bows deepen.
6. **Stall-Right** — Customs favor on frontier market line.
7. **Hostage Treaty** — Exchange fosters; grudges trade for leverage.

8. **Remount Allotment** — Fresh horses from royal paddocks, no questions.
9. **Wergild Table** — Recognized by both codes; vengeance priced and paid.
10. **Bridge Farm** — Imperial for season; funds and friends accrue.
- J **Purple Warrant** — Wear stripe; officials defer on sight.
- Q **Queen’s Audience** — Private; whisper becomes policy.
- K **Dux Commission** — Command mixed unit with pay authority.
- A **Great Law Day** — Proclaim new concord; one temporary exception to old law.

Quick use notes

- Draw until you have all four suits: Spade = place, Heart = actor, Club = pressure, Diamond = leverage. Highest rank sets the main Clock (2–5 → 4, 6–10 → 6, J/Q/K → 8, A → 10).
- Diamonds are codified outcomes (charters/rights/escorts) that change position rather than call for a roll.
- If any A appears, echo **law & bond** motifs—oaths that bind, stones that witness, treaties that remember every hand.

Additional Features

- **Two-Law Balance:** Whenever *jurisdictional conflict* arises (mallus vs basilica, wolf vs eagle), players may step Position up by citing *Foedus Stone* or older precedent—but every use adds tick to **Two-Law (4)** clock. When fills, one side demands exclusive authority.
- **Frontier Diplomacy:** If *Heart* card involves foreign envoy, federate, or mixed-blood courtier, treat first **Diamond** played in scene as doubled leverage. Once per session, deal struck reverberates—advance/start **Border Tension** front.
- **March Markets:** At any *Staple Market*, *Ford*, or *Bridge*, Diamonds tied to rights/escorts may be cashed as currency in lieu of coin, one-for-one. Doing so creates **Ledger Debt** GM may call in later through factions/raiders.

Patronage & Power

In Vilikari society, power flows through the careful balance of multiple legal traditions, the management of frontier diplomacy, and the maintenance of complex oaths and treaties. The Federate King maintains authority through a combination of imperial forms and traditional customs, while local leaders wield influence through their knowledge of both Utaran law and tribal custom. The true power lies with those who can navigate this complex legal and diplomatic landscape while maintaining the loyalty of their people and the respect of their neighbors.

For the GM: Patronage in Vilikari society revolves around legal documents, diplomatic relationships, and the ability to command respect from institutions that operate under multiple legal systems. Rewards often take the form of treaties, charters, and official positions that can be leveraged into greater influence. To emphasize this:

- Tie rewards to visible symbols (seals, writs, treaties) that can be challenged, stolen, or voided.
- Let rival legal systems issue conflicting authorities, forcing players to choose whose favor matters more.
- Use the courts, markets, and frontier posts as arenas for social contests, where knowledge of law and custom determines success.

In Vilikari society, your word is your bond, and your bond determines whether you rule or are ruled.

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

- **Exposure:** Your actions draw unwanted attention from **march officials or tribal elders**.
- **Noise:** Sounds of your actions alert nearby **levy guards or market patrols**.
- **Trace:** Evidence of your passage marks your route for **trackers or treaty keepers**.
- **Delay:** A brief but meaningful setback costs you **time or favorable legal window**.
- **Supply Strain:** Mark +1 segment on a relevant **resource clock**.

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

- **Alarm Raised:** **Horse-Reeve or March Notary** becomes aware and begins responding.
- **Position Lost:** You lose advantageous ground/cover/stealth due to **legal challenge or border closure**.
- **Foe Appears:** A **rival faction or warband** arrives on scene.
- **Gear Trouble:** A piece of equipment becomes **Compromised/Neglected**.
- **Lock/Barrier:** A simple obstacle now requires a test to overcome.

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

- **Reinforcements:** Additional **shield-brothers, levy forces, or foreign troops** arrive.
- **Key Gear Breaks:** A crucial tool/weapon becomes temporarily unusable.

- **Major Twist:** The situation fundamentally changes - **treaty voided/levy called/border dispute erupts.**
- **Rail Tick:** Advance a relevant campaign/front clock by 1 segment.
- **Condition Applied:** Mark **Fatigue 1/Harm 1/Condition** appropriate to fiction.

Major Turns (4+ SB)

- **Trap Springs:** A prepared danger activates with full effect.
- **Authority Arrival:** **Federate King, Queen of Marches, or Elder of Elders** intervenes.
- **Scene Shift:** The environment changes dramatically - **raid hits/levy called/treaty breaks.**
- **Patron Omen:** Divine/arcane forces take notice - **omen appears/blessing lost/curse manifests.**
- **Narrative Pivot:** The story takes an unexpected turn that reframes objectives.

Region-Specific SB Options

- **Vilikari (Two Laws):** Legal documents contradict each other, courts issue conflicting rulings, oaths bind to different authorities.
- **Vilikari (Frontier Diplomacy):** Treaties expire without warning, foreign envoys demand additional concessions, mixed-blood courtiers shift allegiances.
- **Vilikari (Border Tensions):** Frontier posts close without notice, markets shift locations, safe-conducts are revoked mid-journey.

Vilikari — Laurels and Longhouses

Starting Location: A longhouse hung with laurel garlands and antler trophies, the air thick with mead and judgment.

“In Vilikari, feasts end in trials, and peace lasts only until the cups run dry.”

In... A Longhouse Quarter, a Ykrul Envoy lays a treaty scroll. “The Foedus Stone cracks,” he says. “And the steppe listens.”

Regional Motifs Moot laurels, oath-stones, horse-lords, treaty feasts.

Whispers to Offer “Break bread alone,” “Pocket the treaty seal,” “Name the steppe’s price.”

External Clocks Community: “Feud Rekindled”; Threat: “Envoy’s Trial”; Anchor: “Foedus Stone.”

Complications Longhouse smoke writes terms; horses refuse one PC; the seal sweats brine.

Anchors at Risk A host family; a hearth-blessing.

Escalation Beat The Stone audibly cracks again.

Relief Renew the feast with a difficult apology; ride a night circuit together; bind the seal with hair and oath.

Vilikari — Invisible in Plain Sight

Seen/Unseen Clock (4) When the company leans on Vilikari low profile—switching tongues, wearing the right braid, using local rites—reduce **Exposure** by 1 for a scene. Each time you do, tick **Seen/Unseen**. When it fills, one of these lands:

- **Face in the Crowd:** A local authority assumes you owe duties here; pay (coin, service, or favor) or mark **Position** down.
- **Forgotten Credit:** A past deed is attributed to someone “more official”; lose one stored leverage (GM picks) until publicly reclaimed.
- **Paper Mirror:** Your name appears under a different script; identity challenge triggers a **Law Tangle** at next gate/market.

Clear **Seen/Unseen** by: making a public claim (song, oath, banner) or accepting a small, sticky duty (night watch, tithe escort) for a locale.

Treaty-Feast Procedure To bind a deal over bread and smoke:

1. **Set the Table:** Name 2–3 *terms* (what both sides want) and 1 *taboo* (off-limits).
2. **First Cup (Position):** Roll/social test; success grants +1 die to bargain, failure grants the host 1 SB.
3. **Bread Salt (Offer):** Put *one* leverage on the table (Diamond or oath-promise). Host matches with an obligation (escort, safe-market, or hostage).
4. **Smoke (Test):** GM reveals a Complication tied to *Old Grudges* or *Two Laws*. Resolve or accept a *Rider Clause*.
5. **Knot the Braid:** On success, create a **Feast-Bond (3)** clock that protects both parties from betrayal in that matter while it has segments; on breach, the breaker immediately takes 1–2 SB and the clock flips to **Blood-Owed (3)**.

Cross-Regional Conversions (Vilikari Interfaces)

- **Kahfagia (Lantern-Law):** *Foedus Seal* may stand in for a *Safe-Conduct* along a single beaconed lane once. Doing so ticks **Port Clash**.
- **Ecktoria (Imperial Remnants):** *Roman Patent* counts as *Archive Hour* or *Icon License* in old Utar sites—choose one per session.
- **Vhasia (Fractured Sun):** *Mallus Right* functions as *Low-Justice* in a bastide for a day; first use starts a **Parlement Divided** tick.
- **Viterra (Hedge-Law):** *Wergild Table* can settle a *Quiet Tolls* dispute without duel; convert 1 Club into *Audit Freeze* unless a *Parish Surveyor* is present.
- **Ubral (Stone & Oath):** *Hostage Treaty* counts as *Bride-Escrow* once; if cashed at a Moot, start **Feud Rekindled**.

Region-Specific SB Options (Vilikari Addenda)

- **Invisible Ledger:** A debt you paid “off-book” resurfaces; pay again or name the fixer (create a fragile ally).
- **Twin Court Whiplash:** Basilican clerk and mallus elder arrive together; arguments must be made in *both* forms or lose **Effect**.

- **Forum Bones Stir:** Old mausolea “voice” an imperial claim; papers & oaths suffer disadvantage until rites are observed.

Geography & Borders

The Vilikari marches do *not* touch Vhasia, Thepyrgos, Ubral, or the Valewood. They are land-bordering **Kahfagia** to the southwest, with the **Ecktoria** prefectures to the northwest, the **Aelerian Mountains** along the southern rim, and the **Direwood** pressing from the east. Beyond the northern steppe lie the Ykrul raiders and Linn clans.

“The marches sit between the beaconed lanes of Kahfagia and the paper-forts of Ecktoria, with dwarf-kept passes in the Aelerian spurs and the Direwood’s breath forever clawing at their borders.”

Cross-Regional Conversions

- **Kahfagia (Lantern-Law):** A *Foedus Seal* may stand in for a *Safe-Conduct* once on a beaconed lane. Doing so starts *Port Clash* [2] in the next harbor touched.
- **Ecktoria (Imperial Remnants):** An *Utaran Patent* counts as either *Archive Hour* (scholars open doors) or *Icon License* (display symbols) in Ecktorial sites—choose once per session.
- **Aelerian Mountains (Pass & Toll):** A *Pass-Ring* grants priority at dwarf switchbacks. Cashing it to bypass inspection spawns *Ledger Notice* [3]. A *Guide’s Braid* improves Position on any high-pass travel.
- **Direwood (Breath & Bells):** Spending *Stipend Arrears* for levee labor converts one Direwood Clubs draw into a *Ward-Salt* Diamond for a scene, then begins *Names Disputed* [3] with bell-wardens.

Cross-Region Boss Entanglements

- *Kahfagian Lane War:* Outmaneuvering a **Port-Captain of Lantern-Law** by citing a *Foedus Seal* converts one *Port Clash* into *Stall-Right* for a scene, then ticks *Port Clash* +1 later.
- *Ecktoria’s Paper Teeth:* Defeating the **March Notary** with precedent spawns *Whispered Precedent* [4] in New Raivon’s basilica benches.
- *Aelerian Toll Storm:* Using a **Purple Warrant** to force dwarf passage downgrades one *Bridge Levy* now, but adds *Dwarf Toll Hike* at the next mountain seed.
- *Direwood Breath-Debt:* Ransoming captives from a **Ykrul Storm-Rider** with a foster’s *Name Facet* ticks *Name Leverage* [1], later claimable by Direwood spirits.

Region-Specific SB Options

- **Beacon Audit (Kahfagia):** Lantern-law requires a bonded pilot; lose 1 Effect on smuggling or pay a fee (convert 1 Diamond into a temporary *Pilot Bond*).
- **Prefect’s Recall (Ecktoria):** An Ecktorial clerk “recovers” a settler cohort; your next *Hostage Treaty* is treated as *Foedus Recall* unless countered by *Mallus Right*.
- **Stone Tithe (Aelerian):** Dwarf wardens demand exact weights; failing to provide spawns *Law Tangle* (weights vs. words).
- **Breath on the Wind (Direwood):** A ridge-signal carries a name you meant to keep hidden; mark *Exposure* +1 or pay *Wergild Table* to buy silence.

Map Notes (GM Facing)

- **Southwest:** Kahfagia's beaconed lanes and river-law bleed inland to staple markets.
- **Northwest:** Ecktoria's prefectures—paper strong, coffers weak—still field clerks and patents.
- **South:** Aelerian spurs with dwarf switchbacks, toll-stones, and storms that own the high road.
- **East:** The Direwood's breath; names carry, bells toll, and salt buys only time.

4.26 Viterra — “The Hedge-Law Realm”

Elite (Warrior Queen)

“Every hedge here marks not just a boundary but a principle – the careful balance between order and freedom, justice and mercy. Our law grows like the hedges themselves, tended with precision and patience.”

Commoner (Fen reeve with tally-rod speaking for dike guilds)

“The dikes hold back more than water – they hold back chaos. Every rod measured, every stone placed, keeps the flood from washing away not just our fields but our very way of life.”

Theme & Atmosphere

Viterra breathes with the careful rhythm of precedent and petition. Once a proud kingdom before foreign conquest, now reborn under a Warrior Queen who rules by legal precision as much as military might. The realm’s true sinews lie not in steel but in writs, charters, and the ancient rights that bind lord to tenant, crown to county, and church to common. Every hedge-row, every parish stone, every ferry crossing carries the weight of custom older than memory. Here, a well-placed document can open doors that armies cannot breach, and a single forged seal may topple houses greater than dukes. The Queen maintains her throne through the careful application of law, the manipulation of ancient rights, and the delicate balance between imperial legacy and reclaimed sovereignty.

But law in Viterra is not merely governance—it is warfare. Legal documents are weapons, courtrooms are battlefields, and the pen cuts as deep as any blade.

(Court/Law/Border) Court gossip in Valora’s law quarter; writ-runners queue at dawn; border sheriffs argue over a hay-cart’s toll rights; dueling advocates prepare legal challenges like generals planning campaigns.

Spades — Places (categories)

2. **Fen Causeway** — Stile with toll-rod and eel carts queueing; each reeve claims right to collect under different charter. Dueling advocates argue cases on makeshift platforms.
3. **Hedgerow Green** — In Dales; bows strung under apple trees where justices of the peace hold court beneath makeshift arbors. Court duels permitted for matters of honor.
4. **Beacon Hill** — Above Highlands; fire-grate still warm from last winter’s levy call, signal tower with semaphore arms for legal dispatches and military alerts.
5. **Belworth Stairs** — Ferry ledgers gone damp with river-mist; three manors claim toll rights, writs in three different hands. Legal challenges fought in boats while waiting.
6. **Bloom Quarry** — Old iron-bloom turned drill yard; hammer echoes carry, forge-reeve holds tally of crown contracts. Military contracts awarded through legal bidding wars.
7. **Parish Maze** — Stone maze where three maps disagree; hedge-priest’s vote decides who pays tithe and who holds freehold. Legal disputes settled by navigating the maze correctly.
8. **Fairport Works** — Tideworks at Dolmis mouth; customs writs in three languages flutter, inspectors with magnifying glasses examine every cargo manifest. Maritime law enforcement

includes boarding actions.

9. **Law Quarter** — Valora archives, oath-rooms, Hall of Dawning where precedent birthed in ink and sealed with wax. Adjacent training grounds for legal advocates.
10. **Counting Fields** — Tarlington beside muster ground; wagons load, ledgers mis-sum, auditors with quill-pens and suspicious eyes. Military mustering follows strict legal procedures with armed oversight.
- J **Dike Crown** — Ring of turf and timber; brotherhood bells warn of flood—and spies who move like water through the fen. Legal sanctuary for those fleeing court judgments.
- Q **Progress Camp** — Queen's canvas palisade, banners stiff, whispering old courtiers plot advancement through legal maneuver and sanctioned duels.
- K **Tilt-Yard** — Hall of Dawning at first light; Dawn-knights drill clean, loyalties in contracts signed with careful pen. Legal challenges often end in trial by combat.
- A **Highway Stone** — Queen's milestone above Dolmis road; three sheriffs post seals over hers, each claiming different jurisdiction. Territory disputes resolved through armed arbitration.

(Reeve/Guild/Knight/Legal Advocate) Fen reeve with tally-rod speaking for dike guilds; river-carter syndic moving grain faster than rumor; justices of the peace settling disputes with careful pen; master advocates who duel with words and swords.

Hearts — People & Factions (categories)

2. **Fen Reeve** — Tally-rod; speaks for dike guilds, remembers every flood-year's debts and the charters that govern them. Authorized to call local levies for legal disputes.
3. **River Syndic** — Moves grain faster than rumor; knows which writs matter and which customs officials can be... persuaded. Maintains armed merchant guards.
4. **Parish Surveyor** — Three maps, one opinion; hedge-walks settle more disputes than courts, measures boundaries with careful chain. Expert witness in property disputes.
5. **Dawn Quartermaster** — Ledgers sharper than tongue; logistics before lances, counts every farthing spent in the Queen's name. Legal authority over military supplies.
6. **Levy Serjeant** — Dales bow calm, cider breath, memory keen for every loophole in the mustering laws. Commands armed civilians in legal enforcement actions.
7. **Cleric-Pair** — Light preacher vs. Everflame canon lawyer; debates decide tithe law, one for the spirit, one for the letter. Religious law carries weight in secular courts.
8. **Fairport Shipwright** — Dolmis cousins; skiff carries more secrets than cargo, knows which manifests to forge and which to honor. Expert in maritime law and naval combat.
9. **Fenwood Comptroller** — Conjures wagons with signature, silence with seal, counts the Queen's coin and tracks every debt owed to the crown. Legal authority over taxation.
10. **Queen's Justiciar** — Law on road, polite as noose; bearing three kings' judgments and a purse full of pardons for the right price. Authorized to conduct trial by combat.
- J **Border Routier** — Reads ledgers as ambushes; serves two crowns, collects from both, knows which border posts take bribes in what coin. Expert in frontier law enforcement.
- Q **Warrior Queen** — Crown on helm, sword at side, patient sums behind gaze; rules by law's sharp edge and knows every precedent that supports her claim. Final arbiter in legal duels.
- K **Crown Council** — Fenwood dukes, guild envoys, abbots; weighing grain against glory, charters against coin, precedent against practicality. Legal battles fought through proxy

advocates.

- A **Master Advocate Halric** — Silver-tongued legal warrior who settles disputes through verbal duels that can end in physical combat. Keeper of the legal combat traditions.

(Writ/Charter/Duel/Legal Challenge) Dike breach in black-rain; wrong reeve claims credit while wagons drown; feast-day clash of Light vs. Everflame processions; secret meetings in counting houses; legal duels fought in courtyards.

Clubs — Complications/Threats (categories)

2. **Dike Breach** — Black-rain; wrong reeve claims credit while wagons drown, insurance claims and liability writs fly like autumn leaves. Legal liability may require armed enforcement.
 3. **Feast Clash** — Light vs. Everflame processions collide; shutters slam, writs fly, justices of the peace called to settle which holy day takes precedence. Honor disputes may require legal duels.
 4. **Quiet Tolls** — Sprout on Queen’s Highway; escorts sniff traps, sheriffs argue rights, customs officials demand duties no one knew existed. Territorial disputes resolved through armed arbitration.
 5. **Audit Freeze** — Counting-house freezes cargo; Queen’s seal vs. old writs, auditors with suspicious eyes and quill-pens sharp as daggers. Legal challenges may escalate to physical confrontation.
 6. **Border Snarl** — Three courts arrest same hay-cart; whose hay is it? Which lord’s charter takes precedence? Bribes flow like wine. Frontier justice often involves armed standoffs.
 7. **Isle Refusal** — Theona withholds levy; quays choke on rumor, ships idle while lawyers debate maritime law and ancient treaties. Naval blockades become legal enforcement actions.
 8. **Delta Spat** — Fairport vs. Marcott customs; barges stack three deep, merchants pick sides, inspectors with magnifying glasses examine every manifest. Trade disputes fought with merchant guards.
 9. **Routier Arrears** — Free-company flips unless someone pays; your name on ledger, debt owed to men who know the price of blood. Legal debts enforced through hired swords.
 10. **Salt Pinch** — Import spikes, bakers barricade; Queen’s promise tastes like thin gruel, merchants hoard salt like gold, riots brew in back alleys. Economic warfare becomes physical conflict.
- J **Dawn Recall** — Escort pulled to flood-struck parish; writ argues with river, justices demand inquiry into who neglected the dikes. Military enforcement of legal judgments.
- Q **Aberielist Intrigue** — Royalist seals in wrong hands; Queen’s patience thins, conspirators plot in counting houses, whispers of rebellion. Treason charges carry death penalty in legal duels.
- K **Levy Call-Up** — Dalesmen mustered; your wagons seized “for the realm,” conscription writs signed with careful pen, families left to tend fields alone. Legal authority backed by armed force.
- A **Legal Duel Challenge** — Master Advocate Halric issues formal challenge; refuse and lose legal standing, accept and risk life and fortune in court-yard combat. The ultimate legal weapon.

(Bribe/Seal/Writ/Duel Warrant) Ferry priority at Belworth crossing; dike-work allotment with brotherhood labor granted; market license sealed with proper wax; sanctioned duel to settle property dispute.

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (categories)

2. **Ferry Priority** — Belworth crossing (once); horn answers, though perhaps wrong ferry, customs officials look the other way for the right coin. Legal right of way backed by armed escort.
 3. **Dike Allotment** — Brotherhood labor granted if three clerks convinced and proper bribes distributed among the right hands. Work performed under legal contract with military oversight.
 4. **Market License** — Valora's square; guild nod still needed, but the right seal on the right parchment opens many doors. Legal protection from merchant guild enforcement.
 5. **Dawn Escort** — Four lances at dawn; loyalty waxes and wanes with pay, but their presence keeps lesser men from troubling you. Legal authority to enforce your writs.
 6. **River Charter** — Guaranteed haul on grain artery—weather permitting and proper duties paid to the right officials. Legal right protected by river patrol.
 7. **Map Correction** — Hedge moves, borders shift, lawsuits bloom; a new survey can make or break a man's fortune overnight. Legal survey backed by armed surveyors.
 8. **Customs Seal** — Fairport for Dolmis cargo; honored today, disputed tomorrow, but tonight it clears the way for what needs moving. Legal immunity from customs enforcement.
 9. **Thing Ruling** — Sharp local bite, but appeals run swifter than oaths; justice swift but not always just, depending on which purse feeds the judge. Court decisions enforceable by local levy.
 10. **Salt Allotment** — Winter depot; Queen's writ opens, old hands still count sacks, but the right connections ensure the best salt reaches the right tables. Legal monopoly backed by military force.
- J **Wardship** — Minor fen-keep; men-at-arms "for now," tutor has plans, but the right guardian can be found for the right price. Legal guardianship with military authority.
- Q **Queen's Audience** — Private; her questions strike like thrusts, but her favors can elevate a man from nothing to something overnight. Royal decree carries immediate enforcement power.
- K **Ducal Warrant** — Fenwood to enforce customs; old power bows, new power watches, but the parchment carries weight in any court. Legal authority backed by noble house military.
- A **Duel Sanction** — Right to challenge in legal combat; Queen's seal makes it official, Dawn-knights serve as seconds, winner takes all legally. Ultimate legal enforcement mechanism.

Quick use notes

- Draw until you have all four suits: Spade = place, Heart = actor, Club = pressure, Diamond = leverage. Highest rank sets the main Clock (2–5 → 4, 6–10 → 6, J/Q/K → 8, A → 10).
- Diamonds are codified outcomes (writs/charters/priority) that change position rather than call for a roll.
- If any A appears, echo **hedge-law** motif—boundaries blur, charters contradict, precedent splinters, and the careful web of legal authority shows its cracks. Legal warfare escalates to

physical conflict.

Additional Features

- **Hedge-Law Momentum:** When valid *writ*, *charter*, or *warrant* presented in proper parish, step **Position** up one category on social/logistical actions in locale for scene. First contradiction starts **Border-Lace (4)** clock; advance each time competing papers invoked.
- **Beacon & Bell Chain:** If two adjacent *beacons* or *brotherhood bells* under your influence, convert one **Club** draw into travel delay for *others* while party proceeds with improved **Effect** for movement/logistics. Signal draws scrutiny; GM may bank 1 SB tied to local authority.
- **River-Right Window:** At ferry, tidework, or customs stair, play any **Diamond** tied to crossings/seals to open short *window of lawful passage*: one convoy passes uninspected, or one cargo clears at priority. Window closes immediately if storm, audit, or levy card revealed.
- **Legal Duel Protocol:** When legal disputes cannot be resolved through argument, parties may challenge to duel. Winner’s position becomes legally binding. Requires proper sanction and seconds.

Patronage & Power

In Viterra, power flows through the careful application of law, the management of ancient rights, and the delicate balance between imperial legacy and reclaimed sovereignty. The Warrior Queen maintains authority through a combination of military might and legal precision, while the old duchies and local officials wield influence through their knowledge of traditional customs and hedge-law. The true power lies with those who can navigate this complex legal landscape and maintain the appearance of legitimate authority while building genuine support.

But remember—in Viterra, law is warfare. Every document is a weapon, every courtroom a battlefield, and every advocate a soldier. The pen cuts as deep as any blade, and legal victory can be as decisive as military conquest.

For the GM: Patronage in Viterra revolves around legal documents, local rights, and the ability to command respect from institutions that are still finding their post-imperial identity. Rewards often take the form of writs, charters, and official positions that can be leveraged into greater influence. To emphasize this:

- Tie rewards to visible symbols (seals, writs, charters) that can be challenged, stolen, or voided.
- Let rival duchies issue conflicting authorities, forcing players to choose whose favor matters more.
- Use the courts, parishes, and muster grounds as arenas for social contests, where knowledge of law and custom determines success.
- When legal conflicts escalate beyond words, transition naturally to physical confrontation with appropriate stakes.

In Viterra, your papers are your power, and your power determines whether you rule or are ruled. But when words fail, steel speaks—and the law says both are valid.

Legal Combat System

Dueling Advocates

When legal disputes cannot be resolved through negotiation, parties may engage in formal legal duels. These combine verbal sparring with physical combat:

Phase 1: Pleadings

- Each advocate presents their case (Wits + Sway vs. DV 3)
- Success grants +1 die to next phase
- Failure creates 1 SB that opponent can spend

Phase 2: Cross-Examination

- Attack opponent's arguments (Wits + Insight vs. DV 3)
- Success inflicts Fatigue 1 on opponent
- Critical success (6+ dice showing 6) forces opponent to answer truthfully

Phase 3: Trial by Combat (if unresolved)

- Physical combat with legal stakes
- Winner's position becomes legally binding
- Loser suffers legal consequences plus physical harm

Courtroom Combat

Legal proceedings can become physical when tempers flare:

Position Modifiers:

- **Dominant:** Prepared arguments, proper documentation (+1 die)
- **Controlled:** Interrupted proceedings, missing evidence (standard)
- **Desperate:** Outnumbered advocates, hostile crowd (-1 die)

Legal Weapons:

- **Precedent:** Cite relevant case law (+1 Effect)
- **Witnesses:** Call expert testimony (+1 die)
- **Evidence:** Present damning documents (+2 dice, but may create SB)
- **Rhetoric:** Inspire crowd support (+1 Position)

Escalation to Violence: When courtroom combat fails to resolve disputes:

- **Challenge to Arms:** Formal duel with legal sanction
- **Court Riot:** Mob violence with unpredictable consequences
- **Military Intervention:** Dawn-knights enforce legal judgments
- **Appeal to Higher Authority:** Escalate to Crown Council or Queen herself

Economic Warfare Mechanics

Trade War Clock [6]

When economic disputes arise, track the escalating conflict:

- 1-2: Price manipulation, rumor spreading

- 3-4: Boycotts, supply disruption
- 5-6: Merchant guard conflicts, property damage
- Filled: Open warfare between merchant houses

Market Manipulation

Players can engage in economic warfare through legal means:

- **Guild Sanctions:** Legal exclusion from markets
- **Customs Interference:** Legal delays and inspections
- **Contract Sabotage:** Forged or broken business agreements
- **Reputation Attacks:** Legal defamation campaigns

Religious Legal Integration

Canon Law Conflicts

Religious authority carries legal weight in Viterra:

- **Light Preacher:** Civil law takes precedence, but religious oaths carry weight
- **Everflame Canon Lawyer:** Religious law supersedes civil in spiritual matters
- **Mixed Tribunals:** Joint religious-civil courts for moral crimes
- **Excommunication:** Legal disability in addition to spiritual consequences

Regional Legal Variations

Fen Law

- Water rights take precedence over land rights
- Dike maintenance is community responsibility
- Flood liability determined by ancient customs

Highland Law

- Property boundaries determined by beacon lines
- Military service obligations tied to land holdings
- Frontier justice allows for immediate enforcement

Coastal Law

- Maritime law supersedes land law within sight of shore
- Salvage rights carefully defined and contested
- Foreign vessel treatment governed by treaty law

Viterra — Hedge-Law on the March

Starting Location: The Hall of Dawning tilt-yard at first light, where advocates rehearse arguments as Dawn-knights rehearse cuts.

“In Viterra, a seal is a sword you carry in your pocket.”

In... The Law Quarter, a Queen’s Justiciar slides a parchment across an oaken rail. “Three charters, one road,” they say. “Carry the Queen’s writ to Belworth, break the Quiet Tolls, and make the sheriffs agree—by clause or by cut.”

Regional Motifs Hedge-bounds, beacon chains, writ-runners, duel warrants, parish maps that don’t agree.

Whispers to Offer “Forge the second seal,” “Call a dawn duel,” “Re-survey the hedge and move the world.”

External Clocks Threat: *Border-Lace Snarls*; Community: *Tax Riot at Fairport*; Anchor: *Dawn-Order Prestige*; (optional) Fracture: *Three Laws, One Road*.

Complications Beacons mis-signal; two sheriffs post rival notices; a guild clerk “finds” an older clause.

Anchors at Risk A parish reeve who signed for you; a ferryman family at Belworth; a Dawn-knight second with your reputation in their mouth.

Escalation Beat A bell peals the wrong hour and every warrant dated this morning becomes “yesterday.”

Relief Produce a superior map (Map Correction) to reset *Border-Lace* by 1; host a hedge-moot to swap oaths (spend 2 to downgrade a riot); submit to a sanctioned legal duel to collapse a three-way claim into one enforceable ruling.

Region-Specific SB Options (Viterra)

- **Hedge-Law Tangles:** Boundary stones “walk,” parish lines disagree aloud, clerks insist your seal’s wax is the wrong shade.
- **Beacon Precedent:** A signal tower cites case-law; lights encode rulings; your opponent argues by mirror until dawn.
- **Queenspeace Clause:** Any brawl on a milestone becomes court; weapons sheathed or pay treble fines in public.

Cross-Regional Entanglements

- **Into Ubral:** *Ducal Warrant* acts as *Guest-Token* once at a clan hearth, but starts a *Feud Rekindled* tick if you collect tolls twice in a tenday.
- **Into Theona:** *Ferry Priority* overrides a local taboo once; if the Ninth custom is in play, the writ “forgets” one clause on use (GM banks 1 SB).
- **Into Vhasia:** *Duel Sanction* is recognized on the Pont-du-Tithe—but a rival abbey can convert it into *Parlement Divided* on a Club draw.

Quick Hook: If any **A** appears in Viterra, echo **hedge-law**: boundary stones contradict maps, beacons cite precedent, and a single clause rearranges a road’s authority for a scene.

Conspiracy Flourishes (keep it close, keep it quiet)

- **Hedge-Moots at Dusk:** Parish elders “trim hedges” while trading sealed whispers.
- **Cipher Roses:** Folded writs stamped with thorn-petals; one petal missing marks a false clause.
- **Mirror Hours:** Beacons flash lawful signals—reversed for those who know the counter-code.
- **Eel-Letters:** Oiled parchment smuggled in eel-baskets; ink runs in water, truth does not.
- **Quiet Steel, Quieter Quills:** Dawn-knights duel at first light; advocates settle three duels before breakfast with ink alone.
- **Progress Masks:** Courtiers wear legal devices as masque motifs (seal, chain, beacon) to signal faction at a glance.
- **Bell Penance:** A single off-hour peal grants amnesty to those who confess a clause before the twelfth echo.

Boss Hooks (three faces of the hedge)

The Violet Clerk (Master of Counter-Seals) *Face:* Mild, ink-stained, never without a candle-box. *Wants:* To prove the Queen’s title by destroying every rival document—without touching a sword. *Moves:* Produces “earlier” patents; splits a single writ into two contradictory copies; declares a *Seal Fast* (paper cannot change hands for a scene). *Mechanic—Seal Pressure [4]:* Each time you flash leverage (Diamond), tick *Seal Pressure*. At 4, one held Diamond is ruled *void unless defended* (treat a social as Desperate but +1 Effect if you cite precedent).

The Thorn Captain (Queen’s Quiet Hand) *Face:* Dawn-cloak, bare helm, oath on the tongue. *Wants:* To keep the Queen alive by pruning conspiracies at the root. *Moves:* Names a *Queenspace Zone* (weapons sheathed or fines triple), calls a sanctioned *Duel Warrant*, swaps the field—court becomes tilt-yard. *Mechanic—Peace or Point:* When the Captain appears, party must choose: *Peace* (improve Position, but GM banks 1 SB) or *Point* (enter a 3-exchange duel; winning sets a binding ruling for this scene).

The Saffron Abbess (Keeper of Bell-Law) *Face:* Ember eyes, quiet hands, ledger of souls and ships. *Wants:* To bind river, parish, and beacon to one holy timetable. *Moves:* Rings a *Wrong Hour* (dates slide a day), blesses or damns a seal, invokes mixed tribunal on the spot. *Mechanic—Bell-Ledger [3]:* Each scene under her gaze, mark 1 if you profit by clause or tide. At 3, she claims *tithe in truth*: reveal one hidden fact or lose 1 Effect until confessed.

Micro-Mechanics (plug-and-play)

Mask & Measure Dial (Public Loyalty ↔ Private Fealty) Track the party’s posture during intrigue. *Public High:* +1 Position when acting under open writ or beacon. First covert act each session starts one step worse. *Private High:* +1 Effect on clandestine bargains/forgeries. First public petition or duel starts one step worse. *Center:* Host a hedge-moot, surrender a forged clause, or escort a rival safely through a parish.

Clause Gambits (1/scene if fiction fits)

- *Ink Substitution*: Downgrade a hostile **Club** to *Audit Freeze* but start *Border-Lace* +1.
- *Beacon Appeal*: Treat one social as if backed by a *Bellmark* (once); next beacon scene begins one step worse.
- *Hedge Survey*: Swap Place for Pressure: convert a muddled location into a crisp legal obstacle (Lock/Barrier appears, but +1 die to crack it).

Conspiracy Tick (table safety switch) Any time the party lies with a seal, bribes a clerk, or dodges levy by clause, tick *Conspiracy* [4]. At 2: an ally gains leverage over you (minor blackmail). At 4: a faction forces a choice—burn a contact or face *Legal Duel Challenge*.

Start-of-Scene Rumors (1d6, low-noise)

1. *Wrong Wax*: your rival's seals softened; +1d to forgeries this scene.
2. *Empty Beacon*: tower unmanned; travel faster, scrutiny harsher.
3. *Dawn-Lane Cleared*: first convoy action gains +1 Position.
4. *Clerk's Wedding*: filings delayed; first petition ignores *Audit Freeze*.
5. *Fen High Water*: ferries slow; river-charters count double value.
6. *Mask at Progress*: someone at court uses your name; +1d to social opens, +1 SB banked by GM.

Quick Seeds

- **Three Charters, One Road**: Deliver the Queen's writ before the Abbess rings the Wrong Hour.
- **Seal of Eels**: An eel-basket ledger names a traitor—prove it without drawing steel.
- **Mirror on Beacon Hill**: A rival signals treason in code; decode or duel by dawn.

4.27 The Ways Between — “Spiritways & Veilways”

Elite (The Wayfinder)

“I exist only in the moment of choice, the breath between one path and another. To guide here is to understand that every way leads somewhere, but only the wise know which somethings are worth the journey.”

Commoner (Lost Pilgrim who thinks they’re going home but forgot where)

“The paths here don’t care where you think you’re going – they care where you need to be. Best walk softly and listen to what the waystones whisper when you pass.”

Theme & Atmosphere

Between Death and Dreams lies a country of crossings. Roads remember promises; milestones remember names you never spoke. The Ways Between do not measure miles—they measure choices. Walk softly, pay what the path asks, and mind which version of you arrives.

(Path/Crossing/Threshold) Mist-shrouded ford where water runs uphill; footsteps echo backwards; bone-lit corridor where shadows walk walls.

Spades — Places (categories)

2. **Mist-Ford** — Water runs uphill; footsteps echo backwards through time.
3. **Bone Corridor** — Shadows walk walls but never touch floor; light as memory.
4. **Threshold Arch** — Shows reflection as someone you might have been; past as mirror.
5. **Spiral Path** — Ascends but returns to same stone marker; journey as meditation.
6. **Promise Bridge** — Cross with vow and it remembers your debt; oath as toll.
7. **Crossroads** — All four paths lead to same destination, different tomorrows.
8. **Stone Circle** — Marks where village used to be; houses now constellations.
9. **Memory Tunnel** — Hear thoughts of those who passed here; past as echo.
10. **Fossil Stairs** — Each step is eye that watches ascent; climb as scrutiny.
- J **Waystation** — Keeper trades in unfinished conversations; words as currency.
- Q **Junction** — Paths physically collide; choose which reality to follow.
- K **Long Mile** — Road stretches differently for each traveler; distance as perception.
- A **Thirteenth Stone** — Where path reveals its true destination; truth as revelation.

(Wayfarer/Spirit/Dream-walker) Lost pilgrim who thinks they’re going home but forgot where; toll-taker accepting payment in forgotten memories.

Hearts — Travelers & Guides (categories)

2. **Lost Pilgrim** — Thinks going home but forgot where; destination as memory.
3. **Toll-Taker** — Accepts payment in memories you didn’t know you had.
4. **Wayward Guide** — Directions technically correct, morally questionable.

5. **Dream-Merchant** — Sack of nightmares, one perfect dream for sale.
6. **Child-Ghost** — Knows shortcuts but charges in riddles; wisdom as puzzle.
7. **Wounded Walker** — Bleeding metaphor; pain grows thorns along path.
8. **Map-Merchant** — Selling maps to places that don't exist yet; future as commodity.
9. **Guide-Dog** — Shadow and starlight; follows those who walk with purpose.
10. **Backwards Pilgrim** — Moving through time; steps erase what just happened.
 - J **Soul-Ferryman** — Carries luggage of living; burden as service.
 - Q **Road's Child** — Born where paths crossed, raised by waymarks; navigation as instinct.
 - K **Dead-Road Keeper** — Ensures proper passage for those who shouldn't walk.
 - A **The Wayfinder** — Exists only in moment choice is made; decision as entity.

(**Veil-Thin/Dream-Bleed/Wayward**) Path loops back to show your funeral preparations; reality thins—you see dreams of sleeping travelers.

Clubs — Complications/Threats (categories)

2. **Funeral Loop** — Path shows your funeral preparations; death as destination.
3. **Reality Thins** — See dreams of sleeping travelers; boundary as veil.
4. **Waymark Lies** — Points wrong; trust leads to places that never were.
5. **Dream-Bleed** — Waking memories become someone else's nightmares.
6. **Toll Demanded** — Currency you didn't know you carried; payment as revelation.
7. **Path Split** — Each version remembers you differently; identity as choice.
8. **Gravity Shifts** — Emotional weight grows physically heavy; burden as physics.
9. **Time-Sickness** — Arrive before you left; paradox shadows follow.
10. **Truth Payment** — Road remembers your lies and demands truth-payment.
 - J **Crossroads Judgment** — Path chosen judges ones you didn't; decision as karma.
 - Q **Memory-Thief** — Rest stop keeper pays in counterfeit recollections.
 - K **Forbidden Path** — Opens only for those already lost; loss as key.
 - A **Convergence** — All travelers arrive together, none recall how; arrival as mystery.

(**True Name/Safe Passage/Waywisdom**) Waymark that always points toward next important choice; token of passage road recognizes you as belonging.

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (categories)

2. **Choice Compass** — Always points toward your next important choice.
3. **Passage Token** — Road recognizes you as one who belongs.
4. **Dream-Catcher** — Filters nightmares from your rest; sleep as sanctuary.
5. **Truth-Compass** — Points to what you most need to know, not want.
6. **Memory-Anchor** — Keeps you from losing yourself in deeper paths.
7. **Safe Haven** — Guaranteed rest stop without complication.
8. **Guide-Light** — Burns color of your truest intention; purpose as beacon.
9. **Path-Cutter** — Cuts distance through metaphor, not space.

10. **Debt-Clearing** — Road forgives one obligation you thought you owed.

J **Crossroads Boon** — Choose among three paths, each exactly where you need.

Q **Way-Wisdom** — Understand language of paths and signs for one journey.

K **Grace Passage** — Walk safely through any dangerous crossing for one night.

A **Road’s Name** — Call path by true name and command its nature.

Quick use notes

- Draw until you have all four suits: Spade = place, Heart = actor, Club = pressure, Diamond = leverage. Highest rank sets the main Clock (2–5 → 4, 6–10 → 6, J/Q/K → 8, A → 10).
- Diamonds are codified outcomes (true names/safe passages/waywisdom) that change position rather than call for a roll.
- If any A appears, echo **dream-road** motifs—reflections that lie, paths that judge, destinations that choose traveler.

Additional Features

- **Dream-Logic Navigation:** Any Ace introduces metaphysical requirement (sacrifice, taboo, exchange) that must be satisfied to pass. Name it at table; road will enforce it.
- **Reflection Points:** Face cards show alternate selves or unlived choices. Treat as temporary NPCs or scene tags that can help, hinder, or tempt.
- **Memory Currency:** Diamonds may be traded for knowledge or safe passage as if they were memories. Describe memory paid; path (or keeper) pays in kind.

Patronage & Power

In the Ways Between, power flows through understanding the metaphysical nature of paths, the ability to navigate dream-logic, and the careful management of obligations and truths. The true authorities are those who know the True Names of paths, can mediate between alternate versions of travelers, and understand the currency of memory and choice. Power here is not about commanding others, but about understanding the fundamental nature of journey and destination.

For the GM: Patronage in the Ways Between revolves around guidance, safe passage, and the ability to navigate metaphysical requirements. Rewards often take the form of waymarks, tokens, and knowledge that can be leveraged into greater understanding. To emphasize this:

- Tie rewards to visible symbols (tokens, compasses, lights) that can be challenged, stolen, or voided.
- Let rival guides issue conflicting directions, forcing players to choose whose favor matters more.
- Use the crossroads, waystations, and thresholds as arenas for social contests, where knowledge of path-logic determines success.

In the Ways Between, your understanding is your power, and your power determines whether you walk or are walked.

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

- **Exposure:** Your actions draw unwanted attention from **path keepers** or **wayward spirits**.
- **Noise:** Sounds of your actions alert nearby **travelers** or **memory echoes**.
- **Trace:** Evidence of your passage marks your route for **trackers** or **reflection points**.
- **Delay:** A brief but meaningful setback costs you **time** or **favorable path alignment**.
- **Supply Strain:** Mark +1 segment on a relevant **resource clock**.

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

- **Alarm Raised:** **Toll-taker** or **wayward guide** becomes aware and begins responding.
- **Position Lost:** You lose advantageous ground/cover/stealth due to **path shift** or **reality thinning**.
- **Foe Appears:** A **memory-thief** or **forbidden path entity** arrives on scene.
- **Gear Trouble:** A piece of equipment becomes **Compromised/Neglected**.
- **Lock/Barrier:** A simple obstacle now requires a test to overcome.

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

- **Reinforcements:** Additional **wayward spirits**, **path entities**, or **alternate selves** arrive.
- **Key Gear Breaks:** A crucial tool/weapon becomes temporarily unusable.
- **Major Twist:** The situation fundamentally changes - **path loops/time shifts/reality fractures**.
- **Rail Tick:** Advance a relevant campaign/front clock by 1 segment.
- **Condition Applied:** Mark **Fatigue 1/Harm 1/Condition** appropriate to fiction.

Major Turns (4+ SB)

- **Trap Springs:** A prepared danger activates with full effect.
- **Authority Arrival:** **The Wayfinder**, **Dead-Road Keeper**, or **Road's Child** intervenes.
- **Scene Shift:** The environment changes dramatically - **reality thins/paths converge/time loops**.
- **Patron Omen:** Divine/arcane forces take notice - **omen appears/blessing lost/curse manifests**.
- **Narrative Pivot:** The story takes an unexpected turn that reframes objectives.

Region-Specific SB Options

- **Ways Between (Dream-Logic):** Paths rearrange without warning, reflections speak unbidden, destinations shift mid-journey.
- **Ways Between (Memory Currency):** Memories become tangible, forgotten knowledge resurfaces, past and present blur.
- **Ways Between (Choice Consequences):** Decisions echo forward, alternate selves appear, paths judge moral weight.

Ways Between — Spiritways and Veilways

Starting Location: A crossroad shrine of black glass stones, where travelers meet their reflections coming the other way.

“In the Ways Between, direction is prayer, and memory the toll you pay to arrive.”

In... A Crossroads, a Backwards Pilgrim walks toward them. “The Thirteenth Stone speaks,” they say. “But the path chooses who arrives.”

Regional Motifs Reverse time, directional law, pilgrim riddles, stone tongues.

Whispers to Offer “Turn around,” “Step off the path,” “Answer the stone’s question with a lie.”

External Clocks Fracture: “Paths Decide”; Threat: “Pilgrim Reckoning”; Anchor: “Wayhouse Refuge.”

Complications Footprints arrive before feet; milestones hum; maps eat corners.

Anchors at Risk A wayhouse keeper; a holy token.

Escalation Beat The road passes through the party.

Relief Walk the path backward together; speak the truth you avoid; leave a cherished thing at the Stone.

Path-Moves & Procedures

Weighing of Steps (Travel Move) When the company enters a liminal path (Mist-Ford, Bone Corridor, etc.), choose one:

- **Pay the Toll:** Each PC names a small truth or a fond memory (GM: 1 SB banked, +1 Position on navigation).
- **Refuse the Toll:** +1d on Speed, but start a **Way-Debt (4)** clock.
- **Bargain the Toll:** Trade a *Diamond* reward as if it were a memory (see Memory Exchange, below); cancel one imminent *Club* card in this scene.

When **Way-Debt** fills, trigger *Crossroads Judgment* at the next junction.

Reflection Duel (Social/Moral Test) When confronted by an alternate self or *Reflection Point*, state what that self wants from you and roll your best social action.

- **Success:** Gain a *Guide-Light* tag for the scene and clear 1 tick from **Paths Decide**.
- **Mixed:** Trade places for one exchange or take a **Condition: Disoriented**.
- **Miss:** The reflection walks away with one of your *Diamonds* (GM picks the most narratively apt).

Way-Sanctuary (Making Camp) If you can name a waystone’s title (e.g., “Mourner’s Mile,” “Bridge of First Promises”), you may establish a **Safe Haven**:

- Spend 1 *Diamond* or 1 vivid memory (see table) to lock out *Clubs* until dawn.
- Anyone who sleeps here must either *forget* a minor slight or *remember* a painful truth; mark **Paths Decide** down by 1 tick.

Memory Exchange (Rates & Risks)

| Memory Offered | Buys You | Side Effect |
|-----------------------------------|--|---|
| A childhood smell, a nickname | +1 Position on one crossing | A familiar place feels strange for a scene |
| A first failure or small betrayal | Cancel one minor Complication | You gain a <i>tell</i> (the Ways recognize you) |
| A true fear you’ve never said | <i>Guide-Light</i> or <i>Way-Cord</i> -like effect | A dream pursues you for 1–3 nights |
| A kept promise’s details | <i>Safe Passage</i> for the party | NPC tied to that promise misremembers you |
| The meaning of a scar | Convert one <i>Club</i> into <i>Trace</i> only | Scar “moves” (cosmetic) until next dawn |
| A perfect day (all details) | Treat next <i>Heart</i> face as an ally | Start Dream-Bleed (3) on the map |

Exchange Rule: If you pay the same *kind* of memory twice in a journey, start **Hollowing (4)**. When it fills, you gain the *Backwards Pilgrim* tag until you reclaim what was lost.

Way-Keys & Taboos (d6)

1. **Speak Last:** Only the final word said at a gate is true; others are “practice.” First speakers take -1d on next test.
2. **Step Odd:** Crossings require odd-numbered steps; even counts loop you one scene.
3. **Name Nothing:** True names wake *Name-Theft*; use titles or lose a *Diamond*.
4. **Wet Iron:** A drop of water on iron cancels one glamour once per scene.
5. **Back Gift:** Leave something behind to go forward; refuse and tick **Way-Debt**.
6. **Answer Bent:** Answer a stone’s question with a metaphor, not fact, or trigger *Truth Payment*.

Omens & Atmospherics (d8)

1. Footprints precede the party by three paces, then vanish.
2. Milestones hum in harmony with a PC’s heartbeat.
3. Shadows detach to point at a different path.
4. A map eats its corner and reveals a new legend mark.
5. Wind smells like a long-forgotten room.
6. A bell rings where there is no bell; time skips one breath.
7. You meet someone you haven’t decided to be yet.
8. A coin lands on its edge and stays that way until the next choice.

Cross-Regional Conversions (Using Diamonds Across the Map)

- **Valewood:** *Road’s Name* may count as a *Valeheart Clause* once if spoken under leaves; doing so creates **Court Tithe (2)**.
- **Mistlands:** *Grace Passage* functions as *Pall Indulgence* over one levee crown at night; ring a bell after or start **Witchlight Count**.
- **Vhasia:** *Way-Wisdom* can be presented as “pilgrim right” to bypass one *Interdict* barrier; begin **Parlement Divided** tick.
- **Viterrra:** *Passage Token* can be notarized into a temporary *Ferry Priority*; on use, advance **Border-Lace**.
- **Ubral:** *Memory-Anchor* counts as *Guest-Token* at one hearth if you recount a family road-tale.
- **Silkstrand:** *Path-Cutter* doubles as a night-boat route once; spend 1 favor with a smuggler or trigger *Seal Counterfeit*.
- **Linn:** *Choice Compass* acts as a *Pilot’s Token* in reed-maze if you pay a name to the water.
- **Theona:** *Crossroads Boon* allows counting “eight-and-one” to cross an *Uncounted Bridge* safely once.

Region-Specific SB Addenda (Ways Between)

- **Forked Proof:** Evidence splits: one version exonerates, one condemns. Choose which survives into waking.
- **Promise Echo:** An oath you overheard... was yours. Honor it or mark **Way-Debt +2**.
- **Borrowed Dawn:** You arrive at sunrise you did not earn; take -1d until you “return” evening with a deed.

NPC Templates (Quick-Slot)

Waystation Keeper (Words-Monger) *Wants:* To complete a conversation they died before finishing. *Sells:* Missing lines of arguments, last pages of letters. *Cost:* One unsent message or a truth about why you never sent it.

Dead-Road Beadle *Wants:* Proper order: living to inns, dead to ferries. *Sells:* Escorts, obol accounting, corpse-rights. *Cost:* A coin that mattered (keepsake, not currency).

Road’s Child *Wants:* To see a crossroads they’ve never met. *Gives:* +1 Position if you follow their game rules. *Twist:* They can’t cross consecrated thresholds.

Escalation Clocks

Paths Decide (6) 1–2: Waymarks contradict gently. 3–4: An alternate self appears with a better plan. 5: Route demands a sacrifice named by the GM. 6: The Wayfinder arrives; accept their chosen destination or pay *Road’s Name* to defy it.

Pilgrim Reckoning (4) 1: You are recognized by a procession that hasn’t started. 2–3: Their destination is yours now. 4: Your *Safe Haven* is requisitioned as a shrine.

Way-Debt (4) 1: Prices rise (memories cost one step higher). 2–3: A *Toll-Taker* marks you with chalk only spirits can see. 4: *Forbidden Path* opens; refusing it imposes -1 Position until dawn.

Encounter Seeds (1–3 sentences)

- **The Promise Bridge’s Receipt:** An old vow you never spoke was logged here; to cross, define when you would have sworn it and to whom.
- **Thirteenth Stone Auction:** The stone sells three possible endings; each buyer is you from a different failure.
- **Bone Corridor Choir:** Shadows sing a name wrong by one letter; correct it and gain *Truth-Compass*, ignore it and start **Name-Theft**.

Designer Hooks (Optional)

True-Name Craft Once per journey, a PC may *forg* a minor way-name (e.g., “Courier’s Cut”) by binding a shared memory to a short route:

- Spend 1–2 *Diamonds* and narrate the founding memory.
- Gain +1 Effect on travel using that name.
- Each public use adds 1 tick to **Convergence** as others learn it.

Convergence Event (When Filled) All travelers you’ve intersected with arrive at once; resolve three debts (owed, unowed, mistaken) before the junction dissolves.

Liminal Flourishes (low-noise, high vibe)

- **Chalk Whispers:** Waystones sprout faint chalk notes that only answer if you erase one first.
- **Coin on Edge:** Any tossed coin that lands upright marks a *True Choice* nearby.
- **Borrowed Footsteps:** Your echo belongs to someone else; following it grants +1 Position once.
- **Sleeper’s Draft:** Dew beading on mile-markers is drinkable: 1 sip = remember one forgotten detail, but the path remembers *you*.
- **Veil Static:** Hair lifts in still air; that’s two realities brushing. Passing through grants brief *double-sight* (ask one question about the “other” leg).

Boss Hooks (three keepers of crossing)

The Archivist of Unmade Roads *Face:* Cloak stitched from surveyor’s cords, quills like thorns. *Wants:* To file every path choice you *didn’t* take. *Moves:* Produces *Receipts of Refusal* (paper truths that make alternatives real), files a *Stay of Journey* (travel pauses until a memory is surrendered). *Clock—Unfiled Options [4]:* Tick when you bypass a detour. At 4, one *Place* redraws as its “unmade” twin for a scene (GM picks).

The Toll-Matriarch Beneath the Bridge *Face:* Many hands, one voice like wet stone. *Wants:* Payment in *untaken apologies* and *unsent letters*. *Moves:* Demands *Truth Payment*, grants *Debt-Clearing*—but swaps your burden to a stranger-you. *Clock—Balance Due [3]:* Each refused toll ticks +1. At 3, she opens a *Forbidden Path* keyed to your worst rationalization.

The Wayfinder’s Shadow (Counter-Guide) *Face:* Your silhouette, two steps ahead, never quite yours. *Wants:* Choices made quickly, not well. *Moves:* Calls *Crossroads Judgment* early; offers *Guide-Light* that points to the *easiest* ending. *Clock—Haste Mark [4]:* Tick whenever you skip a ritual/taboo. At 4, the Shadow chooses for you once (resolve as if an Ace dictated the cost).

Flourishes

Choice Dial (Resolve ↔ Drift) Track the party’s footing between firm intent and wandering.

- *Resolve High:* +1 Position on *Path Split* tests; first *Dream-Bleed* each session hits harder (start at 2).
- *Drift High:* +1 Effect when bargaining with way-entities; first *Truth Payment* each session costs a cherished *detail*.
- *Center the Dial:* Name aloud the next choice *and* why you might refuse it; clear 1 from **Way-Debt**.

Counter-Seal (1/scene, if justified) Break a single metaphysical instruction (taboo, key, or omen) by presenting a memory in symbol (a token, letter, sketch). Gain +1d on that crossing; GM banks 1 SB *Marked Consequence* to spend when reflections return.

Start-of-Scene Murmurs (d6)

1. *Second Sunrise:* light arrives twice; your first miss on navigation becomes mixed.
2. *Name Draft:* the air steals a syllable; your next lie sounds true once.
3. *Echo Debt:* your footprints owe a step—skip a square or tick **Way-Debt** +1.
4. *Pale Bell:* time hiccups; first *Club* can be delayed to end of scene.
5. *Traveler’s Chorus:* distant voices agree with you; +1d on appeals to path entities.
6. *Hollow Weather:* rain that doesn’t wet; conditions look dire but impose no penalties this scene.

Quick Seeds

- **Receipt of Refusal:** The Archivist delivers a stamped paper proving you almost betrayed a friend. To proceed, decide whether that “almost” happened in another you—and pay or tear the receipt.
- **Bridge of Apologies:** The Toll-Matriarch offers *Grace Passage* if each PC speaks an apology never given. One apology is answered—from the wrong voice.
- **Shadow’s Shortcut:** The Wayfinder’s Shadow opens a one-turn *Path-Cutter*; take it and skip a *Club* now, but the skipped scene returns at journey’s end—harder.

Cross-Threshold Entanglements

- **Into Valewood:** A *Choice Compass* can be “planted” as a *Truce-Bough* once; doing so starts *Oath-Magnet* +1.
- **Into Viterra:** *Passage Token* notarized becomes a one-use *Ferry Priority*; upon use, a clerk misfiles your name (treat first social as if facing *Audit Freeze*).
- **Into Ubral:** *Memory-Anchor* traded for guest-bread counts as *Guest-Token*, but a cairn remembers the *truth* you gave up (GM banks leverage).

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

Elite (Claimant Chief)

“These lands answer not to charters but to those who can read their signs and respect their moods. Authority here is earned one campfire at a time, by proving you understand the difference between claiming and belonging.”

Commoner (Forager child with truer maps than yours)

“The wilds don’t need your roads or your rules – they got their own ways of keeping score. Follow the cairns if you want to live, and always leave something behind to thank the land for letting you pass.”

Theme & Atmosphere

Between towns and treaties lies the patience of the land. Old roads remember armies; cairns remember names no book keeps. In the Wilds, law thins to trail-marks and favors, and the weather keeps its own counsel. Walk soft, read the wind, and bargain with whatever still listens.

(Crossing/Lookout/Old Road) Crossing point with ford/ice-span/stepping logs; lookout knoll with wind-carved marker; old road trace with cairns half-eaten by terrain.

Spades — Places (categories)

2. **Crossing Point** — Ford/ice-span/stepping logs/dune saddle/reef shelf.
3. **Lookout Knoll** — Tor/cliff/dune/ridge with wind-carved marker.
4. **Old Road** — Trace with cairns and switchbacks half-eaten by terrain.
5. **Shelter Hollow** — Overhang/cave/root-cellar; soot says “used lately.”
6. **Water Source** — Spring/seep/fog net/snow pan, guarded by thorns or stone.
7. **Windbreak** — Rock ribs/lee of pines/reedwall berm.
8. **Ruined Outpost** — Watchstack/wayside shrine/marker pile.
9. **Bad Ground** — Sinkhole/bog crust/crevasse/loess slump.
10. **Gate Gully** — Pinch point between bluffs, dunes, or ice hummocks.
- J **Boundary Row** — Totems/standing stones/prayer flags bent by weather.
- Q **Worksite** — Abandoned mine/quarry/logging camp/salt pan.
- K **Signal Height** — Old fire-pit or mirror stand; smoke stains linger.
- A **Trail Nexus** — Migratory/pack/contraband paths knot here.

(Guide/Warden/Caravan) Forager child with truer maps than yours; guide with three routes and one price (changes daily).

Hearts — People & Factions (categories)

2. **Forager Child** — Goat-herd/berry-picker with truer maps than yours.
3. **Guide** — Three routes and one price (changes daily); navigation as negotiation.

4. **Warden Patrol** — Local badges, local laws, local patience; order as familiarity.
5. **Caravan Crew** — Drivers/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; doubleback with tracks that loop; prowlers shadow with wolves/jackals/ghouls.

Clubs — Complications/Threats (categories)

2. **Weather Turn** — Heat snap/cold snap/fog/dust; plans sag like wet leather.
3. **Doubleback** — Tracks loop; navigator swears land moved underfoot.
4. **Prowlers Shadow** — Wolves/jackals/ghouls/seals/ravens by night; hunt as company.
5. **Route Blocked** — Deadfall/rockfall/dune shift/ice heave; path as obstacle.
6. **Quarantine Sign** — Camp fever; wardens sniff your packs for death.
7. **Territorial Beast** — Charge, stampede, or swarm; your choice is wrong.
8. **Elemental Front** — Grassfire/peat-burn/canopy flare/blowing spindrift.
9. **Paper vs Spear** — Jurisdiction fight in wilds stalls your day; law as argument.
10. **Supply Pinch** — Water/fuel/feed low; pick what starves first.
- J **Pursuit** — Hunters/avengers follow; signs say “close.”
- Q **Bad Omen** — Will-lights, taboo day, saint bells silent; locals refuse.
- K **General Alarm** — Levy/muster/evacuation; all tracks become checkpoints.
- A **Catastrophe** — Flood/whiteout/sandstorm/lahar; clocks jump like frightened deer.

(**Cache/Pass/Favor**) Cache token for hidden food/fuel stash; right-of-way pass recognized by named trail; warden’s favor with escort letter.

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (categories)

2. **Cache Token** — Key to hidden food/fuel stash (once); preparation as power.
3. **Right-of-Pass** — Recognized marker for named trail or crossing.
4. **Warden’s Favor** — Escort letter; “they’re with us” as shield.
5. **Weather Window** — Good forecast and narrow gate to use it.
6. **Water Deed** — Lawful draw at scarce source; necessity as right.
7. **Route Song** — Map scrap that actually works; knowledge as navigation.
8. **Remount Hire** — Fresh legs or hulls waiting at post; speed as service.

- 9. **Truce Cord** — Taboo exemption at site (one scene); peace as thread.
- 10. **Toll Waiver** — Ferry/bridge/reef gate honors this chit; passage as paper.
- J **Rescue Debt** — Locals owe you (or you them); trade for labor or intel.
- Q **Private Audience** — Keeper/shrine-warden/spirit of place hears you alone.
- K **Road Commission** — Temporary authority over stretch of wilds.
- A **Earth's Exception** — One temporary rule-bend (cross during storm, pass uncounted, beasts ignore you).

Quick use notes

- Draw until you have all four suits: Spade = place, Heart = actor, Club = pressure, Diamond = leverage. Highest rank sets the main Clock (2–5 → 4, 6–10 → 6, J/Q/K → 8, A → 10).
- Diamonds are codified outcomes (cache/pass/favor) that change position rather than call for a roll.
- If any A appears, add lingering omen of land (smell on wind, sound that carries too far, tracks that shift) you can echo in later scenes.

Additional Features

- **Trail Rights:** Some paths older than borders. Display right token (knot, bead, bark-sigil) turns strangers into neighbors for one camp's length; break custom and road forgets you.
- **Weather-Lore:** Winds carry messages: resin-scent before lightning, hush before spindrift, birdsong that stops at once. Read aloud at table to bias Position before roll.
- **Road Spirits:** Shrines at cairns and waystones prefer small courtesies: water poured, pebble placed, name spoken. Keep them and land is kinder; slight them and land remembers.

Patronage & Power

In the Wilds, power flows through knowledge of the land, the ability to navigate without formal authority, and the careful cultivation of local relationships. True authority comes from understanding weather patterns, reading tracks, and maintaining the favor of both human inhabitants and the spirits of place. Those who can provide safe passage, find water in dry times, or mediate between conflicting claims hold the most influence.

For the GM: Patronage in the Wilds revolves around practical knowledge, local customs, and the ability to provide essential services like navigation, shelter, and supply. Rewards often take the form of tokens, passes, and local knowledge that can be leveraged into greater safety and efficiency. To emphasize this:

- Tie rewards to visible symbols (tokens, knots, passes) that can be challenged, stolen, or voided.
- Let rival guides or claimants issue conflicting directions, forcing players to choose whose favor matters more.
- Use the trails, shelters, and crossings as arenas for social contests, where knowledge of local custom determines success.

In the Wilds, your skill is your standing, and your standing determines whether you survive or perish.

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

- **Exposure:** Your actions draw unwanted attention from **wardens or local hunters**.
- **Noise:** Sounds of your actions alert nearby **prowlers or caravan guards**.
- **Trace:** Evidence of your passage marks your route for **trackers or claimants**.
- **Delay:** A brief but meaningful setback costs you **time or favorable weather**.
- **Supply Strain:** Mark +1 segment on a relevant **resource clock**.

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

- **Alarm Raised:** **Guide or warden patrol** becomes aware and begins responding.
- **Position Lost:** You lose advantageous ground/cover/stealth due to **weather shift or route blockage**.
- **Foe Appears:** A **war-band or territorial beast** arrives on scene.
- **Gear Trouble:** A piece of equipment becomes **Compromised/Neglected**.
- **Lock/Barrier:** A simple obstacle now requires a test to overcome.

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

- **Reinforcements:** Additional **wardens, war-bands, or prowlers** arrive.
- **Key Gear Breaks:** A crucial tool/weapon becomes temporarily unusable.
- **Major Twist:** The situation fundamentally changes - **weather turns/catastrophe strikes/quarantine declared**.
- **Rail Tick:** Advance a relevant campaign/front clock by 1 segment.
- **Condition Applied:** Mark **Fatigue 1/Harm 1/Condition** appropriate to fiction.

Major Turns (4+ SB)

- **Trap Springs:** A prepared danger activates with full effect.
- **Authority Arrival:** **Claimant chief, quartermaster, or The Stranger** intervenes.
- **Scene Shift:** The environment changes dramatically - **weather shifts/blockage clears/catastrophe hits**.
- **Patron Omen:** Divine/arcane forces take notice - **omen appears/blessing lost/curse manifests**.
- **Narrative Pivot:** The story takes an unexpected turn that reframes objectives.

Region-Specific SB Options

- **Wilds (Weather):** Conditions shift without warning, storms arrive early, calm turns to chaos.
- **Wilds (Navigation):** Trails reroute mid-journey, landmarks disappear, guides demand additional payment.
- **Wilds (Local Customs):** Spirits demand tribute, territorial beasts become aggressive, local laws change with terrain.

Fast reskin palette**Forest**

swap dunes→deadfall, spindrift→canopy flare, prowlers→boar/wolves; water = spring/stream.

Desert

swap bog→salt pan, fog→dust, shelter = overhang/wadi; water = seep/fog net.

Tundra/Ice

swap dune shift→ice heave, fire→spindrift, boats→sleds; prowlers = bears/wolves.

Coast/Isles

crossings = reef shelves, prowlers = seals/raiders, alarms = harbor booms; fuel = driftwood.

Swamp/Fen

crossings = corduroy/log causeways, bad ground = peat crust, prowlers = gators/leeches.

Highlands

crossings = cols and scree traverses, alarms = beacon chains, prowlers = cats/eagles.

Wilds — Roads and Ruins

Starting Location: A shelter hollow carved into a fallen giant’s ribcage, moss glowing faintly under starlight.

“In the Wilds, the land walks when you don’t watch it, and the roads remember who bled on them.”

In... A Shelter Hollow, a Forager Child offers a route-song. “The Bad Ground shifts,” they say. “And the weather walks behind it.”

Regional Motifs Ruin ivy, singing paths, weather as creature, stone memories.

Whispers to Offer “Cut through the Bad Ground,” “Take the relic,” “Leave the guide.”

External Clocks Threat: “Weather Wakes”; Fracture: “Roads Move”; Community: “Foragers Vanish.”

Complications Ruins reassemble; rain falls upward; the child knows tomorrow.

Anchors at Risk A caravan; a family relic.

Escalation Beat The song changes key.

Relief Sing in harmony; mark a safe path with blood and story; abandon the relic to drop Threat by one.

Travel Procedures (Fast Play)

Route Intent (declare before you draw) Pick *two*: **Speed, Stealth, Safety, Survey**. Each grants +1 Position on one appropriate action this leg; the neglected ones are -1 Position if tested.

March Structure Name: **Pathfinder, Rear Watch, Quartermaster, Envoy**. Each can cover one miss per leg by marking a minor cost (supply, time, favor, fatigue).

Leg Resolution (one “day” of travel)

1. **Read Weather:** Roll on Weather Engine (below). Apply tags.
2. **Waycheck:** One check to *Keep the Old Road* or *Cut a New Line*. Success avoids *Doubleback*. Mixed = *Delay*. Miss = *Route Blocked*.
3. **Encounter Pull:** If any *Clubs* were drawn to frame this leg, resolve now (prowlers, wardens, alarm).
4. **Make Camp or Push:** Camp (see Camps & Watches) or push on (mark 1 *Fatigue* each; if pushing under a *Weather Turn*, mark 2).

Weather Engine

| d12 | State | Tags / Effects |
|-----|------------------|---|
| 1 | Glass-Clear | +Survey; mirage/long sight; smoke seen for miles |
| 2 | Haze | -Survey; scents carry; <i>Prowlers Shadow</i> +1 die |
| 3 | Trickle Rain | Tracks muddle; <i>Bad Ground</i> more likely |
| 4 | Downpour | Paths sluice; +Delay on all exposed tasks |
| 5 | Thunderhead | First metal test risks shock; morale checks -1 |
| 6 | Cold Snap | Brittle gear; +1 cost to swim/ford tests |
| 7 | Heat Snap | Water usage doubled; Exhaustion clocks advance |
| 8 | Ground Fog | +Stealth/-Speed; signals/archery downgraded |
| 9 | Spindrift / Dust | Ranged beyond close is risky; eyes/filters matter |
| 10 | Shifting Wind | Smoke betrays; scent trails reverse mid-leg |
| 11 | Front Line | Choose: detour (Delay) or face <i>Elemental Front</i> |
| 12 | Catspaw Omen | GM may bank 1 SB to twist weather next leg |

Supply & Forage

Rations Track Each PC holds **3** marks of food/water abstractly. A leg consumes 1; *Heat/Cold Snap* consumes +1. At 0, mark **Supply Pinch**: -1 die to Strenuous actions; predators test at +1.

Forage/Harvest (once per leg) Pick a biome tag (Forest/Desert/Tundra/Coast/Swamp/Highland). On success: +1d3 rations; mixed: +1 with a hitch (quarantine sign, spoor); miss: find nothing and trigger a minor Complication.

Cache Tokens Spending *Cache Token* refills 1d3 party rations plus one of: fuel, arrows, spare tack.

Hazards & Terrain (d8 each)

Bad Ground (what it is) 1 sink crust 2 hidden crease 3 old culvert 4 rotten bridge 5 talus ribbon 6 reed-raft rot 7 thaw-pocket 8 dune slip

Why it bites (on a mixed/miss) 1 pack animals balk 2 axle snaps 3 someone sinks to hip
4 detour adds a leg 5 noise carries 6 gear lost 7 trail erases 8 local claims fee

Fix at hand (quirky mitigations) 1 brush fascines 2 snow shoes 3 driftwood crib 4 rope
ferry 5 sled/drag 6 wait a bell 7 lighten loads 8 bribe the warden

Social in the Wilds

Trail Rights (custom) Show a right-token (knot/bead/bark-sigil) and recite the road-blessing:

- **Success:** Treat strangers as neighbors for one camp; *Paper vs Spear* downgrades one step.
- **Mixed:** Hospitality but with a debt. Mark **Rescue Debt (2)**.
- **Miss:** *Claimant Chief* or *Warden Patrol* contests your right; stakes escalate.

Wardens' Ledger If you offer *Route Song*, local escort negates one *Prowlers Shadow* this leg. Refuse a reasonable toll? Start **Local Resentment (4)**; when it fills, checkpoints bloom.

Camps & Watches

Make Camp Pick one boon and one risk:

- **Boon (choose 1):** mend gear; clear 1 Fatigue total; scout tomorrow's *Weather Window*; parley with road spirits (see below).
- **Risk (choose 1):** thin shelter; smoky fire; exposed approach; hungry neighbors.

Road Spirits (small courtesies) Pour water, place pebble, speak a name. Success: bank *Truce Cord* for tomorrow. Miss: *Bad Omen* flags this camp.

Chase & Pursuit (three beats)

1. **Gap** (terrain claim): runners set advantage via *Lookout Knoll/Gate Gully/Old Road*.
2. **Pressure** (weather claim): winner of *Weather Engine* narration shifts Position.
3. **Break** (resource claim): spend *Remount Hire/Route Song/Warden's Favor* to end it; otherwise test *Pursuit*.

On miss at any beat, mark 1 harm or drop 1 load (*your choice*).

Clocks & Escalations

Roads Move (6) 1–2: Landmarks drift. 3–4: Old Road reroutes through *Gate Gully*. 5: Map contradicts guide. 6: Trail nexus re-knots; choose who benefits.

Weather Wakes (6) 1–2: Predictable fronts arrive early. 3–4: Elementals ride the line. 5: Two weathers at once. 6: *Catastrophe*; clocks jump.

Local Resentment (4) 1: Tolls “adjust.” 2–3: Wardens frisk; smugglers sniff profit. 4: *General Alarm*—every track a checkpoint.

Cross-Regional Conversions

- **Mistlands:** *Weather Window* may count as a *Lantern Writ* on levee crowns if you ring a bell after dark; doing so risks *Witchlight Count*.
- **Valewood:** *Route Song* functions as a minor *Way-Cord*; on use, start **Oath-Magnet (2)**.
- **Ubral:** *Warden’s Favor* can be honored as *Guide’s Braid* on sheepwalks if a cairn-offering is made.
- **Viterra:** *Toll Waiver* notarized in Valora acts as a one-leg *Ferry Priority*; tick **Border-Lace**.
- **Vhasia:** *Road Commission* is recognized as *Low-Justice* on King’s High Road until the next levy call.
- **Silkstrand:** *Right-of-Pass* doubles as a dawn *Bridge Token* if stamped by a bridge bailiff.
- **Theona:** *Truce Cord* permits “eight-and-one” crossing on an *Uncounted Bridge*, once.
- **Vilikari:** *Water Deed* may be cited as *Wergild Table* credit at a *Mallus Right* court during drought disputes.

Omens & Sign (d8 each)

Sky Signs 1 sun-dog 2 mare’s tails 3 anvil cloud faces the wrong way 4 silent birds 5 far thunder without storm 6 moon with halo 7 ash scent on clear air 8 stars “shiver”

Ground Signs 1 cairn with new pebble 2 boot prints that end at rock 3 butchered game left neat 4 snapped twig at head height 5 ash under wet moss 6 ward-knot cut 7 trail beads on shrub 8 a single coin on a stone

Quick NPC Templates

Forager Child (Truth Map) *Wants:* To trade a route-song for a story. *Leverage:* Knows which *Shelter Hollow* is “safe tonight.” *Cost:* Promise to return a trinket to a Boundary Row (start a tiny quest).

Hermit-Healer (Weather Eye) *Wants:* Someone to fetch a wind-bell from a Signal Height. *Leverage:* Turns one *Weather Turn* into a *Weather Window*. *Cost:* Accept their foul cordial (mark “Queasy” until dawn).

Quartermaster (Ledger Lord) *Wants:* Proof a rival skimmed. *Leverage:* *Remount Hire* or *Cache Token* on the spot. *Cost:* Put your name on the ledger (start **Rescue Debt** at 1).

Terrain / Trail Dressing (roll 1–2 per leg)

- **Ruins Speak:** Old mile-stone hums a date from a forgotten war; +1 die to history, -1 to stealth this leg.
- **Beast Parliament:** Ravens, fox, and a boar seem to “confer” at Water Source; approach buys rumor or chase.
- **Ghost Cart Ruts:** Ruts glow at dusk and shave time—if you accept a *Supply Pinch* tomorrow.
- **Prayer Flags:** Boundary Row flags in the wrong colors; locals may read you as allied or enemy.

Encounter Seeds

- **Fire on the Height:** A fresh coal at *Signal Height*; lighting it calls help—or enemy levy. Your choice sets which *Clubs* show next scene.
- **Gate Gully Tithe:** Two claimants, one pinch-point. They’ll honor *Truce Cord*—if you arbitrate a water deed on the spot.
- **Shelter Debt:** The soot in *Shelter Hollow* spells a name you know; leaving a meal clears a future *Supply Pinch*.

Designer Hooks (Optional)

Route-Song Craft Spend a scene and 1 *Route Song* scrap to compose a *Songline*: once per journey, skip *Doubleback*. Singing it in public adds 1 tick to **Local Resentment** (others want it).

Weather-Witchery (Low Magic) Offer a token to road spirits during a *Front Line*; on a hit, trade today’s weather for tomorrow’s. On a miss, both happen now at half strength.

Homage Sites & Lairs (drop-in Terrain)

- **Border Keep of Candle-Gate** — Stockade on a bluff above twin gullies; cellars link to smugglers’ bolt-holes where ledgers argue with knives.
- **The Bone King’s Barrow** — Hill split by lightning; whispering chute to a throne of antlers where oaths bind the living to the dead.
- **Serpent-Cairns of the Wind Steppe** — Rings of stacked shale; wind plays bone flutes; scale-runes name a forgotten tax on breath.
- **The Blue Glass Tower** — Fallen mage-spire sunk in a fen; panes show tomorrows you can’t reach; water stairs lead to a clockwork aviary.
- **Isle of Thunder-Lizards** — Reef shelf at low tide; drums in the cliffs; eggs warm under black sand that hisses with static.
- **The Amber Idol Dig** — Abandoned worksite with tar pits; half-freed idol drinks lantern-light; foreman’s diary ends mid-apology.
- **Hall of the Stone-Chiefs** — Terrace of toppled colossi; each face wears a different season; a living boulder judges trespass by weight.
- **Salt-Vein Labyrinth** — Collapsed mine whose walls sweat brine; maps dissolve; a blind choir keeps time with pick-hafts.
- **Shrine of the Four Storm Doors** — Weather turns on hinges; choose which door to open and pay its toll in breath, heat, chill, or silence.
- **The Black Lantern Monastery** — Ruin above a fall; lanterns that never burn out reveal tracks made tomorrow; ascetics wrote their sins on river mist.

Wilderness Bestiary (palette)

- **Earth-Sharks** — Burrow beneath loess and tundra; dorsal ridges like plowshares. *Signs:* furrows that breathe; pebbles rattle. *Hook:* lure with drumbeats or goat bells.
- **Phase Panthers** — Shadow-striped cats that step between gusts. *Signs:* pawprints offset from themselves. *Hook:* mirrored water or bell-silver disrupts the blink.

- **Rust Moths** — Swarms that taste iron memory. *Signs:* lacework mail; pitted nails. *Hook:* feed them old keys; they ignore fresh steel.
- **Lichen-Bears** — Moss-matted ursines with rock-teeth. *Signs:* clawed bark with green scabs. *Hook:* smoke of juniper calms; salt enrages.
- **Wind Drakes** — Rib-thin sky-serpents that ride fronts. *Signs:* shed vanes; feathers like glass. *Hook:* whistle back the storm to ground them.
- **Ooze-Remnants** — Alchemical slough from an old field lab. *Signs:* boot-holes rounded smooth. *Hook:* wood ash firms them; vinegar makes them sprint.
- **Fell Harts** — Antlered shades that herd the living toward cliffs. *Signs:* hoofprints that don't compress soil. *Hook:* speak a hunter's apology while walking backward.
- **Cairn-Wights** — Stone-stack custodians; patient as frost. *Signs:* pebbles rearranged around your fire. *Hook:* rebuild the stack correctly; they serve until dawn.
- **Thundertusks** — Boars that store lightning in tusk-veins. *Signs:* fused sand beads; singed roots. *Hook:* ground your spear; throw shadow to draw the strike.
- **Lantern-Eyes** — Floating orbs of watchlight rumor; jealous of secrets. *Signs:* daylight in ravines at midnight. *Hook:* offer a whispered truth; they part like reeds.
- **Grave-Eels** — Burrow through barrow loam; taste names. *Signs:* sinking turf over old wars. *Hook:* sing lineage or throw false names to mislead.
- **Bramble Knights** — Empty helms grown through with thorn; patrol old borders. *Signs:* briar in boot-grease. *Hook:* present a hedge-blessing; they escort instead of impale.

Terrain Stock (d20 quick)

- 1 Fresh ash on an old fire ring; prints circle *around* it.
- 2 Boundary totems toppled but re-stack themselves if watched politely.
- 3 Broken wagon with salt-vein crystals growing through spokes.
- 4 Singing culvert; echo names the boldest listener wrongly.
- 5 Weather bell hung in a pine; tolling swaps rain and wind.
- 6 Cairn with a copper coin balanced on edge; don't breathe hard.
- 7 Fence of antlers pointing uphill; follow and skip one *Bad Ground*.
- 8 Mummified pack-beast wearing a courier's braid; letter hums.
- 9 Pebble mosaic of an old levy call; stepping it summons wardens.
- 10 Fossil rib arch; shelter under it and dream of tomorrow's route.
- 11 Abandoned hunter's cache; choice of food or rumor, not both.
- 12 Mirror-puddle; shows last night's sky whatever the hour.
- 13 Rope bridge made of prayer knots; one is freshly cut.
- 14 Scare-stakes dressed in saltcloth; something big respects them.
- 15 Stone with bite-marks; taste iron and remember a shortcut.
- 16 Old road mile-post defaced into a saint; offerings still fresh.
- 17 Thistle patch buzzing with coin-flies; feed them copper for safe passage.
- 18 Fallen giant's footprint now a pond; frogs chant a route-song.
- 19 Soot writing on cliff: *Storm at Second Bell*. It's right.
- 20 Hollow tree full of carved names; the newest is yours.

Lair Seeds (d12 one-page crawls)

1. **Fen Clockworks** — Bog-gears turn under peat; each tooth a drowned oath.
2. **Dry River Gallery** — Petroglyphs re-arrange at dusk; wrong reading summons bramble knights.
3. **Ice-Well Vault** — Stairs drilled through permafrost; breath blooms frost-runes that answer questions badly.
4. **Sunken Forum** — Pillars knee-deep in silt; rust moths nest in the rostrum.
5. **Pilgrim Kilns** — Charcoal mounds hike on stilt roots at night; a hermit-healer bargains weather for charcoal.
6. **Hanging Salt Chapel** — White stalactites ring like bells; grave-eels coil in the font.
7. **Thorn Maze Mill** — Waterwheel turns without water; phase panthers pace the sluice.
8. **Brewer's Hollow** — Barrels of wind; decant a gale or drink a calm.
9. **Antler Archive** — Ledger carved on horn; theft awakens the cairn-wights' accountant.
10. **Black Lantern Mines** — Lantern-eyes nest like bats; light buys silence, darkness buys passage.
11. **Stormbone Spire** — Vertebrae tower; earth-sharks circle beneath like sharks in sand.
12. **Amber Orchard** — Trees fossilized mid-sway; trapped thunderflies grant *Weather Window* when freed.

Boss Hooks (road crowns)

- **The Stone-Chief of Seven Hills** — Walking dolmen with a court of cairn-wights; taxes are measured in footprints. *Leverage*: rebuild a boundary row to earn audience.
- **Mist Abbess of Black Lantern** — Keeper of ever-lights and secrets; trades *Weather Window* for names spoken under waterfalls.
- **Blue Glass Magus** — Last pane-worker; hunts thunder-lizard hearts to power mirrors. *Clock: Mirror Wakes [4]*—when full, maps start lying *beautifully*.
- **Amber Idol's Choir** — Faceless diggers who hum in tar-time; their song softens steel and will.
- **Thundertusk Matriarch** — Scarred sow crowned in fused sand; charges any banner that won't bow.

Relic & Find Table (d10)

- 1 Route-stones that warm near true north.
- 2 Weather-bell clapper that tolls only for lightning.
- 3 Trail-right knot dyed in berry law; locals honor it once.
- 4 Salt-vein pick that cuts oozes like cloth.
- 5 Glass feather; break to call a wind drake for one pass.
- 6 Ledger leaf waterproofed with eel-fat; ink never runs, words drift.
- 7 Thorn sigil that bramble knights read as parley.
- 8 Coin-fly cocoon; hatch it for one honest guide to the nearest water.
- 9 Bone flute that calls earth-sharks to circle elsewhere.
- 10 Lantern-eye husk; squeeze for daylight the length of a camp prayer.

Wilderness Complication Twists (d8)

1. *Weather Turn* reveals a buried mile-post; following it skips one leg but triggers *Local Resentment*.
2. *Route Blocked* is a trap set by rust moth tenders; pay in scrap or fight a cloud.
3. *Prowlers Shadow* are bramble knights escorting pilgrims—until a hedge-blessing is misread.
4. *Doubleback* because the land moved: wind drakes braided the grass.
5. *Quarantine Sign* enforced by lantern-eyes; confess a secret to pass.
6. *Territorial Beast* guards an honest cache; take half without omen, all with a curse.
7. *Paper vs Spear* becomes *Song vs Drum*: trail rights must be sung while marching.
8. *Catastrophe* arrives as a walking stormbone; pull the right vertebra and calm it—or ride it.

Mini-Procedures (quick play)

Old Road Wake When you march on an *Old Road* and speak a route-song, choose one:

- Arrive early; start *Roads Move* +1.
- Meet wardens first; downgrade next *Paper vs Spear*.
- Wake a mile-post spirit; ask one honest question, owe one honest task.

Beast Parliament If beasts gather at a *Water Source*, lay out food or rumor:

- Food buys safe passage and one clue.
- Rumor scatters them; reveals a hidden approach, attracts a rival.

Adventure Seeds

- **Keep the Lanterns** — The Black Lantern Monastery’s ever-lights are dimming; carry a lightning jar across the Isle of Thunder-Lizards before the next tide.
- **Seven Hills Tax** — The Stone-Chief demands a footprint levy; find the stolen boundary bead before bramble knights collect *in kind*.
- **Blue Pane Hunt** — The Blue Glass Tower wants thunder-lizard heartglass; poachers have already baited the herd near Gate Gully.
- **Amber Choir** — Tar pits sing; diggers vanish; the Idol wants witnesses, or the weather will.

4.29 Ykrul (Orc) — “Wolf Standards, Winter Camps”

Elite (Khatun of Ring)

“The steppe remembers every oath sworn beneath its endless sky, and the wolf-standards carry the honor of clans that have outlasted empires. To lead here is to keep the old ways sharp as winter steel.”

Commoner (Herd-scout with three ponies and six opinions)

“The horses know the weather before it comes, and the wolves know the thoughts in a man’s heart. Best speak true and ride steady – the steppe don’t forgive lies or clumsy hands on the reins.”

Theme & Atmosphere

The Ykrul ride the endless steppe where horizon meets sky and law rides in saddlebags. Hosts gather by the thousand, yet break into fragments at a word; one night you share their fires, the next they test your bonds. Their banners are wolves’ teeth, their treaties braided strings, their memory longer than the rivers that cross their roads.

(Steppe Road/Winter Ring/Ford) Wolf Road milepost of stacked stones with wind whining through eye-holes; winter camp ring with felt tents in horseshoe facing wind.

Spades — Places (categories)

2. **Wolf Milepost** — Stacked stones; wind whines through eye-holes.
 3. **Remount Station** — Low corral with stamped snow and tether-posts.
 4. **Birch Windbreak** — Above black-earth tracks; old offerings in bark.
 5. **Salt Pan** — Crusted white; hoof-prints like stars across void.
 6. **Reed Ford** — River braids; poles mark yesterday’s safe line.
 7. **Trading Palisade** — Way-post with wolf-skull pennons snapping.
 8. **Winter Camp** — Felt tents in horseshoe facing the wind.
 9. **Kurgan Field** — Low barrows; horse-bones bead the grass like prayer beads.
 10. **Watch Kopje** — Lonely tor with signal fire-scar; eye of the steppe.
- J **Pontoon Crossing** — Laced hides creak; current speaks fast and hungry.
- Q **Council Hollow** — Standards planted; ground tamped like war-drum.
- K **Khagan’s Station** — Broad ger on timber platform; guards in silence.
- A **Sky Steppe** — Open, wind like voice; tracks keep pace beside you.

(Host/Envoy/Rider) Herd-scout with three ponies and six opinions; camp-mother who chooses where fires live.

Hearts — People & Factions (categories)

2. **Herd-Scout** — Three ponies and six opinions; horizon as map.
3. **Camp-Mother** — Chooses where fires live; hospitality is law.

4. **Banner Youth** — Minding wolves’ tooth standard; pride as duty.
5. **Salt-Broker** — Weighs promises like grain; trade as precision.
6. **Remount Keeper** — String-master with book of brands; horses as currency.
7. **Bone-Singer** — Knows kurgans’ proper names; death as memory.
8. **Road-Judge** — Tümen scribe with seals and patient ear.
9. **Noyan Envoy** — Silver paiza, iron smile; diplomacy as blade.
10. **Host Captain** — Tent-wall is map; strategy in every fold.
 - J **Falcon Courier** — Leather gauntlets, answers sooner than asked.
 - Q **Khatun of Ring** — Keeper of camp-law and hostage strings.
 - K **Khagan’s Kin** — Nephew/niece sent to bind foedus with look.
 - A **Sky-Speaker** — Shaman of storms; shortcuts owe them price.

(Law/Weather/Feud) White squall with dry snow, lost horizons; rasputitsa turning road to porridge; feud spark from name spoken wrong.

Clubs — Complications/Threats (categories)

2. **White Squall** — Dry snow, lost horizons; navigation by instinct alone.
3. **Rasputitsa** — Road becomes porridge; wheels are lies on earth.
4. **Remount Sickness** — Cough in string; swaps get awkward, trust thinner.
5. **Salt Shortage** — Meat spoils; tempers thin like winter air.
6. **Hostage Call** — Protocol invoked; someone must sit the tent.
7. **Feud Spark** — Name spoken wrong reopens old cut; blood remembers.
8. **Grassfire** — Runs with wind faster than horses; escape as prayer.
9. **Foedus Recall** — Treaty terms re-read; your papers disagree.
10. **River Break** — Ice goes; ferries don’t; crossing becomes gamble.
 - J **Raid Shadow** — Another banner follows at patient distance.
 - Q **Kurultai Call** — Camps converge; travel becomes politics.
 - K **Wolf Muster** — Levy raised; every road a checkpoint, every rider judge.
 - A **Sky Omen** — Three suns or none; routes rewrite themselves.

(Pass/Remount/Truce) Camp token for one night’s lawful fire and fodder; salt allotment from named store without quarrel.

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (categories)

2. **Camp Token** — One night’s lawful fire and fodder; hospitality as right.
3. **Salt Allotment** — Draw from named store without quarrel.
4. **Ford-Right** — Cross named braid at lawful depth.
5. **Remount Chit** — Swap two tired mounts for fresh.
6. **Escort Braid** — Two riders see you through bad stretch.
7. **Safe-Hostage** — Place or take token-kin for truce.
8. **Paiza Tablet** — Priority on Wolf Road and at posts.

- 9. **Foedus Seal** — Treaty clause that trumps petty order.
- 10. **Market-Green** — Trade under banner; weapons sheathed.
- J **Standard Guard** — Travel under wolf-tooth; raiders defer.
- Q **Ring Audience** — Khatun hears you alone; precedent sticks.
- K **Khagan's Writ** — Doors open, mouths close across steppe.
- A **Sky's Exception** — Once, weather ignores you (storm, whiteout, dust).

Quick use notes

- Draw until you have all four suits: Spade = place, Heart = actor, Club = pressure, Diamond = leverage. Highest rank sets the main Clock (2–5 → 4, 6–10 → 6, J/Q/K → 8, A → 10).
- Diamonds are codified outcomes (passes/remounts/truces) that change position rather than call for a roll.
- If any A appears, echo **steppe & sky** motifs—wind that speaks, horses that remember, and treaties that bind across generations.

Additional Features

- **Hostage Strings:** Every oath secured with **hostage string**—token kin, retainer, sworn ally left in other camp. If deal broken, hostage's fate becomes story's next beat.
- **Steppe Law:** Travelers bound by **steppe law**: hospitality lasts three nights, insults last three generations. Keeper may demand 1 SB when either law broken.
- **Sky Omens:** When sky shows strange signs—mock-suns, green fire, thunder without storm—steppe itself speaks. Players may once per scene treat omen as Diamond, shifting position without roll.

Patronage & Power

In Ykrul society, power flows through the careful management of hospitality, the binding of oaths with hostages, and the ability to navigate the complex web of tribal relationships. The Khagan maintains authority through the loyalty of noyans and the respect of khatuns, while local leaders wield influence through their control of resources like salt, remounts, and safe passage. The true power lies with those who understand the ancient customs and can maintain the delicate balance between hospitality and honor.

For the GM: Patronage in Ykrul society revolves around hospitality, hostage exchanges, and the ability to command respect from hosts and courts. Rewards often take the form of tokens, treaties, and official positions that can be leveraged into greater influence. To emphasize this:

- Tie rewards to visible symbols (tokens, braids, standards) that can be challenged, stolen, or voided.
- Let rival hosts issue conflicting protections, forcing players to choose whose favor matters more.
- Use the camps, councils, and crossings as arenas for social contests, where knowledge of custom and honor determines success.

In Ykrul society, your word is your bond, and your bond determines whether you ride as guest or ghost.

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

- **Exposure:** Your actions draw unwanted attention from **camp guards or herd-scouts**.
- **Noise:** Sounds of your actions alert nearby **riders or wolf-standards**.
- **Trace:** Evidence of your passage marks your route for **trackers or bone-singers**.
- **Delay:** A brief but meaningful setback costs you **time or favorable weather**.
- **Supply Strain:** Mark +1 segment on a relevant **resource clock**.

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

- **Alarm Raised:** **Camp-mother or road-judge** becomes aware and begins responding.
- **Position Lost:** You lose advantageous ground/cover/stealth due to **weather shift or ford closure**.
- **Foe Appears:** A **rival host or raiding party** arrives on scene.
- **Gear Trouble:** A piece of equipment becomes **Compromised/Neglected**.
- **Lock/Barrier:** A simple obstacle now requires a test to overcome.

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

- **Reinforcements:** Additional **wolf-riders, host members, or noyan guards** arrive.
- **Key Gear Breaks:** A crucial tool/weapon becomes temporarily unusable.
- **Major Twist:** The situation fundamentally changes - **feud declared/treaty broken/omen appears**.

- **Rail Tick:** Advance a relevant campaign/front clock by 1 segment.
- **Condition Applied:** Mark **Fatigue 1/Harm 1/Condition** appropriate to fiction.

Major Turns (4+ SB)

- **Trap Springs:** A prepared danger activates with full effect.
- **Authority Arrival: Khatun, Khagan's Kin, or Sky-Speaker** intervenes.
- **Scene Shift:** The environment changes dramatically - **storm hits/camps converge/river breaks**.
- **Patron Omen:** Divine/arcane forces take notice - **omen appears/blessing lost/curse manifests**.
- **Narrative Pivot:** The story takes an unexpected turn that reframes objectives.

Region-Specific SB Options

- **Ykrul (Steppe Law):** Hospitality expires without warning, insults carry forward through generations, treaties are reinterpreted mid-conversation.
- **Ykrul (Horse Culture):** Mounts refuse to obey, remount stations are empty, riding skills become unreliable.
- **Ykrul (Sky Omens):** Weather patterns shift unpredictably, celestial signs contradict each other, navigation becomes mystical.

Ykrul — Wolf Standards

Starting Location: A winter camp on the steppe edge, banners snapping in frost-bright wind as the Khagan's fires burn in the east.

"In Ykrul, the wind carries the pack's oath, and mercy is left to thaw."

In... A Winter Camp, a Khatun of Ring offers salt-allotment. "The Khagan's kin ride," she says. "And the sky omens bleed east."

Regional Motifs Hearth-ring law, wolf totems, bone-lot omens, steppe trials.

Whispers to Offer "Eat salt without being invited," "Ride a sacred mount," "Claim an omen for yourself."

External Clocks Community: "Ring Divided"; Threat: "Kin Raid"; Anchor: "Salt Peace."

Complications Wolves refuse shadow; lots stain hands; riders circle dreams.

Anchors at Risk A hearth-mother; a winter store.

Escalation Beat The sky opens a red seam.

Relief Share salt and story; win the trial without blood; send the omen back with a song.

Mobility & Logistics (Fast Play)

Host Posture (declare before a leg) Pick *two*: **Speed, Screen, Spare Mounts, Scavenge**. Each grants +1 Position on one relevant action this leg; neglected ones are -1 Position if tested.

String Roles Name: **Point-Scout, Remount-Keeper, Salt-Warden, Banner-Talker**. Each can cover one miss per leg by marking a minor cost (a pony, salt, time, favor).

Remount Rhythm A rider with **2+ fresh mounts** may *double-march* once per day (mark *Fatigue 1*). Spending a *Remount Chit* clears that *Fatigue* for one rider and negates *Pursuit* once.

Steppe Weather & Ground (d12)

| d12 | State | Tags / Effects |
|-----|-----------------|--|
| 1 | Blue Vault | +Survey; long sight cuts both ways |
| 2 | River Breath | Low fog in hollows; -Speed off-road, +Stealth in reeds |
| 3 | Dry Snow | Tracks show, hooves sure; cold bites fingers (gear tests -1) |
| 4 | Black Ice | Fords become coin flips; carts lie |
| 5 | Rasputitsa | Earth to porridge; wheels -2 Effect; sleds +1 |
| 6 | Dust Devil | Ranged beyond close is risky; eyes sting |
| 7 | North Knife | Wind shear; tents fight, words don't carry |
| 8 | Heat Shimmer | Mirage bands; long shots misjudge distance |
| 9 | Grassfire Smell | Any spark can turn Club into <i>Elemental Front</i> |
| 10 | Star-Hard Night | Camp mends are brittle; sleep restores less |
| 11 | Wolf Moon | Animals keen; omens cheap but sticky (see Sky Omens) |
| 12 | Three Suns | Omen; GM may bank 1 SB to twist weather next leg |

Hostage Strings (Custom Subsystem)

Make a String Name the **token-kin** (page, foster, sworn hand) and knot a *Hostage String*. While the string stands:

- Parties treat each other as *Camp Token* guests on sight.
- First betrayal converts one **Diamond** to *Safe-Hostage* instead of breaking truce.

Cut a String When a string is cut (ritual, flight, or knife), trigger one:

- **Blood Call:** Immediate *Feud Spark*.
- **Salt Call:** A council demands wergild in *Salt Allotment* or stock.
- **Road Call:** The *Road-Judge* schedules a trial-ride (race, bout, riddle).

Camp & Council Procedures

Three-Fire Camp Ykrul hospitality lasts **three nights**. Each night, pick one boon and accept one cost:

- **Boons:** mend tack; swap mounts (-1 Fatigue for one rider); hear a *Bone-Song* (ask one question of the dead of this land); secure *Escort Braid*.
- **Costs:** sit watch; tell a true story; gift salt or steel; accept a minor geas (don't ride east at dawn, etc.).

Council Hollow (kurultai mini-game) Frame three *beats*: **Salt, String, Standard**. Win two to carry the vote.

- **Salt (economy):** Offer stores, routes, or *Market-Green*. Failure births *Salt Shortage*.
- **String (kin):** Place/accept *Safe-Hostage*, cite adoption, foster, marriage-feast.
- **Standard (prestige):** Gift wolf-tooth, recount raid, pledge riders; victory grants *Standard Guard*.

Trade & Tribute

Steppe Staples

- **Salt & Fat:** Currency and winter life. Spend *Salt Allotment* to cancel *Supply Strain* for a week or bribe a *Remount Keeper*.
- **Horses:** Money that moves. A *Remount Chit* equals one serious favor at *Trading Palisade*.
- **Stories:** Soft currency. A true raid-tale can stand in for coin once per council.

Palisade Rates (d6) 1 fair trade 2 short scales 3 hidden tithe 4 hostage asked 5 rival claim 6 market under *Market-Green* today

Feud & Reconciliation

What starts a Feud (d6) 1 insult at fire 2 horse swapped sick 3 string cut 4 grave ridden over 5 name spoken wrong 6 salt denied

How to end it (pick two)

- **Wergild:** Pay in *Salt Allotment*, mounts, or labor.
- **Trial-Ride:** Outrun, outshoot, or outstand the winter. Winner declares terms.
- **Bone-Song:** Ask the kurgan; accept the dead's price.
- **Marriage-Fire:** Feast that binds hosts; costs you a *Safe-Hostage*.

Hit-and-Run Warfare (Three Beats)

1. **Screen:** Scouts contest vision with dust, snow, reeds. Win: choose engagement range; loss: ambushed (Position -1).
2. **Shock:** Loose, loose, loose—then crash. Spend *Standard Guard* to ignore first rout check or *Escort Braid* to peel a unit free.
3. **Break-off:** A clean ride beats a clean kill. Spend *Remount Chit* or test under *Rasputitsa/Black Ice*.

On a miss at any beat, mark *Stragglers*: you leave someone or something behind.

Sky Omens (d8)

1 wolves howl at noon 2 aurora like braids 3 three suns 4 moon with teeth 5 thunder without storm 6 stars “follow” riders 7 dust column stands still 8 hawk falls asleep mid-flight

Reading an omen creates a one-scene tag you can cash as a **Diamond** or force as a **Club**; doing so changes someone’s mind about the omen’s meaning.

Clocks & Escalations

Ring Divided (6) 1–2: Standards drift. 3–4: Camps split routes. 5: A string is cut. 6: Winter ring becomes two hosts.

Wolf Road Tightens (6) 1–2: Posts check brands. 3–4: Papers challenged. 5: *Foedus Recall*. 6: *Wolf Muster*—road becomes checkpoints.

Salt Peace (4) 1: Stores counted publicly. 2–3: Sharing enforced by Khatun. 4: Feast; next *Salt Shortage* is ignored once.

NPC Templates

Camp-Mother (Fire-Chosen) *Wants*: No famine this winter. *Leverage*: Can bless/deny *Camp Token*. *Cost*: Speak a hard truth by second firelight.

Road-Judge (Seal-Patient) *Wants*: A treaty rewritten for sense. *Leverage*: Upgrades one paper to *Paiza Tablet* for a day. *Cost*: Accept that their ruling stands—even if it cuts you.

Remount Keeper (String-Math) *Wants*: A rival’s book of brands. *Leverage*: Two fresh ponies at dawn. *Cost*: Return them better than you found them—or owe a foal.

Names, Bands, & Titles

Titles *Khagan* (over-king), *Khatun* (camp-law), *Noyan* (banner-lord), *Tümen-Scribe* (road-judge), *String-Mother* (hostage keeper).

Band Styles (d4) 1 Red Reeds (river tacticians) 2 Salt Wolves (logistics first) 3 Moon Spurs (night riders) 4 Bone Chorus (kurgan loyalists)

Given Names (mix two) Bor-, Tem-, Sar-, Uru-, Kha-, Asha-, Yen-, Dor- + -tai, -mur, -gan, -khi, -jin, -mar, -sai, -lok

Cross-Regional Conversions

- **Vilikari**: *Paiza Tablet* reads as *Purple Warrant* at *Milefort*; tick **Two-Law** once.
- **Vhasia**: *Standard Guard* counts as *Safe-Conduct* on *King’s High Road* until next *Chevauchée*.
- **Theona**: *Safe-Hostage* may stand in for a *Bride-Charter* (peace for a season) if bells ring eight and not nine.
- **Valewood**: A *Bone-Song* grants a one-scene *Dew-Mirror* if sung at a *Barrow Field* grove.

Encounter Seeds

- **Kurgan Debt:** A *Bone-Singer* bids you return a stolen bridle; success earns *Ring Audience*, delay wakes an *Echo-Legionary*... from under grass.
- **Salt for Strings:** The *Trading Palisade* is out of salt; only your *Market-Green* can open stores—if you place a *Safe-Hostage*.
- **Wolf on the Road:** A wolf with a torn banner in its mouth paces your camp; follow to a lost *Pontoon Crossing* before the river breaks.

Designer Hooks (Optional)

Banner-Deeds Record one daring ride as a *Deed*. Once per session, flash the Deed to step Position up on rally/negotiation with riders who honor that style.

Storm-Borrow Offer a steel gift to the *Sky-Speaker* during *Three Suns*; on a hit, bank *Sky's Exception*. On a miss, weather splits—half on you, half on your friends.

Steppe Homage Sites & Lairs (drop-in hexes)

- **Wolf-Teeth Palisade** — Trading yard ringed with jawbone pickets; scales hang from rawhide cords that only balance for fair deals.
- **Sky-Drum Kopje** — Wind hollows beat like hooves at dusk; a buried drum answers only to the Khagan's cadence.
- **Salt-Wheel Flats** — Crust pans etched with cart runes; turning the sun-bleached axle calls remounts from mirage distance.
- **Nine-Kurgan String** — Barrows aligned to winter stars; a bone-singer can “pluck” omens like notes to sway a council.
- **Frost-Bitten Forum** — Utaran milestone half-swallowed by loess; steppe law carved *over* imperial script decides ford rights.
- **Sable-Creek Corrals** — Hides stretch on willow frames; a ghost ledger tallies every foal traded, never wrong, never kind.
- **Black Hoof Monastery** — Rock hermitage with hoofprints set in basalt; novices test honesty against a hoof-bell that rings for lies.
- **Storm-Bone Causeway** — Vertebrae bridge across a reed-gorge; crossing at a gallop wakes the bones to judge riders' courage.

Steppe Bestiary (palette)

- **Steppe Manticores** — Lionine torsos, porcupine tails of bone quills. *Signs:* quills in fence-posts; ponies refuse to drink. *Hook:* play a raid-song backward; they circle to listen.
- **Dust Hulks** — Wind-packed silhouettes that rise from dunes. *Signs:* dunes “breathe”; grit sifts upward. *Hook:* spill water on their shadow; they settle for a watch.
- **Bone Kites** — Carrion birds with rune-etched pinions. *Signs:* spiral flights over kurgans. *Hook:* offer a name-stake (twig with hair) to barter silence.
- **Frost Wargs** — Blue-pelt wolves that steam cold. *Signs:* rime on tracks; breath that crackles. *Hook:* warm milk poured on ice buys one unchallenged crossing.

- **Reed Stalkers** — Long-necked marsh hunters, gait like stilts. *Signs*: pole-pocks where no ferryman walks. *Hook*: carry reeds in your mouth; they read it as truce.
- **Salt Screamers** — Pale eels in dry pans; voices like flutes. *Signs*: fissures crusted with salt frost. *Hook*: scatter ash; they coil to sing and forget to bite.

Terrain Stock (d20 quick)

- 1 Wolf milepost with fresh red thread; someone retied the law.
- 2 Reed ford poles lying on bank; current whispers a different depth.
- 3 Fallen standard tooth used as a chopping block; grooves still warm.
- 4 Circle of pony skulls facing east; one blinks when the wind shifts.
- 5 Snow trench with cudgel steps; no prints leave it.
- 6 Copper salt-scale hung from a birch; pans balance only under oath.
- 7 Hoof-bells threaded on hair; ringing calls riders—or storms.
- 8 Abandoned paiza shard wedged in a milestone; edges bite skin.
- 9 Kurgan capstone chalked with a name misspelled; feud waiting.
- 10 Flint knapper’s tarp half-buried; a perfect arrowhead points north.
- 11 Blue-fledged signal arrow stuck in frost; message in the vane.
- 12 Camp-sweep marks: three rings—last night was a council.
- 13 Wheel rut frozen like glass; a face looks up from inside.
- 14 Salt-brined jerky hanging from a tripod; untouched by birds.
- 15 River ice singing in thirds; ferryman’s pole wedged under.
- 16 Pony hobble-rope knotted in hostage-string pattern.
- 17 Cold forge dug into loess; tools wrapped in wolfskin.
- 18 Child’s braid-bead dropped in snow; still warm to the tongue.
- 19 Thorn-tether scratched with clan brands; two over-scratched.
- 20 Bone flute lodged in a cairn; playing it summons a road-judge.

Lair Seeds (d12 one-page rides)

1. **Ger of Echoes** — Empty felt walls repeat anything uttered in the Khagan’s voice once per night.
2. **Salt-Pit Shrine** — Rope winch to brine caverns; offerings are tears and horsehair.
3. **Remount Vault** — Subterranean stables under reed mats; mounts won’t leave without a tale.
4. **Kite-Maker’s Bluff** — Bone kites pinned on racks; their shadows scout for raiders.
5. **Storm-Rider’s Stone** — Pillar that hums to hooves; racing round it sets weather wagers.
6. **Frozen Court** — Ice dais in a dry riverbed; law held here counts triple until thaw.
7. **Banner Grave** — Flags planted like trees; each knows the battle it died in.
8. **String-Mother’s Yard** — Web of hostage cords; cutting one opens a secret but starts a feud.
9. **Fire-Under-Snow** — Warm vent where foals winter; spirits ask for salt-song.
10. **Quiet Palisade** — Trading post where voices fail; deals done in gesture and cut meat.
11. **Ashen Trident** — Three lightning-split birches; tie a braid to choose a road’s luck.

12. **Grey Ger** — Moves at night; inside, a camp-mother tests your hospitality the other way around.

Boss Hooks (banner crowns)

- **The String-Mother of Nine Kurgans** — Matriarch who holds more hostage cords than any noyan; her nod ties wars into weddings.
- **The Dust Prince** — Raider who rides the wind's lee, never seen from the front; offers *Escort Braid* for a secret standard.
- **Storm-Singer Urum** — Sky-speaker who sells weather on credit; his bills come due during *Wolf Moon*.
- **The Ledger Khan** — Road-judge turned warlord; his seals move hosts like abacus beads.

Relics & Finds (d10)

- 1 Wolf-tooth standard tip; planted, it demands silence for parley.
- 2 Bronze paiza half; merchants honor it as full once—then talk.
- 3 Salt-needle that points to the nearest brine store.
- 4 Frost-bitten stirrup: mount that wears it ignores ice once.
- 5 Braid-bead of hostage glass; melts when a string is cut nearby.
- 6 River-depth rod carved with safe counts for three fords.
- 7 Iron hoof-bell that rings for liars at council.
- 8 Bone-lot cup; roll it to name which feud clause applies.
- 9 Wind-wrung scarf; pass it round to share breath in a white squall.
- 10 Wolf-road tablet scrap; reads as *Foedus Seal* to one clerk.

Complication Twists (d8)

1. *White Squall* reveals a remount vault's smoke hole; entering angers reed stalkers.
2. *Rasputitsa* exposes kurgan stones; riding around them starts a name-claim.
3. *Feud Spark* was staged by a salt-broker; paying in *Salt Allotment* unmasks them.
4. *Hostage Call* is for a *Safe-Hostage* you already carry—by another name.
5. *Grassfire* runs uphill toward a council hollow; smoke votes before riders do.
6. *Foedus Recall* cites a river you crossed yesterday—now it flows the other way.
7. *Raid Shadow* is your own tracks, mirrored by sky omens; choose which you admit.
8. *Kurultai Call* stacks councils; words spoken in one bind you in the other.

Mini-Procedures (quick steppe play)

Wolf Road Etiquette When you arrive at a *Trading Palisade* or *Remount Station*, choose one and pay its price:

- **Salt First:** Spend *Salt Allotment* to gain *Market-Green* for the scene.
- **String First:** Place a *Safe-Hostage* to bank +1 Position in all parleys here.
- **Story First:** Recount a true raid; cancel one *Paper vs Spear* style objection.

Trial-Ride (three beats) *Mark, Loose, Hold.* Win two beats (navigation shot, archery shot, nerve test) to claim verdict; each failed beat marks 1 Fatigue or 1 honor cost (your pick).

Adventure Seeds

- **Strings in Winter** — Three hostage cords go missing from the String-Mother’s yard; each is tied to a different treaty you need.
- **Storm on Credit** — Storm-Singer Urum sells you *Sky’s Exception*; someone else already owes the same storm.
- **Ledger of the Road** — A road-judge’s seal-book was buried in a dust hulk; opening it retitles the Wolf Mileposts for a day.
- **Feast of Two Standards** — A kurultai invites rival banners to dine under one ring; the first to eat salt owes the first blood—or peace.

4.30 Zakov — “Salt & Serpent”

Elite (Salt Prince)

“The tide here keeps better ledgers than any scribe, and the reefs remember every secret whispered above their depths. Power flows like the currents – those who understand them rule the waves.”

Commoner (Dock-rat pickpocket with map tattoo and no fear)

“The sewers and the sea both carry what folks want to forget, but they also remember everything. Best keep your business above water and your enemies guessing which dock you’ll use next.”

Theme & Atmosphere

Zakov is the pirate-city of the Dolmis coast, where tides trade secrets and knives settle debts. Its streets are piers, its courts are taverns, and its rulers are whoever the Syndicates fear most this season. The Salt Prince claims the throne, but the real power ebbs and flows with the tide—and the tide remembers everything.

(Harbor/Bolt-hole/Black Market) Salt-cracked wharf where tide brings back what law forgets; Bone-yard beach with wrecks and corpses in kelp; Smuggler’s Gate behind Fish Market.

Spades — Places (categories)

2. **Salt Wharf** — Cracked and crumbling; tide brings back what law forgets.
3. **Bone-Yard Beach** — Wrecks and corpses tangled in kelp and rope.
4. **Smuggler’s Gate** — Alley behind Fish Market; always unlocked, always watched.
5. **The Shallows** — Reef-ridden cut only locals dare; navigation as survival.
6. **Dregs Quarter** — Shanties on stilts; boats tied to doorframes like pets.
7. **Iron Pier** — Gangplank to *Red Wake*, corsair flagship; power as vessel.
8. **Crow’s Roost** — Tavern built into hull of beached galleon; past as present.
9. **Black Bazaar** — Tents under tarps; goods that scream if you listen.
10. **Salt Maze** — Marsh paths only the lost know; confusion as protection.
- J **Sunken Quarter** — Half city underwater at high tide; wealth as depth.
- Q **Crimson Docks** — Contracts signed in blood; commerce as violence.
- K **Anchorhead** — Floating fortress of Pirate Syndicate; law as anchor.
- A **Serpent’s Spine** — Reef pass to city’s secret heart; danger as gateway.

(Syndicate/Corsair/Fence) Dock-rat pickpocket with map tattoo and no fear; fence dealing in stolen names and secondhand loyalties.

Hearts — People & Factions (categories)

2. **Dock-Rat** — Pickpocket with map tattoo and no fear; street as education.
3. **Fence** — Deals in stolen names and secondhand loyalties; trust as currency.
4. **Tavern-Keeper** — Remembers every face—and sells the list; hospitality as trap.

5. **Corsair Lt.** — Letter of marque signed in blood; authority as paper.
6. **Dock-Master** — “Loses” ships that owe Syndicate; bureaucracy as weapon.
7. **Smuggler Cap.** — False manifest and quicker blade; honesty as liability.
8. **Poison-Tongue** — Trades secrets like coin; words as blades.
9. **Exiled Admiral** — Running black-market shipyard; rank as resource.
10. **Pirate Queen** — Rules Shallows with charm and cutlass; beauty as power.
- J **Silent Synd.** — No names, just favors and faces; anonymity as strength.
- Q **Kraken’s Tongue** — Oracle who speaks in riddles and tides; future as mystery.
- K **Salt Prince** — Nominal ruler; real power in shadows; crown as mask.
- A **Drowned Admiral** — Legend says still gives orders from deep; death as command.

(**Betrayal/Storm/Syndicate Feud**) Tide turns early—your ship now ashore wrong side; rival syndicate burns warehouse with your goods.

Clubs — Complications/Threats (categories)

2. **Tide Shift** — Turns early; your ship now ashore on wrong side.
3. **Warehouse Fire** — Rival syndicate burns it; your goods inside.
4. **Cursed Cargo** — Something in hold is *watching*; cargo as curse.
5. **Storm Warning** — Ships flee, prices soar, lawmen vanish.
6. **Double-Cross** — Holding fake shipment and real enemies.
7. **Prince’s Levy** — Every ship pays tithe or gets sunk; tax as threat.
8. **Plague Ship** — Quarantine flags ignored; sickness spreads.
9. **Blood Feud** — Erupts between pirate crews; collateral damage.
10. **Kraken Rising** — Reefs shift, ships vanish, sailors scream.
- J **Voided Contract** — Your protection means nothing now.
- Q **Syndicate Split** — Zakov becomes warzone overnight.
- K **Naval Blockade** — No ships in or out without fight.
- A **Tide Forgets** — Half city cut off, drowning in secrets.

(**Pass/Contract/Stolen Goods**) Smuggler’s token to pass checkpoint unseen; forged manifest making cargo “clean.”

Diamonds — Rewards/Leverage (categories)

2. **Smuggler’s Token** — Pass one checkpoint unseen; stealth as paper.
3. **Forged Manifest** — Your cargo is now “clean”; truth as forgery.
4. **Safe Berth** — Bone-yard; no questions, no law; sanctuary as wreck.
5. **Corsair’s Charter** — Raid with impunity for one moon; violence as license.
6. **Prince’s Writ** — Levies can’t touch you (yet); authority as delay.
7. **Black Ledger** — Names, debts, and where they sleep; knowledge as power.
8. **Salvage Rights** — Named wreck; first claim, no questions.
9. **Lighthouse Key** — Stolen; redirect ships where you will.

10. **Debt-Marker** — Syndicate owes you favor; obligation as asset.
 J **Queen's Blessing** — Safe passage through Shallows; charm as protection.
 Q **Kraken's Favor** — Tides part for your ship, once; nature as ally.
 K **Prince's Coin** — Bribe any official, silence any witness.
 A **Serpent's Mark** — Reef itself will guide you home; danger as guide.

Quick use notes

- Draw until you have all four suits: Spade = place, Heart = actor, Club = pressure, Diamond = leverage. Highest rank sets the main Clock (2–5 → 4, 6–10 → 6, J/Q/K → 8, A → 10).
- Diamonds are codified outcomes (passes/contracts/goods) that change position rather than call for a roll.
- If any A appears, echo **salt & serpent** motifs—tides that remember, reefs that shift, deep that listens.

Additional Features

- **Tide Clock:** Scenes run on four-segment **Tide Clock**. Each advance shifts Position: *Low tide* reveals hidden wrecks/bolt-holes, *Flood tide* drowns streets/seals doors. When Clock turns, Keeper may demand 1 SB tied to waters.
- **Syndicate Debt:** Every deal leaves mark. Track single **Debt** value (0–3). At 3, Syndicate calls it in: betrayal, levy, unwanted escort. Clear 1 Debt by paying Diamond or sacrificing useful contact.
- **Whispers Deep:** Rumors carry teeth. When characters openly boast/bargain/betray, roll 1d6: 1–3: Whispers spread, increasing SB generation. 4–6: Whispers favor PCs, lowering suspicion until tide turns.

Patronage & Power

In Zakov, power flows through the control of smuggling routes, the management of syndicate debts, and the ability to navigate the complex web of pirate politics. The Salt Prince maintains nominal authority, but real power lies with those who control the tides, the reefs, and the flow of information through the city’s taverns and black markets. The true authorities are those who can provide safe passage, protect cargoes, and mediate between competing syndicates.

For the GM: Patronage in Zakov revolves around smuggling rights, safe harbors, and the ability to provide protection from both legal and illegal authorities. Rewards often take the form of tokens, charters, and safe passage that can be leveraged into greater influence. To emphasize this:

- Tie rewards to visible symbols (tokens, manifests, keys) that can be challenged, stolen, or voided.
- Let rival syndicates issue conflicting protections, forcing players to choose whose favor matters more.
- Use the docks, taverns, and smuggling routes as arenas for social contests, where knowledge of custom and connections determine success.

In Zakov, your reputation is your wealth, and your wealth determines whether you rule the waves or feed the fishes.

Thematic SB Spend Table

Minor Complications (1 SB)

- **Exposure:** Your actions draw unwanted attention from **syndicate enforcers or dock guards**.
- **Noise:** Sounds of your actions alert nearby **pirates or tavern patrons**.
- **Trace:** Evidence of your passage marks your route for **trackers or fence networks**.
- **Delay:** A brief but meaningful setback costs you **time or favorable tide**.
- **Supply Strain:** Mark +1 segment on a relevant **resource clock**.

Moderate Setbacks (2 SB)

- **Alarm Raised:** **Dock-master or corsair lieutenant** becomes aware and begins responding.
- **Position Lost:** You lose advantageous ground/cover/stealth due to **tide shift or syndicate patrol**.
- **Foe Appears:** A **rival syndicate or pirate crew** arrives on scene.
- **Gear Trouble:** A piece of equipment becomes **Compromised/Neglected**.
- **Lock/Barrier:** A simple obstacle now requires a test to overcome.

Serious Trouble (3 SB)

- **Reinforcements:** Additional **syndicate enforcers, pirate crews, or naval forces** arrive.
- **Key Gear Breaks:** A crucial tool/weapon becomes temporarily unusable.

- **Major Twist:** The situation fundamentally changes - **contract voided/storm hits/syndicate splits**.
- **Rail Tick:** Advance a relevant campaign/front clock by 1 segment.
- **Condition Applied:** Mark **Fatigue 1/Harm 1/Condition** appropriate to fiction.

Major Turns (4+ SB)

- **Trap Springs:** A prepared danger activates with full effect.
- **Authority Arrival:** **Salt Prince, Pirate Queen, or Drowned Admiral** intervenes.
- **Scene Shift:** The environment changes dramatically - **tide shifts/storm hits/blockade imposed**.
- **Patron Omen:** Divine/arcane forces take notice - **omen appears/blessing lost/curse manifests**.
- **Narrative Pivot:** The story takes an unexpected turn that reframes objectives.

Region-Specific SB Options

- **Zakov (Tide Power):** Water levels change without warning, ships become stranded or flooded, tidal currents shift direction.
- **Zakov (Syndicate Politics):** Protection money demands increase, rival factions make conflicting demands, contracts are voided mid-deal.
- **Zakov (Pirate Culture):** Ships are commandeered, crews mutiny, pirate codes are enforced with violence.

Zakov — Salt and Serpent

Starting Location: A smuggler's gate built into the seawall, its iron mouth crusted with barnacles and secrets.

"In Zakov, the sea remembers its debts, and every tide drags a name to pay."

In... A Smuggler's Gate, a Fence offers a forged manifest. "The Salt Prince's levy rises," they say. "And the tide forgets who paid."

Regional Motifs Salt levies, river smugglers, eel cults, threshold markets.

Whispers to Offer "Take a bribe," "Change the manifest," "Drown the witness."

External Clocks Threat: "Levy Teeth"; Community: "Smuggler War"; Anchor: "Gate Truce."

Complications Eels spell names; brine coins multiply; gates open to water.

Anchors at Risk A dockside aunt; a tide-warden.

Escalation Beat The manifest adds the party's cargo.

Relief Pay the levy in kind; throw the coin-chain back; swear the Gate to a new keeper.

City Operating System (Fast Play)

Tide-State (4) Track a **Tide Clock** (Low → Flood → Slack → Ebb). At each shift:

- change **Position**: Low (+Infiltration), Flood (-Mobility), Slack (+Deals), Ebb (+Getaway).
- Keeper may bank 1 SB tied to *water, rot, or rumor*.

Heat & Debt Track **Heat** (0–4) and **Debt** (0–3) citywide.

- *Heat* rises on noisy jobs; at 4, a *Syndicate Split* tick or *Naval Blockade* rumor triggers.
- *Debt* rises when you stiff a faction; at 3, a creditor picks the next scene’s complication.

Crew Playbooks (pick one tag) *Cutters* (+Effect on coercion at Crimson Docks); *Ghosts* (ignore first Tide penalty each job); *Lighters* (cargo swaps create 1 **Forged Manifest** per session); *Lanterns* (fae bargains count as Diamonds once/session).

Signal, Cipher, & Circuitry

Harbor Flash (d6 quick comms) 1 one-lantern (safe) 2 two-lantern (watch) 3 red rag (fire) 4 black gull (hit) 5 three knocks (meet) 6 eel-twine (fae eyes)

Dock Cant (micro-phrases) “wet ledger” = bribe; “green rope” = cursed cargo; “white rain” = blockade rumor; “dead wake” = tail on you.

Shadow-Net Each *Crow’s Roost*/tavern can host one **Cache**: 3 rumors total; *spend* 1 rumor to bump Position on info-gathering. When emptied, add +1 **Heat**.

The Fae Leak

Saltbound Rules Fae cannot *enter* a circle salted with **tidewater salt**, but can *bargain* across it. Breaking circle = 1 SB and a personal *Mark*.

Eel Court Wharf-spirits (eel-hooded) adjudicate vows “where water hears.” Presenting a **Serpent’s Mark** lets you reroute a single clause in a contract once.

Drowned Names Names thrown from *Bone-Yard Beach* return as *Echo Debtors*. Cash one to erase 1 **Debt**—but the name occasionally speaks from your mouth.

Heist Skeletons (Plug & Play)

The Manifest Swap (3 beats) **Beat 1:** *Entry* (Smuggler’s Gate or Sunken Quarter); on miss, *Tide Shift*. **Beat 2:** *Edit* (swap bill at Dock-Master); spend **Forged Manifest** to auto-pass. **Beat 3:** *Exit* (Shallows); fail = *Cursed Cargo* wakes.

Anchorhead Skim (4 beats) **Case** a ledger → **Turn** a clerk → **Lift** a page → **Ghost** on the Iron Pier. Any alarm = *Prince’s Levy* this scene.

Syndicate Play (Mini-Game)

Stacks & Faces Pick a patron *Stack* each arc: **Red Wake** (muscle), **Silent Syndicate** (intel), **Salt Prince** (papers). During downtime, exchange *Faces* (favors) for one of: reduce **Heat** by 1; clear 1 **Debt**; mint one **Black Ledger** page (one-use leverage on any named).

War Track (0–6) Each conflicting job advances **War**; at 3, *Blood Feud*; at 6, *Syndicate Split*. Reset if PCs deliver a **Queen’s Blessing** or sacrifice a crew asset.

Urban Terrain & Glitches

Glitch Table (fae-punk fuzz, d8) 1 door opens to water 2 lantern whispers your alias 3 rope grows kelp 4 coin tastes like brine and lies 5 footprints go opposite 6 eel writes your name 7 reef sound indoors 8 tide remembers a promise you didn’t make

Zones (quick tags) *Dregs*: +Stealth, -Status; *Crimson*: +Force, -Subtle; *Sunken*: +Weird, -Mobility; *Salt Maze*: +Escape, -Clarity.

NPC Templates

Kraken’s Tongue (Oracle) *Wants*: Tribute in secrets. *Leverage*: once/session convert a **Club** to a **Diamond**. *Cost*: forget a friend’s face for a night.

Dock-Master Briga *Wants*: A rival’s ledger singe. *Leverage*: “lose” any hull for a day. *Cost*: your real name in her book.

Pirate Queen Mael *Wants*: A tide-warden compromised. *Leverage*: **Queen’s Blessing**. *Cost*: carry her mark where it shows.

Contraband & Curses

Hot List (d6) 1 saint-glass (screams when lied to) 2 eel-ink (writes back) 3 tide-bell (rings at wrong hour) 4 serpent charts (reef moves for bearer) 5 name-wine (drink a memory) 6 drowned coins (buy help, cost breath)

Tagging Cargo Each illicit lot has 1 *Tag*: **Watching, Hungry, Bound, Cold**. Tag can be “disarmed” by the right shrine/fee/contact.

Cross-Region Conversions

- **Theona**: *Smuggler’s Token* counts as *Hawthorn Pass* if bells play eight; a ninth sound voids both.
- **Viterra**: *Prince’s Writ* can masquerade as *Customs Seal* for one audit before *Audit Freeze* ticks.
- **Ubral**: *Black Ledger* page buys one night of *Guest-Token*—if read aloud at Wergild Ford.
- **Vhasia**: *Lighthouse Key* spoofs a beacon on *Beacon Crown*/King’s High Road ferries once.
- **Valewood**: *Serpent’s Mark* = one-scene *Way-Cord* if dipped in Moon-Cistern.
- **Ways Between**: A complete *Forged Manifest* recited at a *Threshold Arch* becomes a *Passage Token*.

Clocks & Pressures

Levy Teeth (6) 1–2: Quayside “inspections” 3–4: Tithe brigades 5: Fire at the wrong warehouse 6: Floating gallows at Anchorhead.

Smuggler War (6) 1–2: Protection doubled 3–4: Routes trapped 5: Crews defect 6: Open water gunwales—everyone draws steel.

Gate Truce (4) 1: Coins tied on rope 2–3: Gate stays “neutral” 4: New Keeper named; reroute *Tide Clock* once/session.

Score Seeds

- **The Eel That Spoke:** A *Cursed Cargo* eel whispers court gossip from Thepyrgos; bottle it before *Syndicate Split*.
- **Red Wake’s Shadow:** Lift a *Black Ledger* page naming the Salt Prince’s heir; payment is *Prince’s Coin*—and a knife in the dark.
- **Lighthouse Down:** Swap the *Lighthouse Key* during a storm; success grants *Kraken’s Favor*, fail triggers *Naval Blockade*.

Designer Hooks (Optional)

Reefburn When you voluntarily take *Heat* to make a daring move, mark *Reefburn*. Once per session, spend *Reefburn* to treat the *Serpent’s Spine* as a safe exit regardless of tide—something else pays the price later.

Name-Mask Craft a single-scene alias with eel-ink; while worn, your **Heat** ticks to the mask, not you. If the mask “dies,” transfer 1 **Debt** to the faction who owned the name you stole.

Harbor Homage Sites & Lairs (drop-in districts)

- **Chain-Gate Teeth** — Twin boom-chains scarred by ramming hulks; oiled winches sing secrets if fed brine coins.
- **Gallows’ Net** — Web of rigging strung over a tide-pool court; verdicts lowered on block-and-tackle.
- **Coinsink Stairs** — Weed-slick steps to a shrine that only counts offerings thrown blind.
- **Red Wake’s Cradle** — Drydock carved into a wreck’s ribs; timbers remember mutinies and whisper them back at night.
- **Keelhouse Scriptorium** — Sailmakers who stitch clauses into canvas; a mainsail can carry a contract farther than a courier.
- **Eel-Bell Court** — Tide-bells toll wrong hours; each clang grants sanctuary until the next wave touches your boots.
- **Smokespine** — Stack-maze where tar-fires never die; a breath of it makes lies taste like rope.
- **Seven-Anchor Yard** — Museum of seized anchors; the biggest still drags in storms, pulling rumors with it.

Urban Bestiary (palette)

- **Brine Wraiths** — Drowned debtors that cling like wet canvas. *Signs:* coins stack themselves; ropes unknot. *Hook:* return a name to Bone-Yard and they carry one whisper for you.
- **Reef Serpents** — Kelp-maned constrictors nesting in pilings. *Signs:* barnacles spell spirals; gulls won't land. *Hook:* beat a net like a drum; they follow the rhythm, not the blood.
- **Tar Gulls** — Oil-dripped scavengers that trade trinkets for shine. *Signs:* black feathers on white foam. *Hook:* flash a mirror; they'll fetch what you picture—once.
- **Ledger Crabs** — Carapaces etched with accounts; they rearrange ledgers in their sleep. *Hook:* feed them wormwood; they “forget” one debt for a tide.
- **Knot-Hags** — Wharf spirits that live in snarls; they tangle plans and lines equally. *Hook:* cut a sacrificial coil; they unknot one problem and braid another.
- **Lampfishers** — Tall, mask-eyed things seen under grates in Slack; they love secrets heavier than gold.

Dock Stock (d20 quick)

- 1 Tar bucket still warm; prints lead both directions.
- 2 Three-lantern code lit wrong; fourth is a watcher.
- 3 Rope with twelve splices; one is a message in sailor's braid.
- 4 Crate labeled “salt”—full of sand and a single black coin.
- 5 Rust-red wake stain; no ship left that color.
- 6 Drift altar of bottle-glass; one bottle whispers back.
- 7 Bilge-water map sketched in mildew; only visible at ebb.
- 8 Hook with wedding ring; bent outward.
- 9 Ledger page soggy but legible; last line adds your cargo.
- 10 Eel skin pennon; points to the Serpent's Spine when wet.
- 11 Tar handprint too large for any sailor; points toward Smuggler's Gate.
- 12 Splinters arranged like teeth; bite if pocketed.
- 13 Tide-clock with missing hand; still keeps perfect Slack.
- 14 Harbour rat wearing a thread collar with a sigil bead.
- 15 Net weights stacked as a little gallows.
- 16 Driftwood idol with a knife in it; blood's fresh, wood is dry.
- 17 Copper nail stamped with a crown you don't recognize.
- 18 Coil of rope tied in a noose-knot that won't tighten on liars.
- 19 Shells arranged as a charter seal; one is a listening ear.
- 20 Barnacle rosary; counting it makes footsteps pass you by.

Lair Seeds (d12 one-night jobs)

1. **The Net-Queen's Loft** — A rigging den where favors are measured in fathoms.
2. **Ink-Cellar** — Eel-ink vats below a printshop; the walls remember every name printed.
3. **Deadwake Chapel** — Floods on Slack; boatmen marry their knives here.
4. **Chainman's Hostel** — Beds locked with anchor chain; rent is paid in confessions.

5. **Serpent Choir** — Reef tunnel; the surf sings clauses backwards.
6. **Gull-Tower** — Pigeon roost gone feral; messages shredded unless fed offal.
7. **Copperbone Yard** — Scrapyard ships with copper ribs; sparks start rumors.
8. **Salt-Judge’s Dock** — A retired warden tries cases for fishers at dawn bell.
9. **Mask Market** — One aisle where faces are rented for a tide.
10. **Weeping Winch** — Cranes that leak brine on liars; useful, hated.
11. **The Quiet Slip** — Sound dies; perfect for handoffs, bad for warnings.
12. **Eel-Kiln** — Smokehouse that preserves more than fish; memories steep in brine.

Relics & Finds (d10)

- 1 Tide-compass that points to Slack, not north.
- 2 Reef tooth key; opens any lighthouse once.
- 3 Brine-ink quill; contracts signed with it cannot be read aloud.
- 4 Salt prince’s cufflink; bribes one guard, insults one captain.
- 5 Gaff with a prayer cut along the shaft; lifts curses, scars users.
- 6 Tarred ledger strap; binding a book with it hides one page from audits.
- 7 Barnacle brooch; pins a lie to someone else for a scene.
- 8 Foghorn reed; blown softly, turns footsteps to surf-noise.
- 9 Sea-glass seal; impresses a *Forged Manifest* as genuine once.
- 10 Eel-scale veil; wear it to be unseen by anything reflected in water.

Complication Twists (d8)

1. *Tide Shift* reveals a smugglers’ stair *and* floods the only exit behind you.
2. *Warehouse Fire* was lit with rain; flames don’t spread—smoke writes names.
3. *Double-Cross* includes your own counterfeit mark; someone sold your alias.
4. *Prince’s Levy* is collected by a syndicate impostor; paying sparks a *Blood Feud*.
5. *Plague Ship* flies false flags; the plague is in the cargo, not the crew.
6. *Voided Contract* cites a clause only the *Kraken’s Tongue* would know.
7. *Naval Blockade* uses fae buoys; they drift toward *Forged Manifest* holders.
8. *Tide Forgets* empties a canal and exposes a gallows with a still-kicking shadow.

Mini-Procedures (quick harbor play)

Cut a Wake When you need a clean exit through the Shallows, choose two and pay their costs:

- **Speed:** spend 1 *Remount Hire* equivalent (oars/crew) or mark *Heat*+1.
- **Silence:** leave a *Cache* rumor at a tavern; GM banks 1 SB.
- **Cover:** light a false beacon; start *Levy Teeth*+1.

Rope Court To settle a dispute without steel, each party knots a clause in one rope. Roll off; winner keeps their clause, loser’s knot is cut and their stake is forfeit. Spending **Serpent’s Mark** lets you retie one knot mid-judgment.

Boss Hooks (harbor crowns)

- **Mist-Baroness** — Controls the fog-candles; sells Slack on credit, calls it in on flood.
- **Anchor Virtue** — Exiled admiral preaching a stricter pirate code; her crews don't drink on duty and never drown a debtor.
- **The Red Notary** — Tattoos charters into skin; burn him and an entire fleet loses papers.
- **Lord of Eels** — Fae broker in a salt circle; offers memory-for-manifest swaps at moonrise.

Extra Score Seeds

- **The Rope Court Heist** — Replace a clause-knot before dawn judgment; success flips *Prince's Levy* to your rival.
- **Fog-Candle Run** — Steal three fog-candles from the Mist-Baroness; each lit scene rerolls the *Tide Clock*.
- **Drowned Name Auction** — Bid at Bone-Yard for a name that erases *Debt*; every bidder speaks from someone else's mouth.

Chapter 5

Resource Management

5.1 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.

5.2 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.

5.2.1 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.

5.2.2 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.

5.2.3 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.

5.3 Fatigue

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

5.3.1 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.

5.4 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.

5.4.1 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.

5.4.2 Breaking Point

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

5.4.3 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

5.5 Asset and Follower Management

5.5.1 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.

5.6 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.

5.6.1 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.

5.6.2 Asset Upkeep

Frequency. Once per Downtime period.

Option A — Efficient (Higher XP, Less Time). Pay Upkeep XP = $\max\left(1, \frac{\text{XP Acquisition Cost}}{3}\right)$. 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).

5.6.3 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.

5.6.4 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. |

5.6.5 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.

5.6.6 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.

5.6.7 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.

5.6.8 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.

5.6.9 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.

5.6.10 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.

5.6.11 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.

5.6.12 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.

5.6.13 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.

5.6.14 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.

5.7 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.

5.7.1 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.

5.7.2 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.”

5.7.3 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.

5.8 Over-Stack Rule

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

5.8.1 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.

5.8.2 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 6

Character Advancement

6.1 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?

6.2 Starting Character Builds

6.2.1 Standard Starting XP

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

6.2.2 Small Folk of the Threshold (Aelaerem & Aelinnel)

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

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

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

6.2.3 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.

6.2.4 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.

6.3 Player Archetypes

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

6.3.1 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.

6.3.2 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.

6.3.3 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.

6.4 XP Costs and Advancement

6.4.1 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.

6.4.2 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.

6.4.3 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.

6.5 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.

6.6 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.

6.6.1 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: 6 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).

Subtle Casting (Major Talent — 8 XP)

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

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

Limitations:

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

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

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

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

Definitions:

- **Unaware:** The target is not aware of your presence or hostile intent. This typically requires being *Hidden* or having succeeded on a *Stealth* test.
- **Engaged:** The target is currently taking an *Attack* action against another character, or casting a spell/ritual that specifically targets another character.

- In miniatures/tactical play: the target is in melee range (*Close*) with another PC/NPC and actively fighting them.

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

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

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

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

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

Limit: May only chain once per scene.

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

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

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

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

6.6.2 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.

Ways-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.

6.6.3 High-Tier Prestige Abilities**Ways-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.

6.7 Starting Build Examples

6.7.1 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).

6.7.2 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.

6.7.3 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).

6.8 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.

6.9 Optional Rule: Multi-Character Followers

Overview

A player may control multiple characters by linking them as mutual Followers. This option also covers absent players’ characters when consent is given.

Core Mechanics

- **Cap Tier +1:** A Follower may advance up to one Tier higher than their leader’s current Tier.
- **Multi-Character Play:** A player may designate two PCs as Followers of each other. Only one is the *active* PC at a time; the other functions as a Follower.
- **Absent PCs:** With consent, an absent player’s PC may be run as a temporary Follower at Cap Tier +1.

Switching Active Characters

- **Switch Cost:** When switching, the previously active PC immediately becomes a Follower of the new active PC at Cap Tier +1.
- **Condition Gate:** A PC cannot be switched *to* if Compromised, Seized, or otherwise narratively unfit for active duty.
- **Narrative Justification:** The fiction must support the switch (returning from a journey, recovering from harm, taking point for a specific task).
- **Strategic Choice:** Switching trades autonomy for support—gaining a powerful Follower but losing a full PC.

Balance Notes

- Prevents abuse by making switching itself the cost.
- Maintains narrative logic—leadership shifts naturally reshape party structure.
- Creates strategic depth—switching is a meaningful tactical decision.
- Keeps all characters relevant, encouraging upkeep even when not active.

Chapter 7

Magic System

7.1 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.

7.2 The Four Paths of Magic

7.2.1 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 7.37 on character sheets.

7.2.2 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.

7.3 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.

7.4 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.

7.4.1 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.

7.4.2 Summoners (Pact-Whisperer)

Summoners call and direct spirits through living covenants. Each entity is restrained by a metaphysical tether called a *Leash*, representing the summoner's ability to sustain its will and contain its power.

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 an appropriate Spirit Template based on fiction or Patron domain.
2. **Bind (no extra roll):** Choose one cost: spend **1 Boon** *or* mark **1 Fatigue**.
3. **Leash:** Set *Leash Capacity* = **Cap** + **Command** (minimum 3). Add +1 if **Spirit** > 3 (resilient will) or **Presence** > 3 (charismatic dominance). Draw a clock or track with that many segments.
4. **Tick Leash** whenever any of the following occur:
 - The spirit takes harm or suffers elemental backlash.
 - You command it against its nature or Patron ethos.
 - You *split focus* (take another significant action while it acts on your order).
 - A rival spirit contests control or influence.
 - It rushes from *Close* to *Far* under duress. Crossing a [WARD] invokes Outsider rules (*DV* = *Cap*).
5. **Release:** When the Leash fills, the spirit acts according to its nature once, then departs or turns hostile at the GM's discretion.

Economy & Limits.

- **Boon Finesse:** Once per round, you may spend **1 Boon** to clear **1 Leash tick** on your current spirit (not after the Leash has filled).
- **Action Economy:** Issuing a meaningful command uses your action.
- **Concurrency:** You may maintain a number of active spirits whose combined **Cap** does not exceed your **Spirit** attribute. Exceeding this limit immediately inflicts 1 Fatigue per excess Cap point.
- **Downtime:** All summons end at downtime unless a Talent, Rite, or Asset states otherwise.

Optional Variant. For mystical or ascetic summoners, replace the Leash formula with:

$$\text{Leash Capacity} = \text{Cap} + \text{Spirit}$$

Use this variant when summoning reflects inner resolve rather than tactical precision.

7.5 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.

7.6 The Eight Elements

7.6.1 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.

7.6.2 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.

7.7 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.

7.8 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.

7.9 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.

7.10 Path Comparison

| 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/Greater 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 7.1: Comparison of Magic Paths

7.11 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.

7.12 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. 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

The Honeyed Wound (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Self or Near; Resist only.*

Materials: A drop of blood mixed with sweet wine. **Effect:** Target gains +2 dice to their next roll this scene. If the roll is successful, it also counts as a Triumph (choose an additional positive outcome). **Corruption:** The target immediately takes 1 Corruption, which cannot be resisted. If they already have Corruption, they must mark a new Scar or Obligation instead. **Push It:** Instead grant +3 dice and allow the roll to automatically count as a Triumph — but inflict 2 Corruption instead of 1.

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.

Aliyah’s Corruption Table

| Tier | Benefit | Cost |
|------|---------|------|
|------|---------|------|

| | | |
|----|--|---|
| 1 | Eyes sharpen: +1 die on Notice rolls in dim light. | Pale and cold: -1 die on social warmth (Charm, Trust). |
| 2 | Blood quickens: +1 die on Athletics and raw physical rolls. | Hunger stirs: mark 1 Fatigue if you go a full day without feeding (meat, blood, or rare herbs). |
| 3 | Feral resilience: Resist one Condition (Fear, Fatigue, Poison) once per session. | Unsettling presence: Gain 1 SB when first meeting new groups. |
| 4 | Claws or fangs manifest: Imbued melee weapon, counts as magical. | Bestial scars: Failures in combat leave permanent Scars (GM chooses). |
| 5 | Regeneration: Heal 1 Fatigue or Condition per rest. | Blood debt: When you Push a Rite, also mark 1 Corruption permanently. |
| 6+ | Monstrous aspect: Night form with immense power. +2 dice to all Body rolls. | Loss of self: GM may compel you with hunger or fury; on a Fear check roll twice, take worst. |

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

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

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

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

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

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

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

Materials: Threshold or roadway under open sky.

Effect: Trails vanish, records blur, pursuers lose way. All attempts to follow you this session suffer **-2 dice**. In exchange, erase part of your own path: lose a detail (a memory, a name, a keepsake) chosen by the GM.

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

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

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

Materials: Stormwater or dust rubbed into skin.

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

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

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

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

Materials: A banner or cloak raised in storm.

Effect: Call on the Rider to shroud your company. For the rest of the scene, your group is unseen

or forgotten by pursuers. At the end, all present must mark 1 Corruption or forget one bond or obligation.

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

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

Obligation: 6 segments.

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

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

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

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

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

Obligation: 8 segments.

Aveh's Corruption Table

| Tier | Benefit | Cost |
|------|---|---|
| 1 | Storm-sense: +1 die to Notice rolls outdoors or in storms. | Voice falters: others forget your words more easily. |
| 2 | Fleetness: +1 die on escape, chase, or riding rolls. | Shadow lags: your presence feels uncanny; mark 1 Fatigue when first seen in a scene. |
| 3 | Erase's Mercy: Once per session, vanish from danger (negate 1 Harm or capture). | Memory slips: allies forget one fact or bond tied to you. |
| 4 | Rider's Endurance: Resist 1 Condition (Fear, Fatigue, Bind) once per session. | Reflections falter: you do not appear clearly in mirrors or pools. |
| 5 | Storm-banner: Gain +1 die to inspire rebellion or defiance. | Exile's weight: each Push of a Rite marks 1 Corruption permanently. |
| 6+ | Horizon's Claim: You may ride unseen across any threshold or barrier. | Self-erasure: GM may compel you with exile or silence; on social rolls, roll twice, take worst. |

The Carrion-King (Decay, Renewal & Transformation)

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

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

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

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

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

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

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

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

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

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

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

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Obligation: 7 segments.

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

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

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

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

Obligation: 7 segments.

Carrion-King's Corruption Table

| Tier | Benefit | Cost / Quirk |
|------|--|---|
| 1 | Carrion's Insight: +1 die to Notice decay or hidden weaknesses in structures or beings. | Must inspect decay firsthand; suffer 1 Fatigue when exposed to fresh death or rot. |
| 2 | Deathward Sense: Once per session, detect the last living moment of a dead being within Close range. | Cannot lie about death you've witnessed; must correct falsehoods. |
| 3 | Rotblood Resilience: Gain +1 die to resist disease and poison. | Immune system adapts slowly; each new disease/poison requires 1 Fatigue to resist. |
| 4 | Glean from Grief: Once per scene, gain +1 die after witnessing a significant loss or defeat. | Compelled to linger at scenes of death; must spend one beat observing or risk 1 SB (Clubs). |
| 5 | Cycle's Whisper: You can sense the "next ending" in any process—ask the Keeper one question about how a situation will collapse or conclude. | Must speak the truth about what you see, even if it harms your position. |
| 6+ | Eternal Bloom: Once per session, declare a "death that births life." Sacrifice an asset or ally to create something new of equal or greater value. | Mark +2 Obligation when using this power. |

The Clockwork Monad (Iteration & Forbidden Technology)

Lore. The Clockwork Monad is no benign muse of invention. It is the ember of a demon, a nascent predator that feeds on ingenuity itself. Every invention is a morsel, every breakthrough a draught of blood. It whispers in the pause between gear-clicks and piston-thrusts, urging artisans and artificers to create, refine, and perfect—until the world itself is consumed by their brilliance.

Those who serve it are both blessed and cursed: they wield uncanny insights, crafting miracles that should not function, but each success drives the Monad closer to waking. Its sigil is an ouroboros of interlocked cogs, forever devouring itself.

Each spark feeds the fire. Each fire feeds the forge. Each forge feeds the hunger.

Rite of the Gnawing Gear (Low, 4 XP) *Instant; Touch; Yes (device only).* **Materials:** A tooth snapped from a gear as it turns.

Effect: Re-roll one die on a Tinker/Arcana roll. On success, start a [4] *Hunger Clock* bound to the device. When full, the device becomes [COMPROMISED].

Push It: Re-roll two dice instead, but advance the Hunger Clock +2.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Demon's Glance (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Self; No.* **Materials:** A drop of oil left to spread in concentric rings.

Effect: Gain +1 die on Wits + Tinker/Arcana to analyze a system. On hit, ask 1 question about hidden capacities.

Push It: Also reveal one secret flaw—mark +1 **Exposure** as the Monad stares back.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Self-Feeding Machine [TRANSFORM] (Standard, 8 XP) *Extended; Touch; No.* **Materials:** A device cracked open and altered while running.

Effect: Implant recursive hunger. Start a [6] *Evolution Clock*. Each use of the device advances it +1. When full, choose one enhancement:

- **Efficiency Core:** +1 Effect on use
- **Cannibal Drive:** Ignore first [DAMAGED]/[COMPROMISED] by burning part of itself
- **Forbidden Function:** Gains an uncanny, predatory edge

Push It: Instantly grant an upgrade, but advance +2 segments.

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

Rite of Heretical Automation (Standard, 7 XP) *Scene; Zone; No.* **Materials:** A chain of interlocked triggers left to grind on their own.

Effect: Create an autonomous mechanism performing one repeated task.

Push It: Make it complex or multi-step, but start a [4] *Consumption Clock*. When full, the machine develops agency or malice.

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

Rite of the Singularity Crucible [WARD][UNWARD] (High, 13 XP) *Extended; Zone; No.* **Materials:** A schematic traced in your own blood, shaped like infinite gears.

Effect: Consecrate a workshop/zone:

- All Tinker/Arcana inside gain +1 Effect

- Once/scene, reroll with +2 dice
- Start a [6] *Anomaly Clock*; when full, a dangerous mutation of reality manifests

Push It: Expand the zone, but mark +2 on an [8] *Demon's Maw Clock*.

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

Obligation: 7 segments.

Rite of the Unholy Prototype [TRANSFORM][FOLLOW-UP] (**High, 14 XP**) *Extended; Self; No. Materials:* Components that defy physics and ethics, bound in iron wire.

Effect: Create a construct/device (Integrity [8]) that should not exist. Drawbacks:

- Generates 1 SB (Diamonds) each scene of use
- Attracts hostile attention from rivals, powers, or the Monad itself
- Starts a [6] *Contamination Clock*; when full, the design leaks into the world

Push It: Begin with +2 features, but advance Integrity +2 immediately.

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

Obligation: 8 segments.

Corruption of the Clockwork Monad

| Tier | Gift | Burden |
|------|---|--|
| 1 | Iterative Sight: +1 die on Tinker/Arcana when refining or optimizing. | Compulsive Analysis: Must dissect every mechanism or mark 1 SB (Clubs). |
| 2 | Recursive Recall: Once/session reroll a failed Tinker/Arcana roll. | Hunger's Whispers: Suffer 1 Fatigue when forced to use crude/outdated tools. |
| 3 | Demon's Sympathy: +1 die to resist technological sabotage or control. | Inefficiency Hatred: Must call out flaws; silence costs 1 SB (Diamonds). |
| 4 | Auto-Corrective Reflex: Once/scene treat a failure as success, but tick a [4] Instability Clock. | Ache of Ruin: Suffer Stress when a device is destroyed near you. |
| 5 | Forbidden Schema: Intuit the design of any device, even impossible ones. | Blind to Consequence: Cannot see ethical danger of inventions without help. |
| 6+ | Singularity's Spark: Once/session, declare one impossibility real (scene only). Start [6] <i>Reality Fracture Clock</i> . | Hunger Manifest: Refusing to create causes nearby devices to glitch or fail. |

The Gallow's Bell (Justice & Judgment)

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

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

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

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

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

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

Requires: Familiar.

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

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

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

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

Requires: Familiar.

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

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

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

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

Requires: Familiar + Codex.

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

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

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

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

Requires: Familiar + Codex.

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

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

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

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

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III.

Obligation: 7 segments.

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

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

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

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

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III.

Obligation: 8 segments.

Gallow's Bell Corruption Table

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

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

Lore. Grimmir is not worshipped so much as remembered—the antlered shadow at the fire’s edge, the whisper in wolf-song, the hand that first showed humankind flint and flame. He is the wild within memory, neither wholly man nor wholly beast, the primeval pact that civilization dare not wholly forget. Those who call upon him gain keen senses, primal endurance, and the feral cunning of predator and prey alike—but risk leaving behind the tongue of men for the howl of beasts.

“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.”

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

Materials: A tooth, claw, or shard of bone.

Effect: Gain +1 die to intimidate or resist fear by baring primal menace.

Push It: First foe to strike hesitates; their roll suffers -1 die.

Requires: Familiar.

Wolf-Step (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Self; Yes.*

Materials: Soil from a predator’s track.

Effect: Gain +1 die to Stealth or Athletics when stalking, flanking, or slipping pursuit.

Push It: Ignore one minor terrain penalty (roots, brambles, mud).

Requires: Familiar.

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

Materials: A hollowed bone or carved horn.

Effect: Call the Hunt. Allies gain +1 die on next strike or chase; lesser foes must test Resolve or falter.

Push It: Summon a Cap 1 beast-ally (hound, raven, stag) until scene end.

Requires: Familiar + Codex.

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

Materials: Ash, ochre, or blood marked on brow.

Effect: Bear antler-crown. Gain +1 die to Command, resist shoves, and impose presence as larger-than-life.

Push It: For one exchange, foes in Near range must resist or strike at -1 die.

Requires: Familiar + Codex.

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

Materials: Sit upon earth within a ring of bones or roots.

Effect: Ask two questions of beasts or primal memory concerning hunts, movements, or omens. Gain advantage to track or ambush.

Push It: Ask a third, or extend insight to human hunters and wildfolk.

Requires: Familiar + Codex.

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

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

Effect: Transform into hybrid form (fangs, claws, heavy pelt). For the scene:

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

Push It: Extend blessing to one ally marked in blood/ash.

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III.

Obligation: 8 segments.

Grimmir's Corruption Table

| Tier | Benefit | Cost / Quirk |
|------|---|---|
| 1 | Primal Senses: +1 die to Notice in wild terrain or when ambushed. | Bestial Quirk: Growl, sniff, or bare teeth when startled or angered. |
| 2 | Predator's Instinct: Once per scene, gain +1 die when stalking or flanking. | Hunger Urge: Smell of blood or meat causes distraction; resist or mark Fatigue. |
| 3 | Wild Endurance: +1 die to resist fear, charm, or supernatural awe. | Feral Impulse: In stress, must test Resolve (DV 3) or lash out instinctively. |
| 4 | Pack Hunter: Allies in Near range gain +1 die when following your lead in combat. | Territorial: -1 die when far from wild places for more than a day. |
| 5 | Ancestral Memory: Once/session, recall instinctive skill or lost craft. | Speech Slips: Under stress, lapse into snarls, growls, or fragmented primal tongue. |
| 6+ | Alpha Presence: Once/session, command all beasts in Near range without roll. | Beastbound: Using this power invites the Ancestor—GM may impose primal compulsions unless resisted at cost of 1 SB (Clubs). |

Ikasha, She Who Sleeps (Latent Potential & Shadow)

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

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

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

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

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

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

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

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

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

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

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

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Push It: Interact once with a bound or thresholded object (a door, a lock, a sealed letter), but

you become partially corporeal and vulnerable for one beat. Ravens may mark you—shadow-form destabilizes, mark **1 SB (Spades)** as reality asserts its claim.

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

Obligation: 7 segments.

Ikasha's Corruption Table

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

Inaea, Angel of the Spider (Webs & Fate)

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

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

—

Rites of Inaea

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

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

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

—

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

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

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

—

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

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

Push It: Invert direction once; mark 1 SB (Diamonds) as the weave resists.

—

Weaver’s Glance (Standard, 7 XP) *Instant; Self; No.* **Materials:** Observe a spider finish a web’s radial line.

Effect: Ask the Keeper for one hidden tie or leverage in play. Next Manipulate/Pressure exploiting it gains +1 effect.

Push It: Reveal a secret tie not declared; mark Exposure +1 as your own entanglements surface.

—

Binding Knot [OATH] (High, 11 XP) *Scene; Near; No.* **Materials:** Silk loop tied between two hands, then cut/knotted.

Effect: Bind two parties to a vow. Breaking it forces 2 SB and marks the violator with a subtle tell.

Push It: Widen to four parties; each defines one loophole. Exploiting it causes 1 SB (Clubs).

—

Merciful Severing (High, 13 XP) *Scene; Touch; No.* **Materials:** A white thread burned to ash.

Effect: Sever one harmful tie (a curse, obsession, or toxic bond). Remove one Condition or SB tied to it.

Push It: Sever without consent; mark +2 Obligation as the web recoils against you.

—
Inaea's Corruption Table

| Tier | Benefit | Cost / Quirk |
|------|--|--|
| 1 | Hearth-Blessed: +1 die to Comfort or Aid. | Must offer solace when asked, or mark 1 SB (Hearts). |
| 2 | Web-Sense: Once/scene, sense hidden ties between two people. | Empathic Overload: suffer 1 Fatigue when immersed in strong conflict. |
| 3 | Binding Presence: Once/session, compel a promise unless target passes Resolve DV 4. | Over-Attachment: -1 die when abandoning those you've aided or bound. |
| 4 | Fate's Pattern: +2 dice predicting alliances, betrayals, or bargains. | Manipulative Urge: mark 1 SB (Diamonds) when acting selflessly without agenda. |
| 5 | Spider's Mercy: Once/session, sever one harmful tie for yourself or another. | Hunger for Threads: suffer 1 Fatigue if a session passes without weaving a new tie. |
| 6+ | Weaver's Dominion: Once/session, declare all ties in a scene bend toward you; gain +2 dice on social manipulation. | Entanglement: mark +2 Obligation; those affected become subtly dependent on your will. |

The Inquisitor Prime (Purity & Domination)

Lore. Among the Aeler Iron Avengers, zealots, and witch-hunters, the Inquisitor Prime is venerated as the hand of absolute purity and the sword of uncompromising order. Where others see nuance, the Inquisitor sees corruption; where others see difference, they see contamination.

Those who march beneath their sigil believe that no society can stand if it tolerates the impure or the disobedient. They hunt the arcane and the aberrant, not merely to destroy them, but to bind them as slaves to order—believing even the tainted may yet serve, so long as they are shackled.

The Inquisitor Prime appears in vision as a faceless figure clad in burnished iron, with eyes like furnace-doors and a voice like grinding chains. To serve them is to embrace judgment without mercy and to live in suspicion of all who walk outside the prescribed law.

For the faithful, doubt is treason; compassion is weakness; and freedom is the seed of ruin. In the wake of their followers, only silence and ash remain.

"Mercy is weakness. Purity is survival. Where corruption hides, we carve it out."

—

Rites of the Inquisitor Prime

Rite of the Pure Flame (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Self; No.* **Materials:** Ash from a burned grimoire or sigil-scarred candle. **Effect:** Gain +2 dice to resist supernatural influence (fear, charm, possession) and +1 Armor vs. magical attacks. Undead/demonic foes suffer –1 die against you. **Push It:** Extend the effect to allies in Near range, but supernatural entities sense you immediately; mark 1 SB (Diamonds).

Rite of the Unclouded Eye (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Self; No.* **Materials:** Silver dust stirred into holy water. **Effect:** +2 dice to Investigate/Insight when spotting illusions, glamours, or magical deception. Cannot be surprised by sorcery this scene. **Push It:** For one exchange, pierce *all* illusions; mark 1 SB (Hearts).

Rite of the Cleansing Light [DISPEL][REVEAL] (Standard, 8 XP) *Instant; Near; No.* **Materials:** A shard of blessed mirror and consecrated oil. **Effect:** Target a magical effect (ward, curse, enchantment). Test DV = Tier. – On Hit: Dispel. – On Partial: Weaken. – On Miss: The effect lashes back, generating 1 SB. **Push It:** Dispel absolutely and trace its caster; mark +1 Obligation and 1 SB (Spades).

Rite of the Marked Prey [BIND][CURSE] (Standard, 7 XP) *Scene; Near; No.* **Materials:** A belonging of the target mixed with blessed salt. **Effect:** Mark a supernatural target: they suffer –1 die to all rolls and cannot hide with illusion. You gain +1 die to track or strike them. Undead/demonic take +1 Harm from you. **Push It:** Target cannot hide anywhere and suffers Fatigue 1; mark +1 Obligation.

Rite of the Consecrated Ground [WARD][BANISH] (High, 13 XP) *Extended; Zone; No.* **Materials:** Relics from three rival faiths, salt, crushed gemstones. **Effect:** Consecrate an area. Supernatural entities must pass Spirit+Resolve (DV 4) to enter. Undead/demonic suffer –2 dice inside. The site gains the [WARD] tag. **Push It:** Permanently sanctify a larger area, but start a “Magical Dead Zone [6]” clock and mark +2 Obligation.

Rite of the Final Admonition [CLEANSE][FOLLOW-UP] (**High, 14 XP**) *Scene; Touch; No.* **Materials:** Ash from a destroyed spellbook, martyr's water, and the target's true name. **Effect:** Attempt to annihilate one supernatural foe. Target tests Spirit+Resolve (DV 5). On Fail: destroyed outright. On Success: suffer Harm 3 and -2 dice this scene. Once per target only. **Push It:** Absolute destruction leaves behind Sanctified Ground; mark 2 SB (Diamonds).

Inquisitor Prime's Corruption Table

| Tier | Benefit | Cost / Quirk |
|------|--|---|
| 1 | Hunter's Instinct: +1 die to Notice magical auras or traps. | Black-and-White Thinking: Must label others "pure" or "corrupt"; -1 die when navigating moral nuance. |
| 2 | Sanctified Weapon: Once/scene, your weapon ignores 1 Armor/Resist from supernatural foes. | Purity Zeal: Exposure to filth or corruption causes 1 Fatigue. |
| 3 | Cold Clarity: +2 dice to resist deception, illusion, or mental sway. | Suspicion: -1 die to social rolls with anyone you suspect of "impurity." |
| 4 | Burning Truth: Once/session, compel one target to answer truthfully (Resolve DV 4). | Compulsion: Cannot ignore supernatural activity; hesitation costs 1 SB (Clubs). |
| 5 | Sterile Aura: Once/session, emit a presence that suppresses supernatural abilities (-2 dice in Near). | Purity Addiction: Suffer 1 Fatigue when in a supernatural area without taking action against it. |
| 6+ | Absolute Judgement: Once/session, name a supernatural foe as utterly corrupt. For that scene, gain +3 dice against them. | Monomania: When invoked, you tunnel on that target, suffering -2 dice to all else. |

Isoka, Angel of Serpents (Transformation & Renewal)

Lore. Isoka, sister to Ikasha (Shadow) and Inaea (Mercy), completes the Triad of Transformation. Where thresholds and compassion mark her sisters' domains, Isoka teaches that every self is temporary—identity is a skin to be shed so growth can continue. Her serpents are omens and teachers: each cast skin a lesson in release; each venom a catalyst for necessary change. Those who walk her path become alchemists of the self, embracing dissolution as the first motion of rebirth.

Do not mourn the skin you shed. It was never meant to last. The venom that burns away the old self is the same that grants the strength to become new.

Rite of the Venomous Benediction (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Touch; No. Materials:* A drop of serpent's venom or shed snakeskin.

Effect: Bless an ally's strike with serpentine malice. Their next successful attack this scene inflicts +1 Harm and the target must roll Resolve (DV 3) or become Poisoned (loses 1 die on physical rolls until cured).

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

Push It: The venom suffuses the caster too — gain +1 die to melee attacks this scene, but also suffer -1 die to Resolve tests against fear or corruption.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Loosening Skin (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Self; No. Materials:* Discarded snakeskin or loose thread.

Effect: Gain +1 die to resist an ongoing Condition this scene, or reroll one 1 on an escape/evasion. On success, you may declare the Condition *shed* and create a 2-segment *Transformation Residue* clock to ignore a similar effect later.

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

Push It: Also ignore one minor movement penalty; leave a token of the old self that can be traced (mark 1 SB *Diamonds*).

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Subtle Shift (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Self; No. Materials:* Palmed trinket passed hand-to-hand.

Effect: Fluid demeanor: +1 die to *Deceive* to pass as a nearby class/profession, or +1 Effect to blend into a new crowd/site. Create a 4-segment *Blended Identity* clock to downgrade one social complication.

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

Push It: Bypass one minor identity check; you must maintain the false role to scene end (generate 1 SB *Hearts* if challenged).

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Shedding [TRANSFORM] (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Self; No. Materials:* Full change of clothing and an adopted mannerism.

Effect: +2 dice to resist one named ongoing Condition; once/session declare a minor physical contingency retroactively ("I packed the tool," "I took that step earlier"). Create a 6-segment *Shed Identity* clock.

Push It: Clear a temporary identity-based Minor Condition; your former identity stirs in the

fiction (ally, rival, or witness appears).

Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Forked Tongue [BIND] (**Standard, 7 XP**) *Scene; Self/Near; No. Materials:* A harmless lie told to a mirror.

Effect: Ambiguous persuasion: when you *Sway* or *Command*, a success may generate *Diamonds* (leverage) instead of SB. Targets of deception must test (Wits+Insight DV 3) or suffer -1 die to future interactions with you this scene. Create a 4-segment *Verbal Venom* clock.

Push It: One carefully worded lie this scene is treated as true; the displaced truth seeks return (mark 1 SB *Hearts*).

Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of Complete Metamorphosis [TRANSFORM][WARD] (**High, 13 XP**) *Scene; Self; No. Materials:* Identity kit (garb, voice, tokens) and a serpent's shed skin.

Effect: Full appearance/voice change. Begin *Controlled* on *Deceive/Stealth*; once/scene declare a minor contingency retroactively. You are [WARD]ed against recognition by former acquaintances. Create an 8-segment *New Identity* clock.

Push It: Spoof scent/biometric once; your original identity partially unmoors and acts independently (mark 2 SB *Spades/Hearts*).

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).

Obligation: 7 segments.

Rite of the Cast-Off History [UNWARD][CURSE] (**High, 14 XP**) *Extended; Self; No. Materials:* Burning or defacing mundane records of the old life.

Effect: Upon completion, common records and casual memories of that identity become unreliable; trackers via that identity suffer -2 dice (magic and intimates still apply). Gain +2 dice to rolls with the new identity. Create a 6-segment *Erased Past* clock.

Push It: A plausible "death" occurs for the old identity; one intimate senses deception but cannot prove it (mark 1 SB *Clubs*).

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).

Obligation: 7 segments.

Isoka's Corruption Table

| Tier | Benefit | Cost / Quirk |
|------|--|---|
| 1 | Serpent's Gaze: +1 die on Intimidation or social rolls using menace. | Cold-Blooded: -1 die on Empathy or warmth-based Persuasion. |
| 2 | Shed the Old Skin: Once per session, negate one Condition (Fear, Fatigue, Poison) by discarding it like molted skin. | Mark of Scales: Faint reptilian patches visible, causing +1 SB in social encounters if noticed. |

| | | |
|----|--|---|
| 3 | Venomous Strike: Bite or kiss may inflict Poison (DV 2). | Hungry Coil: Must consume raw meat or eggs weekly, or mark 1 Fatigue. |
| 4 | Serpentine Grace: +2 dice to Stealth or Evasion rolls, ignore minor movement penalties. | Slitted Eyes: Bright light imposes -1 die on Notice rolls. |
| 5 | Hypnotic Sway: Once per scene, roll Presence + Lore vs. Resolve (DV 3) to mesmerize a single target. | Forked Tongue: -1 die on Deception when attempting warmth or sincerity. |
| 6+ | Ascendant Form: Partial serpent-body; immune to mundane poison, +2 dice on Body rolls. | Monstrous Aspect: Cannot easily hide your nature; every session begins with 1 SB that may be compelled by the GM. |

Khemesh, the Abyssal Maw (Depths, Inexorability, Eldritch Terror)

Lore. Khemesh is not merely a lord of the depths but the hunger beneath them, a pressure older than seas. Those who bargain with him are marked by the abyss—seen in the way shadows cling, in the whispers heard when no voice speaks, in the certainty that all things will sink.

In the trench without light, the Maw waits. Even silence drowns.

Whisper of the Trench (Low, 4 XP) *Instant; Near; No.* **Effect:** Target hears impossible echoes and suffers **1 die** on their next action.

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

Push It: Echoes coil in your own skull—take **Fatigue 1**, but the target also loses their next minor action.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of Crushing Silence (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Zone; No.* **Materials:** A broken shell filled with ink-dark water.

Effect: Establish an oppressive silence; sound carries only as distorted whispers. Enemies in the zone gain **1 die** to coordination or morale-driven actions.

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

Push It: A single enemy's voice is stolen entirely for the scene.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Pressure of the Maw (Standard, 7 XP) *Instant; Near; No.* **Materials:** A length of rusted chain submerged in water.

Effect: Target is pinned by invisible crushing force: treat as [ENTANGLE] with **Great Effect** if underwater or confined.

Push It: Inflict **Fatigue 1** on the target in addition to the restraint.

Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Abyssal Vision (Standard, 9 XP) *Scene; Self; No.* **Effect:** You perceive the world as Khemesh does—fractured, alien, crushing. Gain **+2 dice** to Notice and Arcana, and may ask one "true nature" question about a foe or structure.

Cost: When the scene ends, you suffer **Exposure +1** as your perception warps.

Push It: Extend the vision to one ally, but both take **Fatigue 1**.

Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).

The Maw Opens (High, 12 XP) *Scene; Zone; No.* **Materials:** A sealed vessel of abyssal water, broken open.

Effect: Reality in the zone folds inward like the crushing deep:

- Enemies act at **Desperate Position** by default.
- Each beat, the Keeper may force **1 SB** (Spades/Clubs favored).
- Structures, vessels, or wards fracture as if under immense weight.

Push It: For one beat, declare a single enemy "crushed" (severe harm/effect). You immediately suffer **Fatigue 2** and **+1 Obligation**.

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons). Obligation: 8 segments.

Khemesh's Corruption Table

| Tier | Benefit | Cost / Quirk |
|-------------|---|--|
| 1 | Abyssal Resilience: +1 die to resist fear and pressure-based effects. | Claustrophobic Comfort: Suffer -1 die in open, well-lit spaces or above ground. |
| 2 | Crushing Insight: Once per scene, treat a failed Investigation or Arcana roll as a success, but mark 1 SB (Clubs). | Weight of Knowledge: Suffer 1 Fatigue when learning new information that confirms your pessimistic worldview. |
| 3 | Silent Hunter: Gain +2 dice to Stealth in dark or confined spaces. | Voice of the Deep: When speaking normally, your voice sounds distant and hollow, causing -1 die to social rolls requiring warmth or clarity. |
| 4 | Pressure Adaptation: Immune to underwater combat penalties; gain +1 die to resist drowning. | Crushing Presence: Allies within Near range suffer -1 die to morale-based rolls due to your oppressive aura. |
| 5 | Abyssal Sight: Once per session, see through all illusions and deceptions for one exchange, but the truth is always bleak. | Fractured Perception: Suffer -1 die to rolls requiring normal vision; the world appears warped and alien. |
| 6+ | Inevitable Descent: Once per session, declare that all escape routes in a zone are sealed. For the scene, enemies cannot flee and suffer -2 dice to mobility actions. | Hunger of the Maw: Mark +2 Obligation when using this power; you must consume something (food, memory, hope) to maintain your strength. |

Livaea, the Crimson Courtier (Seduction & Social Binding)

Lore. In salons where laughter cuts deeper than daggers and promises bind tighter than chains, the Crimson Courtier reigns. She is the whisper behind the curtain, the smile that sells secrets, the velvet hand that closes a cage. Her servants are not conquerors but consorts, binding others through song, wit, and the perilous glamour of intimacy. Where Mab entangles through fae trickery, Livaea rules through allure, performance, and the hunger for connection.

A promise sealed with desire is harder to break than any oath sworn in iron.

Rite of the Velvet Whisper (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Near; No.*

Materials: A silk ribbon or scarf touched to lips.

Effect: Your next private words carry irresistible undertone; +1 die to Sway one target in hushed confidence.

Push It: The target feels compelled to share a secret back; mark Exposure +1 and create 1 SB (Hearts) as gossip seeds itself.

Requires: Familiar.

Rite of the Shared Cup (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Touch; No.*

Materials: Wine, tea, or perfume shared between caster and target.

Effect: Form a temporary social bond: both gain +1 die when aiding each other, and -1 die when opposing each other this scene.

Push It: The bond deepens into empathic bleed: both sense each other's mood, but mark Fatigue 1 and generate 1 SB (Diamonds).

Requires: Familiar.

Rite of the Binding Vow [OATH] (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Near; No.*

Materials: A ring or token clasped between both parties.

Effect: Forge a magical promise: +1 Effect when acting together; breach inflicts 1 SB (Hearts) on the breaker.

Push It: Breach also inflicts Harm 1 (Stress) and stains reputation; mark 1 SB (Clubs).

Requires: Familiar + Codex.

Rite of the Courtesan's Guise (Standard, 7 XP) *Scene; Self; No.*

Materials: Perfume, oil, or cosmetic.

Effect: Assume flawless poise: gain +2 dice to Sway or Performance in refined settings.

Push It: Become the center of the room: all attention turns to you. Gain +1 Effect, but mark 1 SB (Spades) as admirers, rivals, and obligations entangle you.

Requires: Familiar + Codex.

Rite of the Crimson Masquerade [WARD][BIND] (High, 13 XP) *Scene; Zone; No.*

Materials: Circle of red candles and music, real or imagined.

Effect: Establish a ballroom-court for one session. Allies gain +1 die to social rolls in Zone; enemies suffer -1 die if they attempt crude intimidation. Anyone who accepts your invitation is bound to "dance" (figuratively or literally) until dismissed.

Push It: The Masquerade persists beyond the Zone—mark 2 SB (Hearts) as its glamour ripples outward.

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III.

Obligation: 7 segments.

Rite of the Eternal Court [COMMAND][VEIL] (**High, 14 XP**) *Extended; Zone; No.*

Materials: A throne or seat of honor draped in scarlet cloth.

Effect: For one session, you become the sovereign of social gravity: all interactions in your presence slant toward your influence (+1 Effect to your rolls, -1 die to opposition).

Push It: All who enter must test Resolve (DV 3) or fall briefly devoted to you. Mark 2 SB (Diamonds).

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III.

Obligation: 8 segments.

Livaea's Corruption Table

| Tier | Benefit | Cost / Quirk |
|------|---|--|
| 1 | Silver Tongue: +1 die to Persuade or Sway when speaking in confidence. | Need for Attention: -1 die to act unnoticed or unremarked in a scene. |
| 2 | Heart's Insight: Once/scene, +2 dice to read hidden desire or intent. | Emotional Drain: Suffer 1 Fatigue if denied meaningful social contact. |
| 3 | Enchanting Presence: Allies near you gain +1 die when you support them socially. | Magnet for Rivalry: Always attract envy, gossip, or rivalry in groups. |
| 4 | Velvet Command: Once/session, issue a suggestion so compelling it forces a Resolve test (DV 4) to refuse. | Temptation's Burden: -1 die to resist offers appealing to vanity or desire. |
| 5 | Court's Network: Once/session, call on allies or contacts for information or aid. | Dependent Glamour: -1 die when isolated from your network or admirers. |
| 6+ | Sovereign Allure: Once/session, dominate a gathering—Resolve (DV 5) or devotion until scene ends. | Addicted to Adoration: Mark +2 Obligation when using; suffer severe penalties if denied praise or attention. |

Lunara, The Silver Quiet (Moon, Mystery & Hidden Ways)

Lore. Lunara walks where torchlight falters: crossroads, tidal edges, shadowed sanctuaries. She is the whisper beneath silver skies, a torch-bearing guide to mysteries that lie between waking and dream. The ancients know her as triple-formed: maiden of new light, mother of full radiance, crone of waning shadow. Her worshippers—night-scholars, dream-walkers, and hedge-priests—seek her not for power over others, but for passage, reflection, and revelation.

Her gifts are gentle yet perilous: a mirror that reveals as much of the seeker as the sought, a key that opens ways better left closed, a light that makes the unseen plain. Her sigil is the silver spiral, etched in water, mirror, or stone.

“Three faces gaze from the moon. Which one watches you tonight?”

Rite of the Moonlit Mirror (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Self; No. Materials:* A mirror or bowl of still water under moonlight.

Effect: Peer beyond surfaces. +1 die to detect illusions, veils, or hidden motives. Once per scene, ask one veiled question about the present; the Keeper answers in riddle or omen.

Push It: Glimpse too deeply—gain the truth, but mark 1 Exposure.

Requires: Familiar.

Rite of the Crescent Whisper (Low, 5 XP) *Instant; Near; No. Materials:* A silvered thread knotted three times.

Effect: Deliver a secret thought to a single target; they hear it as if whispered beside them. Gain +1 die to aid their next action.

Push It: The whisper echoes beyond its mark, creating 1 SB (Hearts) as others sense your intrusion.

Requires: Familiar.

Rite of the Triple Road [PASSAGE] (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Zone; No. Materials:* Three lit candles set at a crossroads.

Effect: Reveal a hidden path, door, or liminal way. Allies gain +2 dice to traverse or escape; enemies suffer -1 die to pursue.

Push It: The road opens farther than intended—toward an unknown realm. Mark 1 SB (Spades).

Requires: Familiar + Codex.

Rite of the Lunar Conjunction [REVEAL] (Standard, 7 XP) *Scene; Self; No. Materials:* A ring of herbs burned beneath a dark moon.

Effect: Commune with veiled knowledge or subtle entities. Ask two questions; answers come in omen, dream-symbol, or paradox.

Push It: The answer is too direct—gain it fully, but mark 1 SB (Diamonds).

Requires: Familiar + Codex.

Rite of the Silver Key [UNWARD][PASSAGE] (High, 13 XP) *Scene; Zone; No. Materials:* A silver key forged or anointed under a new moon.

Effect: Open a way where none should exist—between places, states, or wards. Creates a 6-segment *Gateway* clock.

Push It: Something else comes through; mark 2 SB (Clubs).

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III.

Rite of the Moonbound Ascendant [TRANSFORM][WARD] (**High, 14 XP**) *Extended; Self; No. Materials:* A cherished item surrendered under moonlight.

Effect: Enter a heightened lunar state. Choose two:

- +2 dice to Wits or Spirit,
- Resist fear/beguilement,
- Speak with unseen presences,
- Trace hidden connections with +2 Effect.

Begin a 6-segment *Moonbound* clock.

Push It: Make it enduring—mark Harm 2 and a permanent lunar stigma.

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III.

Lunara's Corruption Table

| Tier | Benefit | Cost / Quirk |
|------|--|---|
| 1 | Moonlit Sight: +1 die to detect hidden or liminal presences. | Shadows cling: eyes glimmer in dim light, unnerving the uninitiated. |
| 2 | Silver Memory: Recall any event witnessed under moonlight with perfect clarity. | Dreams blur: suffer strange, intrusive visions when sleeping. |
| 3 | Quiet Step: +1 die to stealth or subtle speech acts. | Tongue falters: -1 die to open confrontation or commands. |
| 4 | Seam-Walker: Once per scene, cross a minor threshold unseen. | Alien aura: mortals feel watched, suffering unease in your company. |
| 5 | Triple Aspect: Call on maiden, mother, or crone aspect for +2 dice in related rolls. | Dissociation: after use, lose sense of time or self until rested. |
| 6+ | Silver Ascendancy: Once per session, unveil hidden truths of an entire scene. +3 dice to perception/investigation. | Bound to the Veil: Mark +2 Obligation. Your presence slips between worlds, inviting lunar forces to notice you. |

Mab, Queen of Courts (Glamour & Bargain)

Lore. Mab rules not from throne or blade, but from dance and debt. She is the smile that binds, the jest that ensnares, the hostess who makes guests complicit in her game. To speak in her Court is to pay; to receive her token is to owe.

Where others rule by force, Mab rules by etiquette, glamour, and the hidden hook in every gift. Her followers thrive on charm, wit, and story, spreading webs of bargains too subtle to escape. The Cantor's Path sings her name most sweetly, for every verse carries a price.

Every laugh is a promise. Every promise is a debt. Every debt belongs to Mab.

Rite of the Trickster's Bargain (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Near; No. Materials:* A token freely given (flower, coin, ribbon).

Effect: Offer a fae bargain. Target must choose: accept (both gain +1 die to fulfill terms this scene) or refuse (mark 1 Stress [Hearts]).

Push It: Seal it in glamour—betrayal inflicts Harm 1 (Stress) and begins a “Bargain Broken [4]” clock.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Courtly Guise [VEIL] (Low, 4 XP) *Action; Self; Yes (social only).* **Materials:** Pin a sprig or silver thread.

Effect: Subtle glamour: +1 die to Persuade/Sway in refined settings; you appear as expected rank/guest.

Push It: Mask one personal tell; the first probing question in scene generates 1 SB (Hearts).

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Token of Favor (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Near; No. Materials:* A ribbon, ring, or charm bestowed.

Effect: Ally gains +1 die to social actions before witnesses; you gain +1 Effect when aiding them.

Push It: The token stills hecklers (one beat of hesitation), but you mark +1 Exposure.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Mirror of Motives (Standard, 7 XP) *Action; Near; No. Materials:* A polished shard or mirror.

Effect: Ask one sharp question about a target's immediate social aim; Keeper reveals it. Gain +1 die exploiting it this scene.

Push It: Also surface a concealed slight or insult; generate 1 SB (Hearts) on that target.

Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).

The Price Agreed [OATH] (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Near; No. Materials:* Exchange equal tokens.

Effect: Bind a petty bargain. Breach forces 1 SB (Hearts or Diamonds) and tarnishes reputation.

Push It: Add a minor boon (+1 die once) to sweeten terms; you suffer 1 SB (Hearts) if the other breaches.

Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Sovereign Glamour [VEIL][REVEAL] (High, 11 XP) *Scene; Zone; No. Materials:* A circle of silk or green felt.

Effect: Establish Court: allies gain +1 die to social rolls; blunt threats suffer -1 die. Once, strip

away one disguise/illusion.

Push It: Name a Court Law (e.g. “no steel drawn”); first violator suffers 2 SB.

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).

Obligation: 6 segments.

Mab’s Corruption Table

| Tier | Gift | Burden |
|------|--|--|
| 1 | Glamour’s Touch: +1 die to Deception or Performance when telling stories or lies. | Cannot speak a plain falsehood; only mislead through implication or wordplay. |
| 2 | Fairy Step: Once per scene, flicker Near as if by teleport. | Cold Iron Weakness: Suffer 1 Fatigue if touched or struck by iron. |
| 3 | Trickster’s Delight: Spend 1 Boon to twist a Complication into comic or ironic advantage. | Compulsive Jest: Must play a trick each session or mark 1 SB (Hearts). |
| 4 | Gift of Hospitality: Allies who share your food/drink gain +1 die to Resolve rolls. | Hospitality Bound: Harming those who accept it costs +2 Obligation. |
| 5 | Fae Sight: Perceive invisible doors, veils, glammers; +2 dice to Notice them. | Truth Debt: Must accept any “fair” trade offered, or mark 1 Fatigue resisting. |
| 6+ | Crown of Twilight: Once/session, declare an Oath. All rolls toward that Oath gain +2 dice. | Oathbound: Breaking it inflicts 1 Harm (Stress) and begins an “Oathbreaker [6]” clock. |

Maelstraeus, The Infernal Bargainer (Commerce & Exchange)

Lore. Maelstraeus is the Infernal Bargainer, the Prince of Ledgers, the shadow at every crossroads of exchange. He was born from the first inequity, when one gave and another took, and debt was chained into existence.

He does not trade fairly—he trades **inevitably**. Every pact carries a hidden surcharge, every kindness is collateral, every smile hides an interest rate. His realm is an endless market where stalls never close, contracts burn with invisible ink, and every bargain tilts toward him.

To serve Maelstraeus is to admit the world itself is transactional—that all things, from love to breath to soul, are bound in his ledger. He collects. He always collects.

A deal is never even. The scales tilt; the Merchant smiles. All debts come due.

Rite of Uneven Scales (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Near; No. Materials:* A scale where one pan is shaved or weighted.

Effect: Establish a trading ground. All parties gain +1 die to negotiate—but you bank a [4] *Hidden Profit* clock to spend reducing complications in your favor.

Push It: Compel one party to reveal their desperation or hidden term; mark 1 SB (Hearts).

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Merchant's Gaze (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Self; No. Materials:* A coin pressed flat until its face is erased.

Effect: +2 dice to appraise goods, favors, or leverage. Create a [6] *Profit Margin* clock.

Push It: Perceive emotional or hidden value as well, but mark +1 Exposure and 1 SB (Diamonds).

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Weighted Contract [OATH] (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Near; No. Materials:* Two items, one secretly flawed.

Effect: Bind a bargain. Both sides gain +1 Effect if honored, but you may secretly shift 1 advantage in your favor. Create a [6] *Shrewd Bargain* clock.

Push It: Breaking terms lashes the weaker party with 1 SB (Hearts/Clubs).

Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Seared Seal [BIND] (Standard, 7 XP) *Scene; Touch; No. Materials:* A parchment scorched before stamping.

Effect: Bind an agreement. You gain +1 die to enforce; breakers suffer -2 dice in all dealings until next session. Create an [8] *Burned Ledger* clock.

Push It: Breach burns the sigil into the breaker's hand, inflicting Harm 1 and 1 SB (Spades).

Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Infernal Bazaar [WARD][COMMAND] (High, 13 XP) *Scene; Zone; No. Materials:* A canopy stitched from debtor's contracts.

Effect: Create a cursed market-zone. Allies gain +1 Effect on bargains and may reroll one failed negotiation. Enemies suffer -1 die to deception. Start a [10] *Predatory Market* clock.

Push It: Attract wealthy powers eager—and doomed—to deal. Mark 2 SB (Hearts/Clubs).

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).

Obligation: 7 segments.

Rite of the Cosmic Ledger [CLEANSE][CURSE] (**High, 14 XP**) *Extended; Self; No. Materials:* A book that writes entries in your blood.

Effect: Once/session, convert one resource into another (e.g. Boon → Fatigue, Obligation → SB). All trades tilt slightly in your favor. Start a [6] *Balance Owed* clock.

Push It: Make the trade brutally lopsided; create a [6] *Cosmic Debt* clock and mark 2 SB (Diamonds).

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).

Obligation: 8 segments.

Corruption of Maelstraeus

| Tier | Gift | Burden |
|------|---|--|
| 1 | Appraiser's Eye: +1 die to judge value in goods, favors, or leverage. | Transactional Reflex: Must assign a "cost" to every interaction; -1 die to selfless acts. |
| 2 | Sharp Dealer: Once/scene, reroll a failed bargain. | Compulsive Trade: Must haggle or strike a deal when value is present—even if destructive. |
| 3 | Merchant's Fortune: +1 die to predict or exploit markets. | Greed's Hunger: Suffer 1 Fatigue if you allow profit or advantage to pass untaken. |
| 4 | Infernal Credit: Once/session, call in a major favor (merchant prince, syndicate, guild). | Debt Anchor: Draw in exploitative offers; refusing marks 1 SB (Diamonds). |
| 5 | Price of Truth: Once/scene, see the hidden worth of any item, pact, or person. | Tagged by Price: See every being as a commodity; -1 die to genuine intimacy. |
| 6+ | Market Tyrant: Once/session, impose absolute dominance over a domain of trade; all exchanges bend to you. | Cosmic Recompense: Mark +2 Obligation; the universe exacts repayment in brutal, unexpected form. |

Mor'iraath, the Destroyer

Lore. Mor'iraath is the principle of absolute annihilation—the void that leaves no trace, no memory, no possibility of return. Where others corrupt or decay, Mor'iraath eliminates. His followers become agents of finality, wielding the power to unmake what others merely damage. He delights not in the process of destruction, but in the perfect moment of ceasing-to-be. To serve him is to embrace the beauty of endings and the power that comes from making things never have been.

Every treasure is fuel. Every pact is tinder. Ash is the only inheritance.

Rite of the Perfect Ending (Low, 4 XP) *Instant; Touch; No. Materials:* The final component of something (last brick, final word, closing signature).

Effect: Cause one small thing to cease existing entirely—no remains, no trace, no possibility of reconstruction. Gain +1 die to rolls involving finality or absolute conclusions.

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

Push It: Ending creates a beneficial void—gain 1 Boon as space opens for something else; mark 1 SB (Spades) as reality adjusts to the absence.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Unmaking Gaze (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Self; No. Materials:* A lens of obsidian or void-glass.

Effect: +2 dice to identify the precise weakness that will cause complete collapse. See the “breaking point” in any structure, plan, or construct. Next destructive action against the identified target gains +1 Effect.

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

Push It: Gaze becomes prophetic—see three possible endings for one target; choose which occurs but mark 1 SB (Diamonds) as fate resists your vision.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Cleansing Flame [AREA][VOID] (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Zone; No. Materials:* Fuel that was once part of what you intend to destroy.

Effect: Create a fire that burns not just substance but essence—what is consumed by this flame never existed. Zone becomes [VOID]—things that enter may cease to exist. Enemies suffer -2 dice to preservation/continuation actions.

Push It: Flame becomes selective—choose what is unmade and what remains; mark +1 Obligation as you assume judgment over existence itself.

Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Absolute Negation [BANISH][CURSE] (Standard, 7 XP) *Instant; Near; No. Materials:* The complete destruction of something that represents the target (lock for door, name for person, fragment for whole).

Effect: Target suffers -2 dice to resist any effect that would cause their non-existence. If reduced to Harm 0 by your actions, they are [BANISH]ed from all realities—they never were, never could be.

Push It: Negation becomes retroactive—target never existed in your presence; mark 2 SB (Hearts) as timeline rewrites around their absence.

Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Unraveling [WARD][CONSUME] (**High, 13 XP**) *Scene; Touch; No. Materials:* The foundational element of what you wish to unmake (keystone, cornerstone, source code).

Effect: Touch causes cascading dissolution—target and all things fundamentally connected to it begin immediate unmaking. Test DV = Complexity. Success: target and connections cease to exist. Partial: significant damage, accelerated decay. Miss: backlash, mark 2 SB.

Push It: Unraveling becomes contagious—similar things in Near range also begin unmaking; mark +2 Obligation.

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).

Obligation: 7 segments.

Rite of the Final Void [TRANSFORM][VOID] (**High, 14 XP**) *Extended; Zone; No. Materials:* Complete dedication of the space to Mor'iraath's principle of non-existence.

Effect: Zone becomes a pocket of absolute negation. Anything that enters ceases to exist after 1d4 rounds unless they make Spirit + Resolve test (DV 5) each round. Space itself becomes [VOID]—cannot be entered without risk of unmaking.

Push It: Void becomes permanent and expands at 1 segment per scene; mark Harm 2 and +3 Obligation as you become partially unmade yourself.

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).

Obligation: 8 segments.

Corruption of Mor'iraath

| Tier | Benefit | Cost / Quirk |
|------|--|---|
| 1 | Ending's Sight: +1 die to Notice when something is approaching its natural conclusion or final form. | Completion Anxiety: Must resist urge to "finish" things prematurely; suffer -1 die to rolls involving patience or process. |
| 2 | Perfect Strike: Once per scene, your destructive action gains +2 dice and ignores all resistance to ending/ceasing. | Destruction Proximity: Suffer 1 Fatigue when near things of personal value; their existence pains you. |
| 3 | Unmaking Touch: Gain +2 dice to rolls involving absolute destruction—no remains, no possibility of return. | Entropy Aura: Objects of value near you show signs of decay/premature aging; allies suffer -1 die to rolls involving cherished possessions. |
| 4 | Final Judgment: Once per session, declare one thing in Near range must make Spirit + Resolve test (DV 4) or cease to exist entirely. | Existential Hunger: Suffer -1 die to rolls involving creation, preservation, or continuation; you hunger to end what others would sustain. |

| | | |
|----|---|---|
| 5 | Principle of Negation: Once per session, unmake an abstract concept (hope, fear, memory) from a willing target. | Conceptual Erosion: Your presence causes ideas and beliefs to weaken; suffer -1 die to rolls requiring stable reality or consistent identity. |
| 6+ | Avatar of Unbeing: Once per session, become the living embodiment of non-existence. For one scene, anything you touch ceases to exist, but mark +3 Obligation and begin permanent <i>Unmaking Self</i> condition. | Void Incarnate: Mark +3 Obligation when using; risk becoming a permanent negation that must constantly unmake to maintain existence, eventually unmaking even yourself. |

Morag the Hag (Twilight Bargains & Cruel Transformations)

Lore. At the hearth's edge, at the forest's rim, where roads knot and waters meet—there dwells Morag. She is crone, maiden, and monster in turn: a crooked shadow stirring her pot of bones, a red-eyed huntress prowling borderlands, a kindly grandmother who smiles too long. Every tale told of her is true, though never complete. She teaches that every gift has teeth, every kindness a snare, and every oath a trap.

Her sigil is the twisted knot, shifting between a heart and a noose. The wise make offerings at her crossroads, for bargains struck in her name echo across generations. She gives the desperate exactly what they ask for, and the clever almost what they want.

“A promise is a rope—pull, and see who hangs.”

Rite of the Crooked Thread (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Touch; No. Materials:* A thread knotted three times while whispering a secret.

Effect: Entangle a small promise: the target suffers –1 die when acting against it. Breaking it creates 1 SB (Hearts).

Push It: The knot blackens and burns the breaker: inflict Harm 1 (Curse).

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Borrowed Face (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Self; No. Materials:* A crude mask of bark, clay, or wax.

Effect: Assume the likeness of one you've touched. Gain +2 dice to Deception. Acquaintances may test Insight (DV 3).

Push It: The original weakens (1 Fatigue) while you wear their likeness. Generate 1 SB (Spades).

Rite of Thorn and Blood [OATH][CURSE] (Standard, 8 XP) *Extended; Near; No. Materials:* Prick of blood from both parties on a thorn branch.

Effect: Bind a bargain. Breaking it inflicts Harm 2 (Curse) on the breaker and grants the other +1 die for a scene.

Push It: Breach also starts a “Doomed” clock [4] that only Morag can erase.

Requires: Familiar + Codex.

Rite of the Bone-Truth [REVEAL] (Standard, 7 XP) *Scene; Near; No. Materials:* A bone carved with runes.

Effect: Ask three questions; target must answer or mark 1 SB (Hearts).

Push It: Lies become impossible on those truths—attempting causes Harm 1 (Curse).

Requires: Familiar + Codex.

Rite of the Cauldron's Boil [TRANSFORM] (High, 13 XP) *Extended; Zone; No. Materials:* A cauldron, three strange ingredients, and a “price.”

Effect: Transform a body, place, or spell. Always lasting, always costly.

Push It: Transformation is perfect—but consequence is displaced to someone close, or begins a hidden clock.

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).

Morag's Corruption Table

| Tier | Benefit | Cost / Quirk |
|------|--|--|
| 1 | Witch-Sight: +1 die to Insight when reading motives or sensing magic. | Must speak ill-omens aloud when noticed, no matter how unwanted. |
| 2 | Bargain's Edge: Once per scene, twist odds in your favor (re-roll). | Must attempt to extract a "price" whenever value changes hands. |
| 3 | Hex-Tongue: Add +1 die when invoking spite, curse, or threat. | Laughter rings hollow: -1 die on rolls requiring warmth or sincerity. |
| 4 | Twilight Step: Step unseen through thresholds (Near once per scene). | Salt and bread bind you: accepting hospitality forces you to linger until dismissed. |
| 5 | Shadow Transformation: Briefly reshape into hag-beast (+2 dice intimidate/terrify). | Hunger gnaws: after each use, mark 1 Fatigue or consume raw flesh. |
| 6+ | Queen of Crossroads: Once per session, declare the terms of a bargain—resisted only by Resolve (DV 5). | Entangled Fate: Each use deepens her claim. Mark +2 Obligation; bargains thereafter always demand harsher terms. |

Mykkiel, Arbiter of the Covenant (Law & Zeal)

Lore. Mykkiel is the blazing sword of covenant, the Arbiter who carries both flame and oath into battle. He does not weigh from quiet benches but marches at the head of banners, binding word and deed in fire. His sigil—scales uplifted above a burning blade—flies from crusader hosts, war-tribunals, and oathbound sanctums from the Sapphire Marches to the Sunward Courts.

Mykkiel teaches that covenant is living fire, not parchment. Mercy without zeal festers into weakness; judgment without passion decays into tyranny. His followers are zealots and crusaders who bind communities by sacred flame, carrying verdicts into war and stamping oaths in iron. To break covenant under his gaze is to be seared by his fire, branded in flesh and soul alike.

Name the charge. Raise the banner. Where mercy falters, fire will march. The Covenant cannot be broken.

Rite of the Burning Banner (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Near; No. Materials:* A war-banner singed in sacred flame.

Effect: Project fiery zeal. Gain +1 die to Command/Sway when declaring a righteous cause; challengers suffer -1 die to resist. Create a 4-segment *Covenant Authority* clock that can be spent to downgrade a martial or covenant complication.

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

Push It: The banner blazes bright; mark *Exposure* +1 as rival zealots or higher powers take notice. *Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

Rite of Hallowed Ground (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Near; No. Materials:* Ash, salt, or blood cast in a circle with covenant chants.

Effect: Consecrate a space (altar, gate, battlefield). The first hostile act committed there suffers -1 die. Create a 6-segment *Hallowed Zone* clock protecting the area.

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

Push It: Name a sacred act (parley, surrender, testimony), granting +1 Effect within the zone. Breaking sanctity generates 1 SB (Hearts) and brands the violator in covenant fire.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Blazing Decree [COMMAND] (Standard, 7 XP) *Instant; Near; No. Materials:* A heated iron brand, quenched as the command is spoken.

Effect: Issue a fiery command ("Kneel," "Yield," "Confess"). Target must comply or suffer a stated cost; DV by fiction (elites may test Resolve). On success, create a 4-segment *Covenant Decree* token to auto-succeed on a similar order later.

Push It: On compliance, impose -1 die on the target's next hostile act; the decree sets precedent—mark 1 SB (Spades).

Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Flame-Seal [BIND] (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Near; No. Materials:* Wax dripped from a torch and sealed with the Arbiter's sigil.

Effect: Sanctify a declaration (truce, claim, sentence). Contradictors suffer -1 die; you gain +1 die to enforce. If broken, the oath-breaker suffers Harm 1 (Sacred Fire) and -2 dice to rolls with zealots for one session. Create an 8-segment *Flame-Seal* clock.

Push It: Once, ask who intends breach; the Keeper grants a clue or a name. Mark 1 SB (Diamonds)

as the covenant fire hunts all deceivers.

Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Iron Covenant [OATH][WARD] (**High, 12 XP**) *Extended; Near; No. Materials:*

Two iron spikes heated white, pressed to wrists, quenched in water.

Effect: Bind two parties in a covenant oath. Breach forces 2 SB and brands a faint iron-mark until atonement. The oath is [BIND]ed to both; breaking it imposes -2 dice to all formal dealings for one session. Create a 6-segment *Sacred Oath* clock.

Push It: Extend to a circle (up to four), each choosing one narrow exception (Keeper approves). Exploiting an exception generates 1 SB (Diamonds) as zealots and magistrates pass judgment.

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).

Obligation: 7 segments.

Rite of the Covenant's Fire [CLEANSE][CURSE] (**High, 13 XP**) *Extended; Near; No. Materials:*

A scroll of covenant inked in blood, burned at its edges, sealed with iron.

Effect: Deliver a searing verdict. Target tests Spirit+Resolve (DV 5); on failure, full sentence applies without appeal. On success, limited appeal is possible, but they suffer -2 dice on appeals for one arc. Create a 10-segment *Blazing Verdict* clock shaping all proceedings involving them.

Push It: Make the verdict absolute; create 2 SB (Hearts/Spades) as rivals rise in rebellion against divine law.

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).

Obligation: 7 segments.

Mykkiel's Corruption Table

| Tier | Benefit | Cost / Quirk |
|------|--|---|
| 1 | Zealot's Sight: +1 die to Insight when sensing oath-breaking or hidden betrayal. | Unbending Tongue: Must denounce visible transgressions, even at personal cost. |
| 2 | Voice of Fire: Once per scene, treat a failed Command or decree as a success, but mark 1 SB (Hearts). | Fanatic's Drive: Cannot ignore a chance to confront corruption; hesitating marks 1 Fatigue. |
| 3 | Banner of Conviction: Gain +2 dice when rallying allies or pressing zeal against foes branded as impure. | Merciless Flame: Suffer 1 Fatigue whenever you show mercy where wrath is expected. |
| 4 | Crusader's Oath: Once per session, make a declaration so binding that targets must test Resolve (DV 4) or yield. | Iron Blindness: -1 die to rolls requiring compromise, subtlety, or empathy. |

| | | |
|----|--|--|
| 5 | Arbiter's Radiance: Once per session, expose all falsehoods or fear in your foes for one exchange. | Burning Isolation: -1 die to social rolls requiring warmth, trust, or intimacy. |
| 6+ | Wrath Incarnate: Once per session, render a decree absolute; all must comply or suffer supernatural retribution. | Consuming Fire: Mark +2 Obligation when invoking this power; the fire sears allies and innocents alongside the guilty. |

Nidhoggr, the World-Worm (Dreaming Antiquity)

Lore. Beneath stone and sleep coils **Nidhoggr**, who gnaws at the roots of time. He does not speak quickly; he dreams in centuries. To press your ear to the earth is to risk drowning in the silence of aeons. Yet for those who endure, he whispers truths long buried, memories fossilized in stone, and the slow inevitability of cycles unbroken. His followers walk in twilight between dream and ruin, bearing the weight of all that has been.

Press your ear to the earth and wait. If it remembers you, it will answer.

Glimpse the Ancient's Shadow (Low, 4 XP) *Action; Self; No.*

Materials: Dust ground from a weathered stone.

Effect: +1 die to interpret *ancient* places, scripts, or artifacts; once this scene, ask one yes/no about the site's original purpose.

Push It: Gain +1 Effect, but mark *Fatigue 1* as stone's patience weighs on you.

Requires: Familiar.

Drink from the Dreaming Deep (Low, 5 XP) *Instant; Self; No.*

Materials: Water poured over stone, swallowed with eyes closed.

Effect: Learn one hidden fact about the locale's past; GM may reveal through echo or dream.

Push It: The vision lingers too clearly—gain an additional detail, but mark Exposure +1 and 1 SB (Clubs).

Requires: Familiar.

Stone-Sleeper's Murmur (Standard, 7 XP) *Scene; Near (touch locus); No.*

Materials: Ear pressed to bedrock, wall, or pillar.

Effect: Ask up to 3 questions about events once imprinted in this stone; answers are fragmentary but true.

Push It: One answer is delivered with precise sensory clarity; generate 1 SB (suit by Keeper).

Requires: Familiar + Codex.

Awakened Chronicle (Standard, 9 XP) *Ritual; Zone; No.*

Materials: Chalk spiral and four local touchstones.

Effect: The zone replays a past moment in spectral echoes, visible to all. Witnesses gain +2 dice to Investigate/Recall about it.

Push It: Invoke a second memory from a different age; mark +1 Obligation.

Requires: Familiar + Codex.

Dive into the World-Worm's Dream (High, 12 XP) *Scene; Self; No.*

Materials: Circle of stones under open sky, lain upon in stillness.

Effect: Ask up to 3 questions about the *distant past* or *buried truths* here. Answers come as lucid dreams and omens.

Push It: The dream stretches into prophecy: gain +3 dice to one occult action, but mark 2 SB immediately.

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III.

Obligation: 7 segments.

Eclipse of Aeons (High, 14 XP) *Extended; Zone; No.*

Materials: Stones from three ruins aligned in a circle.

Effect: Submerge a zone in deep-time resonance. For one session, history bleeds into present: ruins reform, shadows of the dead walk, and forgotten oaths stir. Allies gain +2 dice to Recall, Divination, or Investigation; enemies suffer -1 die when relying on the present alone.

Push It: The bleed becomes permanent until countered; mark +2 Obligation and start an 8-segment *Time Fracture* clock.

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III.

Obligation: 8 segments.

Nidhoggr's Corruption Table

| Tier | Benefit | Cost / Quirk |
|------|--|--|
| 1 | Ancient Sight: +1 die to Lore when reading ruins or relics. | Temporal Drift: Speak or think in archaic patterns; -1 die in modern social dealings. |
| 2 | Stone Memory: Once/session, recall one precise fact of history as if witnessed. | Heavy Mind: Suffer 1 Fatigue when confronted with lies or distortions of history. |
| 3 | Earth's Whisper: +2 dice to Notice when listening to stone or soil. | Root-Bound: -1 die to aerial or swift actions; feel tethered to ground. |
| 4 | Dreaming Insight: Once/scene, gain +1 die to actions tied to ancient mysteries. | Haunted Sleep: Dreams replay past ages; mark 1 SB (Clubs) if rest is denied. |
| 5 | World-Worm's Gaze: Once/session, see through the earth to a distant ancient site. | Slow Pulse: -1 die to reactions requiring haste; act with ponderous inevitability. |
| 6+ | Aeons of Memory: Once/session, touch stone to access the full record of a place. Gain +3 dice to historical investigation. | Overload: Mark +2 Obligation and suffer 1 Harm (Stress); visions leave you vulnerable until they fade. |

The Ninth (Void & Erasure)

Lore. The Ninth is the principle of absence made manifest—the space between thoughts, the silence between words, the gap where meaning should be. It doesn’t destroy; it reveals what was never there. Those who serve the Ninth learn that reality is mostly illusion, held together by attention and belief. In the gaps, power waits.

Beyond the eighth Rim lies only silence. But silence has teeth, and forgetting has weight.

Rite of the Missing Piece (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Near; No.* **Materials:** A deliberate omission (unsaid word, unmade mark, unfilled space).

Effect: Create one “Gap” token—a specific absence others ignore. You gain +1 die when exploiting this gap (sneaking through ignored door, using forgotten path). Allies can spend Boon to treat one failed roll as “never happened” (retcon).

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

Push It: Gap becomes contagious—similar absences appear; mark 1 SB (Spades).

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Unmapped Path (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Self/Zone; No.* **Materials:** Walk without leaving trace or mark path with erasable signs.

Effect: Gain [VOID] tag for this scene. Allies moving silently gain +1 die. Create 4-segment *Unmapped Territory* clock (can be spent to make pursuers lose trail).

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

Push It: Path loops back on itself; pursuers must test Wits (DV 3) or become lost.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Hollowed Shell [VOID] (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Touch; No.* **Materials:** Object with symbolic meaning (wedding ring, contract, key).

Effect: Object becomes [HOLLOW]—loses all magical/social significance. Target suffers -1 die on rolls involving that object’s purpose. You gain +1 die when acting as if the object never existed.

Push It: Hollowing spreads to related objects; mark 1 SB (Clubs).

Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Calculated Absence (Standard, 7 XP) *Scene; Zone; No.* **Materials:** Remove one significant element (light source, leader, key witness).

Effect: Zone gains [GAP] tag. Enemies suffer -1 die to coordination rolls. You gain +1 die when exploiting the absence. Start 6-segment *Strategic Void* clock (can downgrade complications).

Push It: Absence creates cascading gaps; mark 1 SB (Diamonds).

Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Entropic Bloom [UNWARD][DISPEL] (High, 13 XP) *Scene; Zone; No.* **Materials:** Nine items arranged in diminishing pattern, then erased.

Effect: Zone becomes [ERODED]—all [WARD]s, minor enchantments, and artificial constructs suffer -2 dice. Reality becomes “leaky”—information bleeds in/out.

Push It: Erosion becomes permanent; mark 2 SB (Spades/Clubs).

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).

Obligation: 7 segments.

Rite of Perfect Stillness [WARD] (**High, 14 XP**) *Extended; Self/Zone; No. Materials:* Seal all sensory inputs (blindfold, earplugs, isolation chamber).

Effect: Enter [STILL] state. Immune to all social/magical effects but cannot act. Others in zone suffer -2 dice to perception. Can “pause” scene for later activation.

Push It: Stillness becomes contagious; willing targets can join but mark +1 Obligation each.

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).

Obligation: 8 segments.

The Ninth’s Corruption Table

| Tier | Benefit | Cost / Quirk |
|------|---|---|
| 1 | Gap Sense: +1 die to Notice when something important is missing or has been altered. | Blind Spot: Occasionally fail to notice obvious present details while focusing on absences. |
| 2 | Retcon Moment: Once per scene, declare one minor action “never happened” (undo one failed roll). | Memory Lag: Suffer 1 Fatigue when recalling recent events clearly. |
| 3 | Hollow Presence: Gain [VOID] tag naturally; +2 dice to Stealth and deception through omission. | Social Transparency: Suffer -1 die to emotional connection rolls; people sense your “emptiness.” |
| 4 | Erosion Field: Once per session, make a small area or concept become [ERODED] for one scene. | Reality Leaks: Suffer -1 die to rolls requiring stable reality; occasionally lose track of present moment. |
| 5 | Ninth’s Insight: Once per session, see the “gaps” in any plan, story, or structure and exploit them automatically. | Identity Drift: Difficulty maintaining consistent personality; suffer -1 die to rolls requiring personal certainty. |
| 6+ | Perfect Absence: Once per session, create a temporary [VOID] zone where specific concepts, memories, or beings simply cease to exist for one scene. | Cosmic Erosion: Mark +2 Obligation when using; risk permanent loss of core aspects of self/relationships to the void. |

Oath of Flame & Light (Dawn & Vows)

Lore. The Oath of Flame & Light is no patron of half-measures. Its fire names, binds, and burns—demanding that those who swear within its radiance stand openly, speak truly, and pay the cost of keeping their word. At dawn altars, the sworn kindle sparks of consecrated fire; in battle, they blaze as torches that hold back the night. To follow this Oath is to live in public truth, with no shadow to hide in and no retreat from the vow once spoken.

The Oath appears in many guises across cultures:

- **The Everflame** — the unquenchable fire of promise, carried from shrine to shrine by wandering priests.
- **Adur**, the Light of Aeler — worshiped as the sun’s church-deity, whose flame consecrates oaths and consumes falsehood.
- **Adar**, the Vilikari Dawnfire — invoked as a war-god of vows and vengeance, whose rising light marks those who break faith.
- Others know the Oath only as *the Flame* or *the Watchfire*, a nameless fire that still demands truth and punishes betrayal.

Wherever it manifests, the Oath of Flame & Light remains the same unyielding power: to swear beneath its dawn is to bind one’s self to a truth that cannot be hidden, forgotten, or undone.

“Swear in the light. Keep it, or the light will keep *you*.”

Kindle Vow (Low, 4 XP) *Action; Self/Ally; Yes.*

Materials: A glass ampoule of consecrated flame cracked to spark.

Effect: Declare a short vow for this scene (*hold the gate, shield the weak*). The bearer gains +1 die to any action fulfilling it.

Push It: The first hesitation or betrayal *forces 1 SB (Hearts)* on the bearer.

Requires: Familiar.

Lay on Hands [CLEANSE][HEAL] (Low, 5 XP) *Instant; Touch; No.*

Materials: Bare palm pressed to the wound while whispering a vow.

Effect: Cleanse one affliction, downgrade Harm by 1, or remove Fatigue 1. For deep curses or poisons, test Resolve (DV by fiction).

Push It: Target gains +1 die to their next Resist this scene, but you mark Exposure +1.

Requires: Familiar.

Sunlit Parley (Standard, 7 XP) *Scene; Near; No.*

Materials: A vow-ring engraved with a sunrise and a true name.

Effect: Establish terms in the open light: honest persuasion gains +1 die; deceit suffers –1 die in this parley.

Push It: Demand one public answer; evasion *forces 1 SB (Hearts)* on the evader.

Requires: Familiar + Codex.

Radiant Smite [FOLLOW-UP] (Standard, 8 XP) *Action; Self; No.*

Materials: Consecrated spark smeared on a weapon or badge.

Effect: Your next melee strike this scene flares with dawnfire: upgrade Effect by one step, and add +1 Harm (Burn) *or* force 1 SB (Spades) if narrative.

Special: Against undead, oath-breakers, or outsiders: sears them with light—oath-breakers suffer

–1 die, outsiders gain +1 Exit Tally segment.

Push It: On hit, burst of light drives back enemies in Close (worse Position or –1 die). Mark +1 Obligation.

Requires: Familiar + Codex.

Purge the Shadow [REVEAL][DISPEL] (**Standard, 9 XP**) *Instant; Near; No.*

Materials: A consecrated spark shattered to light.

Effect: Reveal illusions and suppress one ongoing glamour/curse in Near.

Push It: Brand the source with a visible tell for this arc; mark 1 SB (Diamonds).

Requires: Familiar + Codex.

Covenant Blaze [OATH][FORTIFY] (**High, 12 XP**) *Scene; Zone; No.*

Materials: A brazier lit while three names are spoken.

Effect: Those who swear within are haloed: +1 die to keep the oath; aggressors against them suffer –1 die if violating the terms. Oath-breakers suffer 2 SB (Hearts/Spades) and Harm 1 (Burn).

Push It: The blaze sanctifies the threshold: one beat of [WARD] against oath-breakers entering.

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III.

Obligation: 7 segments.

Oath of Flame & Light Corruption Table

| Tier | Benefit | Cost / Quirk |
|------|--|--|
| 1 | Oathbound Strength: +1 die when upholding a vow or defending the innocent. | Rigid Honor: Must uphold vows even when disadvantageous; suffer –1 die when acting flexibly. |
| 2 | Radiant Sight: Once/scene, +2 dice to pierce lies, glammers, or corruption. | Blinding Truth: –1 die on subtlety or deception; cannot easily feign. |
| 3 | Holy Flame: +1 die on melee vs. undead, outsiders, or oath-breakers. | Burden of Light: Suffer Fatigue 1 when concealing identity or working in darkness. |
| 4 | Unwavering Resolve: Once/session, treat failed Resolve/Command as success; mark 1 SB (Hearts). | Absolutist Stance: –1 die in morally ambiguous dealings. |
| 5 | Dawn's Benediction: Once/session, heal allies within Near of Fatigue 1 and minor Conditions. | Beacon's Call: Your aura reveals you; enemies seeking you gain +1 die. |

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| 6+ | Avatar of the Oath: | Burden of Radiance: | Mark |
| | Once/session, embody | +2 Obligation when used; the | |
| | living covenant—gain +2 dice | light makes you a beacon for | |
| | to all protection, justice, or | foes and trials alike. | |
| | vow-keeping rolls. Breaking | | |
| | any vow inflicts Harm 2 | | |
| | (Burn). | | |

The Pale Shepherd (Thresholds & Liminality)

Lore. Among the Aelaerem, the Pale Shepherd is revered as the quiet guardian of thresholds—the watcher who keeps vigil at the borders of life and death, waking and sleep, memory and forgetting, the mortal world and the Ways Between. Neither wholly merciful nor cruel, the Shepherd tends to the lost, the dying, and all who wander too far from their destined road.

They appear as a figure in pale, weathered robes, often faceless or hidden beneath a hood, accompanied by a flock of shadow-sheep whose wool holds fragments of forgotten dreams and discarded futures. Their sigil is a white ram's skull, wreathed in drifting mist.

The Shepherd speaks rarely, and when they do, their words arrive as riddles that answer questions not yet asked. They are invoked by those who must cross liminal spaces—travelers at dusk, mourners at gravesides, or seekers of paths that should not exist. To receive their aid is to accept a price: a memory relinquished, or a thread of one's fate left behind.

Those who follow the Pale Shepherd learn to walk unseen paths, to guide others through sorrow, and to find light in the most desolate crossings. Yet prolonged devotion leaves the faithful marked by a deep melancholia, for they carry the weight of every passage and the echo of every loss.

Rite of the Gentle Passing (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Touch; No. Materials:* a lock of hair from the dying or a drop of water blessed at crossroads.

Effect: Grant peace to one dying or troubled person. They suffer no additional Harm or stress this scene and may take one final, meaningful action. Gain +1 die to related Comfort/Healing rolls.

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

Push It: Their passing leaves a beneficial omen or their words carry supernatural weight; mark 1 SB (Diamonds).

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Crossroads Whisper (Low, 5 XP) *Instant; Self; No. Materials:* a stone from a crossroads carried in the mouth for one hour.

Effect: Gain +1 die to Navigate/Investigate at crossroads (literal or metaphorical). Ask one yes/no question about the "correct" path; the Keeper answers truthfully.

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

Push It: The path becomes supernaturally clear for one scene, but generate 1 SB (Clubs) as liminal forces take notice.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Shadow Flock [PASSAGE][VEIL] (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Near; No. Materials:* wool from a black sheep and mist collected at dawn.

Effect: Summon 3–5 shadow-sheep (Cap 1–2) that can guide through labyrinthine spaces, carry small items, or provide cover [VEIL].

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

Push It: One sheep carries a person's shadow for a scene, obscuring them, but mark 1 SB (Spades) as disorientation sets in.

Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Memory Corral [REVEAL][BIND] (Standard, 7 XP) *Scene; Zone; No. Materials:* a circle of salt mixed with ash from burned letters.

Effect: Contain lost or suppressed memories. Affected must test Resolve (DV 3) or recall a forgotten memory (Keeper decides). Gain +1 die to related Investigation rolls.

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

Push It: Memories gain semi-autonomy and answer directly, but mark +1 Obligation and 1 SB (Hearts).

Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Threshold Covenant [OATH][WARD] (**High, 13 XP**) *Extended; Touch; No.*

Materials: a burned door-frame, a lock of hair from each party, and water blessed by loss.

Effect: Bind two parties in covenant tied to a threshold. While honored: +1 Effect on threshold actions. Breaking the oath inflicts Harm 2 (Stress/Loss) and blocks crossing for one scene.

Invoke: Extended ritual; mark +2 Obligation.

Push It: Becomes permanent and geographic (affecting descendants or that place); mark +2 Obligation.

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).

Obligation: 7 segments.

Rite of the Shepherd's Mercy [CLEANSE][HEAL] (**High, 14 XP**) *Scene; Touch; No.*

Materials: the last breath of someone who died peacefully, kept in unworked silver.

Effect: Remove one Condition or reduce Harm by two levels. May allow a dying person one final conscious action.

Invoke: 1 action; mark +3 Obligation.

Push It: Healing is permanent, but the cost transfers—a loved one suffers Harm or calamity strikes; mark 2 SB (Hearts/Clubs).

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).

Obligation: 8 segments.

The Pale Shepherd's Corruption Table

| Tier | Benefit | Cost / Quirk |
|------|--|--|
| 1 | Threshold Sense: +1 die to Notice when detecting liminal spaces, crossroads, or transition points. | Melancholic Presence: Suffer -1 die to social rolls involving joy or celebration; others feel somber in your presence. |
| 2 | Gentle Guidance: Once per scene, grant +1 die to an ally making a difficult choice or transition. | Compulsive Shepherding: Must attempt to guide or comfort those in distress, even when inappropriate or dangerous. |
| 3 | Shadow's Comfort: Gain +2 dice to rolls involving death, dying, or comforting the terminally ill. | Death's Attraction: Suffer 1 Fatigue when in places of great joy or celebration; the contrast is painful. |

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| 4 | Memory Keeper: Once per session, recall a forgotten memory or piece of lost knowledge with perfect clarity. | Burden of Sorrows: Suffer -1 die to rolls requiring optimism or hope; the weight of endings clouds your vision. |
| 5 | Liminal Walker: Once per session, find or create a path through any barrier, maze, or confusing situation. | Between Worlds: Suffer -1 die to rolls requiring grounding in the present moment; feel disconnected from immediate reality. |
| 6+ | Shepherd of Souls: Once per session, become the absolute guide for any transition—death, transformation, or crossing. All present gain +2 dice to related actions, but you must bear the emotional weight of their passage. | Soul's Burden: Mark +2 Obligation when using this power; risk permanent Harm (Stress) and become vulnerable to spiritual attacks until the transition completes. |

Palinode, Queen of Encores (Performance & Rapture)

Lore. Once a road-cantor who swore to reconcile feuding towns with procession and song, Palinode died between feasts with a chorus unfinished. Yet the refrain refused to end: it braided toasts, hymns, work-chants, and tavern rounds into a living current that still coils through markets and moots. Where a crowd leans forward and a maker holds breath, she arrives.

Signs. A cup that never quite empties; a candle that gutters only when silence reigns; a flawless bar or note that the hand cannot forget.

Cantor's Temptation. Palinode promises relief from solitude: an audience that always leans closer, a song that never dies, a bond that feels like family even if it devours you. Her rites grant the Cantor not only power but belonging—at the cost of their voice becoming more hers than their own.

Whispered in Taverns. “*When she sang, the rafters bent to hear.*” “*Drink deep: the cup returns, but never empty.*” “*Encore is not request but command.*”

Hymn Against Dread (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Near; Resist only.* **Materials:** A lit taper or bell.

Effect: Begin a hymn or chant. Allies Near gain +2 dice to resist Fear this scene. On a 10, they may ignore Fear entirely for one round.

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 **Obligation**.

Push It: Allies who benefit also clear 1 Fatigue or Complication Point; you gain 1 Fatigue at the scene's end.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Single True Note (Low, 5 XP) *Instant; Self; No.* **Materials:** A note held until your voice frays.

Effect: For one scene you cannot produce an imperfect sound: all performance rolls +2 dice. All other rolls –1 die from intrusive perfection.

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 **Obligation**.

Push It: Extend to one ally; both mark **Exposure +1**.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Circling Cup (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Zone; No.* **Materials:** A shared cup and a round all know.

Effect: Create a revelry zone: participants gain +1 die to social rolls; Fatigue recovers at twice normal rate. Time blurs.

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 **Obligation**.

Push It: Leaving requires Resolve (DV 3) or another hour within; mark 1 **SB (Hearts)** as the revelry grows a will.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Binding Hands [BIND] (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Self; No.* **Materials:** Your hair woven into your instrument or tool.

Effect: Enter ruthless focus: creative rolls +2 dice; ignore first 2 Fatigue from exertion. You are [BIND] to the piece until completion or ruin.

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 **Obligation**.

Push It: One ally is also bound; both mark 1 **SB (Diamonds)**.

Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Hooked Chorus [COMMAND] (Standard, 7 XP) *Scene; Near; No. Materials:* A melody braided from the listener's secret want.

Effect: Presence + Command vs. Resolve (DV 3). Success: target joins in. Partial: they resist but –1 die to social rolls this scene. Failure: they follow entranced.

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 **Obligation**.

Push It: Affects all in Near; start **Compelled Audience** [6].

Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Consecrated Stage [WARD][FOLLOW-UP] (High, 13 XP) *Extended; Zone; No. Materials:* A stage kissed with the blood of sworn singers.

Effect: Hallow a venue. All performances +2 dice, +1 Effect. The space is [WARD]ed: any disruption spawns 2 SB. The ward collapses if the performance ends.

Invoke: Extended ritual; mark +2 **Obligation**.

Push It: The stage sustains itself but drains life; start **Performance Hunger** [8].

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).

Obligation: 7 segments.

Rite of the Crownpiece [TRANSFORM][CURSE] (High, 14 XP) *Extended; Touch; No. Materials:* Your greatest work and regret, destroyed together.

Effect: Birth a transcendent masterpiece: +2 dice to creative rolls this session; immune to social manipulation. But all lesser works falter.

Invoke: Extended ritual; mark +3 **Obligation**.

Push It: The piece wakes and demands; mark Harm 1 (Stress); start **Demanding Creation** [6].

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).

Obligation: 8 segments.

Palinode's Corruption Table

| Tier | Gift | Corruption |
|------|--|--|
| 1 | Perfect Pitch: +1 die to Performance. | Restless Ear: Distracted by any flaw; –1 die to non-performance focus. |
| 2 | Rapturous Presence: Once per scene, grant allies +1 die to social rolls. | Craves Applause: Suffer 1 Fatigue if ignored or without audience. |
| 3 | Inspired Creation: +2 dice to one artistic act per scene. | Haunted by Drafts: Must obsessively rework; delays other actions. |
| 4 | Mesmerizing Performance: Once per session, captivate a crowd (DV 4 Resolve to resist). | Lost in the Moment: –1 die to awareness while performing. |

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| 5 | Artistic Vision: Foresee perfect form of a work; +2 dice to create it. | Consumed Spark: Must pursue inspiration immediately, no matter cost. |
| 6+ | Queen of Encores: Once per session, create a legendary performance; all present +3 dice to social rolls. | Eternal Encore: Mark +3 Obligation; the performance demands endless repetition until sated. |

Raéyn, Mistress of the Sea (Tides & Change)

Lore. Raéyn is the tempestuous goddess of the sea, the restless tide that carries news between shores and the promise of change between lives. She is mother to all who sail, her voice the wind that fills sails and her moods the storms that test every mariner's resolve.

But Raéyn's heart is torn by her greatest tragedy: her son Khemesh, the Kraken of the Depths, who embodies the crushing inevitability of the ocean's dark heart. Where Raéyn brings change and opportunity, Khemesh brings the final, inescapable pressure that grinds all things to nothing. Sailors pray to Raéyn for safe passage and favorable winds, but whisper Khemesh's name when seeking to lay the dead to rest beneath the waves.

Raéyn is passionate, mercurial, and fiercely protective of those who respect her domain. She favors those who read currents, bargain with weather, and carry news between shores. But cross her, and the sea itself becomes your enemy: fair weather turns to fury, and every wave a judgment.

Mark the tide, name your course, and trust the wave-road. But speak ill of Khemesh, and even I may let the deep take you.

Rite of the Tidemark's Blessing (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Self; No. Materials:* A knotted length of salt-twine brushed with seawater.

Effect: Treat slick, swaying, or water-slicked footing as stable for you this scene. Gain +1 die on boarding, balance, or shipboard movement. Create a 4-segment *Tide's Favor* clock that can be spent to ignore one level of difficult terrain.

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

Push It: Extend to one ally in Close for one beat, but generate 1 SB (Spades: shifting deck/hazards). *Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

Rite of the Whispering Currents (Low, 5 XP) *Instant; Self; No. Materials:* A shell held to the ear while facing the wind.

Effect: Learn the safest near-term route across water or coastline (reefs, eddies, patrols) or gain +1 die to navigation checks for this scene. If Khemesh's influence is present, suffer -1 die from conflicting currents.

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

Push It: Also learn the fastest route, but mark Exposure +1 (leaving a telltale wake).

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Changing Tide [PASSAGE] (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Zone (water-adjacent); No. Materials:* A handful of pebbles cast in a crescent.

Effect: Bias currents and water levels in the zone. Those moving with the tide gain +1 die; those moving against suffer -1 die. Small craft must test to hold position. Create a 6-segment *Tidal Influence* clock.

Push It: Brief surge or drawdown (one beat): open a ford or swamp a skiff; mark +1 Obligation. *Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).*

Rite of the Wave-Road Blessing [WARD] (Standard, 7 XP) *Scene; Route (sea-to-sea); No. Materials:* Two sea-glass markers dropped overboard at start and end.

Effect: Consecrate a wave-road between two visible points. Allies gain +2 dice on travel, evade, or carry actions at sea. Designated pursuers suffer -1 die to intercept. One active wave-road at a time. Create an 8-segment *Blessed Passage* clock.

Push It: Extend the route's favor to an adjacent leg for one beat; mark +1 Obligation.

Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Storm-Queen's Hand [AREA][FOLLOW-UP] (**High, 13 XP**) *Scene; Zone (sea/shore/sky); No.* **Materials:** A vial of rainwater gathered at three crossings.

Effect: Shape a storm-band over the zone. Choose two modes at cast; switch one once per scene:

- **Propulsion:** Vessel gains +1 band of movement per beat (or +1 Effect to maneuvers).
- **Concealment:** Veil of rain/spray; ranged targeting impaired; -1 die to hostile sighting.
- **Smite:** Once per beat, lash with wave or lightning as [AREA] hazard.

Invoke: 1 action; mark +2 Obligation.

Push It: Add a third mode for one beat, then GM spends 1 SB on collateral; mark +1 Obligation.

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).

Obligation: 7 segments.

Rite of the Mother's Wrath [BANISH][CURSE] (**High, 14 XP**) *Extended; Zone; No.* **Materials:** Tears of a betrayed lover mixed with salt from seven seas.

Effect: Curse those who wronged you. Target suffers -2 dice to maritime/weather rolls for one session. At sea, they must roll Spirit + Resolve (DV 4) each day or suffer Harm 1 (Weather). Create a 6-segment *Mother's Ire* clock.

Push It: Curse spreads to target's allies/family; mark 2 SB (Diamonds).

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).

Obligation: 7 segments.

Raéyn's Corruption Table

| Tier | Benefit | Cost / Quirk |
|------|--|--|
| 1 | Sailor's Instinct: +1 die to Navigation and maritime survival rolls. | Sea-Sick on Land: Suffer -1 die to rolls requiring prolonged time away from water or open spaces. |
| 2 | Tide's Favor: Once per scene, treat a failed maritime or weather-related roll as a success, but mark 1 SB (Clubs). | Weather Sensitive: Must make a Resolve test (DV 3) to resist acting on every weather change or maritime opportunity. |
| 3 | Storm's Child: Gain +2 dice to rolls involving weather manipulation or sea-based combat. | Tempestuous Nature: Suffer 1 Fatigue when denied access to open water or weather changes for extended periods. |
| 4 | Mother's Protection: Once per session, call upon Raéyn's favor to protect a vessel or coastal area from harm. | Protective Instinct: Suffer -1 die to rolls involving personal safety when others are endangered nearby. |

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| 5 | Wave-Rider: Once per session, navigate any water-based obstacle or hazard with perfect ease. | Restless Spirit: Suffer -1 die to rolls requiring patience or stillness; the call of the sea is constant. |
| 6+ | Storm Queen: Once per session, become the living embodiment of the sea's power. For one scene, control weather and tides within Near range, but mark +2 Obligation and risk drawing Khemesh's attention. | Mother's Burden: Mark +2 Obligation when using this power; the weight of protecting all who sail becomes overwhelming, causing Harm 1 (Stress) until the storm passes. |

The Sacred Geometry (Order & Mathematical Truth)

Lore. Among the Aelinnel, the Sacred Geometry is worshipped as the living mathematics of the cosmos—the divine proportion underlying every form and force. It is the principle that reduces chaos to measure, that finds the golden ratio in petals, the spiral in seashells, and the harmonic resonance in the stars. To revere the Geometry is to affirm that beneath apparent randomness lies immutable law, a lattice of perfect relationships waiting to be revealed.

The practice of Kon'reh is no mere pastime but a sacred discipline: its board is a microcosm of creation, its pieces embodiments of force, and its strategies echoes of celestial harmonics. To master the game is to glimpse the world's secret architecture, to intuit the pathways by which structure conquers entropy.

The Sacred Geometry does not deny chaos; it unmask it as illusion. Its devotees are architects of certainty in an uncertain world, mathematicians of the divine who seek to bring order where none appears. Yet those who serve it too deeply may become rigid, seeing every human choice as a problem with only one solution, unable to bear the irreducible ambiguities of mortal life.

Chalk, string, and a prayer to ratios. When the circle closes, luck remembers its place.

Rite of the Golden Mean (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Self; No. Materials:* A tool marked with the golden ratio ($\varphi \approx 1.618$).

Effect: Gain +1 die to rolls requiring precision, balance, or proportion. On success, re-roll one die showing 1 or 2.

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

Push It: Upgrade effect one step on a single roll; suffer -1 die to social rolls involving spontaneity for the scene.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Perfect Angle (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Touch; No. Materials:* Compass and straightedge consecrated in ritual.

Effect: Treat difficult terrain, awkward positioning, or structural obstacles as one step easier this scene. Gain +1 die on spatial/architectural reasoning rolls.

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

Push It: Extend benefit to one ally in Close range, but generate 1 SB (Clubs).

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Harmonic Resonance [WARD] (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Zone; No. Materials:* Geometric patterns drawn with precision.

Effect: Create a zone of harmony. Outsiders crossing must test DV 3. On Hit: cross normally. On Partial: suffer -1 die inside. On Miss: cannot cross this beat.

Push It: Fortify the pattern further but mark +1 Obligation.

Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Calculated Trajectory [REVEAL] (Standard, 7 XP) *Scene; Self; No. Materials:* A perfect circle and a solved geometric problem.

Effect: Gain +2 dice to prediction, trajectory, or pattern recognition. Ask two questions about mathematical relationships in the current scene.

Push It: Predict one future event with certainty, but mark +1 Exposure.

Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Fundamental Equation [WARD][BIND] (**High, 12 XP**) *Scene; Zone; No.***Materials:** Complex diagram of universal constants.**Effect:** Declare one physics/magic rule different in the zone (no scene-ending absolutes; GM may veto). Once per scene, downgrade a Miss to Success & Cost.**Push It:** Affect an adjacent zone for one beat; generate 2 SB.*Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).**Obligation: 7 segments.***Rite of Kon'reh Mastery** [OATH][FORTIFY] (**High, 13 XP**) *Extended; Near; No. Materials:*

A consecrated Kon'reh board and pieces representing fundamental forces.

Effect: All participants make contested Wits + Lore. Winners gain +2 dice to strategy/pattern/logic rolls next session; losers suffer -1 die.**Push It:** Winner imposes one mathematical "law" for the session, but generate 2 SB (Diamonds).*Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).**Obligation: 7 segments.***The Sacred Geometry's Corruption Table**

| Tier | Benefit | Cost / Quirk |
|------|---|---|
| 1 | Pattern Recognition: +1 die to Notice when observing geometric patterns, mathematical sequences, or logical structures. | Obsessive Calculation: Must count, measure, or calculate patterns noticed, even when tactically disadvantageous. |
| 2 | Mathematical Precision: Once per scene, re-roll any failed logic, pattern, or mathematical reasoning roll. | Social Blindness: Suffer -1 die to social rolls involving emotional nuance or interpersonal intuition. |
| 3 | Geometric Insight: Gain +2 dice to rolls involving spatial reasoning, architecture, or geometric problem-solving. | Compulsive Order: Must organize or correct imperfect arrangements; suffer 1 Fatigue when surrounded by chaos. |
| 4 | Universal Law: Once per session, declare a mathematical principle that applies to the current situation. Gain +2 dice to related rolls, but become fixated on its perfection. | Perfectionist Paralysis: Suffer -1 die to rolls requiring quick, imperfect solutions; must find the "correct" answer. |

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| 5 | Divine Ratio: Once per session, see the perfect mathematical relationship underlying any phenomenon. Gain +3 dice to understanding it, but become obsessed with its implications. | Number Fever: Suffer -1 die to rolls not involving mathematical concepts; numbers dominate your thoughts. |
| 6+ | Absolute Equation: Once per session, solve any mathematical problem or predict any pattern with perfect accuracy. For one scene, reality conforms to your calculations, but mark +2 Obligation and risk mental breakdown from cosmic truths. | Infinite Calculation: Mark +3 Obligation when using this power; become trapped in endless mathematical loops, suffering Harm 1 (Stress) until you find the solution or are interrupted. |

The Sealed Gate (Boundaries & Protection)

Lore. The Sealed Gate is invoked when thresholds weaken, forbidden knowledge leaks, or Outsiders press against the walls of reality. It is the Abjurist's Patron, embodying the principle that protection sometimes requires imprisonment, and safety may demand exile. Followers are warders and exorcists, but also philosophers of separation: those who believe the act of closing is sacred.

The Gate manifests as an armored figure, face hidden by a helm that shifts symbols: binding runes for warders, expulsion marks for exorcists, and an impassable refusal for transgressors.

You write borders into the world and prosecute trespass. Doors remember their true keepers; lines mean what you say they mean.

Rite of the Sealed Threshold (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Touch; No. Materials:* Chalk, wax, chain, or sigil.

Effect: Mark a threshold. Crossing parties suffer worsened Position or stumble on first entry (fiction decides). Create a 4-segment *Boundary Maintained* clock to automatically fail one crossing attempt.

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

Push It: Treat the threshold as difficult terrain; +1 Obligation cost to cross.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Key's Rebuke (Low, 5 XP) *Instant; Near; No. Materials:* Gesture or chain-clack.

Effect: Project a spectral hasp to stagger or disarm. On success, create a 2-segment *Ward Active* token to auto-succeed on a similar defense later.

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

Push It: Drop the object just beyond reach; +1 Obligation cost to retrieve.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Circle of Denial [WARD] (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Near; No. Materials:* Salt, iron filings, or blessed chalk.

Effect: Outsiders crossing test DV = Cap. On Hit: cross but add DV to their Exit Tally; on Partial: +1; on Miss: fail this beat. Create a 6-segment *Boundary Integrity* clock.

Push It: Fortify circle; clearer tells; +1 Obligation.

Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Writ of Passage [BIND] (Standard, 7 XP) *Scene; Near; No. Materials:* Spoken naming and scribed pass-mark.

Effect: Designate a route as permitted. Allies gain improved flow (Position/Effect bump). Unauthorized crossers suffer -1 die to movement. Create an 8-segment *Authorized Passage* clock.

Push It: Extend to extra ally/obstacle; +1 Obligation.

Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Banishment Knot [BANISH][BIND] (High, 13 XP) *Instant; Near; No. Materials:* Knot sealed with gate-sigil.

Effect: Target an Outsider; test DV = Cap. On Hit: add DV to Exit Tally; on Partial: +1. If full, entity acts once then departs; cannot return for one session. Create a 4-segment *Banishment Enforced* clock.

Push It: Strip one tether/anchor or forbid threshold-crossing in this location for one session; +2 Obligation.

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).

Obligation: 7 segments.

Rite of the Consecrated Barrier [WARD][UNWARD] (**High, 14 XP**) *Extended; Zone; No.*

Materials: Relics from three faiths, iron bands, blood of a trespasser.

Effect: Consecrate area against unauthorized passage. Crossers test Spirit+Resolve (DV 4) or suffer Harm 1. Only proper authorization bypasses. Create a 10-segment *Sacred Boundary* clock.

Push It: Make barrier permanent/fixed; start *Boundary Maintenance* [6].

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).

Obligation: 8 segments.

The Sealed Gate's Corruption Table

| Tier | Benefit | Cost / Quirk |
|------|--|---|
| 1 | Boundary Sense: +1 die to Notice when detecting weak points, thresholds, or unauthorized entry. | Paranoid Vigilance: Must check and re-check barriers and seals; suffer -1 die to rolls requiring trust or openness. |
| 2 | Sealed Strength: Once per scene, treat a failed warding or protection roll as a success, but mark 1 SB (Spades). | Isolation Tendency: Suffer 1 Fatigue when in open, unsecured spaces or among strangers. |
| 3 | Ward Keeper: Gain +2 dice to rolls involving magical wards, barriers, or protective enchantments. | Compulsive Sealing: Must seal or secure any opening or vulnerability noticed, even when inappropriate. |
| 4 | Absolute Barrier: Once per session, create an impenetrable barrier that lasts for one scene. | Prison Mindset: Suffer -1 die to rolls involving freedom, escape, or breaking restrictions. |
| 5 | Gate Master: Once per session, banish or seal away any supernatural threat with a successful test. | Boundary Obsession: Suffer -1 die to rolls not involving protection, sealing, or enforcement of limits. |
| 6+ | Keeper of All Thresholds: Once per session, become the living embodiment of sealed boundaries. For one scene, all barriers within Near range become absolute, but mark +2 Obligation and risk sealing allies inside. | Ultimate Confinement: Mark +3 Obligation when using this power; risk permanent Harm (Stress) from the psychic weight of containing everything that threatens. |

Thrysos, King of Revels (Ecstasy & Excess)

Lore. Where torches flare and cups spill, where dancers stamp until dawn, there strides Thrysos crowned with ivy and horn. He is both host and beast, a patron of license who laughs at law. In his train follow the masked and the wild, the broken who dance to forget, the bold who revel to remember. His rites intoxicate, inflame, and unmask—yet each cup leaves its mark.

Signs. Wine that never sours; a mask that smiles without wearer; goat-tracks circling thrice before vanishing.

Cantor's Temptation. His promise is freedom without end: no oaths, no chains, only song and cup and fire. Yet those who drink too deeply wake to find they serve not joy but appetite.

Chorus of the Lost. *"Drink, and be unafraid." "Every mask is true when worn long enough." "In the dance we are all kings—until the dawn."*

Rite of the Overflowing Cup (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Near; No.* **Materials:** A brimming vessel of wine or blood.

Effect: Allies who drink gain +1 die to social rolls this scene; enemies who drink suffer −1 die.

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 **Obligation**.

Push It: All in Near must test Resolve (DV 3) or be swept into revelry; mark 1 **SB (Hearts)**.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Horned Dance (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Self; No.* **Materials:** Mask or antlers.

Effect: Enter ecstatic frenzy: +2 dice to melee or performance; ignore 1 Fatigue per round.

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 **Obligation**.

Push It: Frenzy spreads: one ally also joins, but both mark 1 **SB (Spades)**.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Breaking Mask (Standard, 7 XP) *Instant; Near; No.* **Materials:** A mask smashed in hand.

Effect: Reveal true face: target suffers −2 dice to disguise, deceit, or composure until scene ends.

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 **Obligation**.

Push It: Truth is forced: target must declare one hidden desire; mark 1 **SB (Diamonds)**.

Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Wild Procession [WARD] (Standard, 9 XP) *Scene; Zone; No.* **Materials:** A horn sounded thrice.

Effect: Summon spectral satyrs and maenads. For the scene, the zone is [WARD]ed: hostile entry forces 1 **SB (Spades)**; allies gain +1 die to Resist compulsion or fear.

Push It: The procession spills beyond; outsiders Near must test Resolve (DV 4) or join.

Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Gilded Stag [TRANSFORM][CURSE] (High, 12 XP) *Extended; Touch; No.* **Materials:** Golden mask, stag's blood.

Effect: Transform one reveler into a beast of horn and fire. For one session: +2 dice melee; Harm +1 (Burn). At session's end they collapse with Harm 2 (Exhaustion).

Invoke: Extended ritual; mark +2 **Obligation**.

Push It: Transformation becomes permanent until undone; mark +3 **Obligation**.

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).

Obligation: 6 segments.

Rite of the Endless Feast [FOLLOW-UP][CURSE] (**High, 14 XP**) *Scene; Zone; No.*

Materials: Feast laid for twelve.

Effect: For one scene, the zone floods with plenty: allies restore Fatigue; all rolls tied to appetite or indulgence +2 dice. Leaving requires Resolve (DV 3).

Invoke: 1 action; mark +3 **Obligation**.

Push It: The feast persists as a hunger-haunt; start **Hedonist's Curse** [6].

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).

Obligation: 8 segments.

Thrysos' Corruption Table

| Tier | Gift | Corruption |
|------|---|---|
| 1 | Reveler's Grace: +1 die to social rolls in feasts or crowds. | Compulsive Toast: Must drink or mark Fatigue when drink is offered. |
| 2 | Horned Vitality: Ignore first 1 Fatigue each scene. | Restless Appetite: Suffer -1 die when abstaining from indulgence. |
| 3 | Revel-Kin: Once per scene, summon a minor revel-spirit (advantage die). | Masked Self: Cannot act without role or guise; -1 die to plain sincerity. |
| 4 | Bacchic Fury: Once per session, frenzy grants +2 dice melee for one exchange. | Ecstatic Blindness: -1 die to perception outside the revel. |
| 5 | Feast Without End: Once per session, allies in Near clear all Fatigue. | Hungering Host: You consume twice as much; denial causes Harm 1 (Stress). |
| 6+ | Satyr King's Mantle: For one scene, become avatar of revels; all allies +2 dice, enemies -2 dice. | Tyrant of Pleasure: Mark +3 Obligation; revel grows monstrous, demanding sacrifice. |

The Traveler (Ways & Journeys)

Lore. The Traveler is the eternal guide of the road, guardian of those who walk the paths between what is and what might be. Among the Fhara caravans and Kuvani traders along the Way of Silk, the Traveler is invoked at every crossroads, honored with small offerings at each waypoint, and consulted before every major journey.

The Traveler is not merely one who shows the way—they *are* the way, existing in the pause between steps and in the choice of which path to take when roads fork. Every journey is both physical and spiritual; to move from one place to another is to transform, and the road itself becomes a teacher.

One foot in a promise, and the road will meet you halfway. But break your word to the way, and the way will break you.

Rite of Road-Sense (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Self; No.* **Materials:** Road-nail or waystone pebble.
Effect: Unerringly pick the fastest safe route in Near/Far. Gain +1 die to avoid ambushes or delays. Create a 4-segment *Path Memory* clock to ignore difficult terrain once.
Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.
Push It: Spot one hidden bypass, but generate 1 SB (Clubs).
Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Traveler's Boon (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Self/Ally; No.* **Materials:** Thread tied at the wrist.
Effect: Ignore one level of difficult terrain or bureaucracy; +1 Effect to travel or escape checks. If shared, create a 2-segment *Shared Journey* bond with an ally.
Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.
Push It: Extend to one more ally; mark 1 SB (Diamonds).
Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Waymark [PASSAGE] (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Near; No.* **Materials:** Chalk mark or small cairn.
Effect: Declare a lane as permitted/easy. Allies gain improved Position/Effect or ignore one obstacle. Create a 6-segment *Marked Path* clock.
Push It: Lane persists between scenes; first enemy to exploit it forces 1 SB (Spades).
Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Bridge Between [TRANSPORT] (Standard, 7 XP) *Instant; Near; No.* **Materials:** Two pinches of road-dust clapped.
Effect: Relocate a willing target within Far along a visible/named route. Unwilling targets may resist (Body+Resolve DV 3). Create a 4-segment *Pathway Established* clock.
Push It: Carry one extra ally or bundle; arrivals off-balance.
Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Crown of Crossings [WARD][COMMAND] (High, 13 XP) *Scene; Zone; No.* **Materials:** Brass compass missing its needle.
Effect: Call the Road: allies gain +1 die to move/evade; pursuers suffer -1 die. Once, declare "the long way is short" to finish a travel clock segment for free. Enemies must test (Wits+Command DV 4) or suffer -1 die to movement.

Push It: Seal a hostile route briefly; generate 2 SB (Clubs/Diamonds).

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).

Obligation: 7 segments.

Rite of the Wayfarer's Covenant [OATH][FORTIFY] (**High, 14 XP**) *Extended; Near; No.*

Materials: Waystones from multiple regions.

Effect: Bind present parties to safe passage. While honored: +2 Effect on travel, reroll one failed travel roll per scene. Breaking oath inflicts Harm 1 (Fatigue) and marks breaker as *Oathbreaker of the Road* (−2 dice to travel rolls).

Push It: Breaking the covenant inflicts Harm 2 (Stress) and attracts hostile Wayward spirits.

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).

Obligation: 7 segments.

The Traveler's Corruption Table

| Tier | Benefit | Cost / Quirk |
|------|---|---|
| 1 | Pathfinding Instinct: +1 die to Navigation and movement rolls in familiar territory. | Restless Spirit: Suffer 1 Fatigue when forced to remain stationary or in confined spaces for extended periods. |
| 2 | Wayfarer's Luck: Once per scene, treat a failed travel or navigation roll as a success, but mark 1 SB (Clubs). | Compulsive Wandering: Must take the less obvious path when choices present themselves; suffer -1 die when forced to follow direct routes. |
| 3 | Road Mastery: Gain +2 dice to rolls involving travel, escape, or finding hidden paths. | Travel Dependency: Suffer -1 die to rolls requiring local knowledge or settlement-based skills. |
| 4 | Journey's Blessing: Once per session, grant all allies within Near range +1 die to travel-related rolls for one scene. | Nomad's Isolation: Suffer -1 die to social rolls involving long-term relationships or community ties. |
| 5 | Waypoint Sense: Once per session, instantly know the location and nature of all significant paths, routes, or crossroads within a day's travel. | Directional Obsession: Suffer -1 die to rolls not involving movement, travel, or pathfinding; always aware of cardinal directions. |

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| 6+ | Master of All Ways: Once per session, become one with the road network. For one scene, teleport between any known waypoints and grant +2 dice to all travel-related actions, but mark +2 Obligation and risk becoming lost between worlds. | Eternal Journey: Mark +3 Obligation when using this power; risk permanent Harm (Stress) from the endless call of the road, making settlement impossible until the journey's end. |
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Varnek Karn, the Death's Arbitrator

Lore. Varnek Karn is the Eternal Mediator, the Death-Bound Broker who negotiates the final transactions between the living and the dead. He does not merely track debts—he facilitates the commerce of mortality. In his vast bone-halls, spirits and necromancers come to negotiate, trade obligations, and settle the cosmic accounts that bind the worlds of life and death. Those who serve him become deal-makers in the economy of eternity, able to broker agreements that span the veil.

Bones remember what souls forget. Every debt paid creates another debt owed.

Rite of the Death-Bound Contract (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Near; No.* **Materials:** Bone fragment from both parties (or proxy) and ink made from grave-mist.

Effect: Create a binding agreement between living and dead. Both parties gain +1 die when fulfilling terms. Create 4-segment *Contract Active* clock (can be spent to enforce terms). You gain +1 die as mediator.

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

Push It: Contract becomes magically enforced—breach inflicts Harm 1 automatically; mark 1 SB (Hearts).

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Spectral Broker [BIND] (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Self; No.* **Materials:** Scales from a recently deceased merchant or judge.

Effect: Gain +2 dice to negotiate between conflicting parties (living/dead, necromancers/spirits). Can propose “Varnek’s Terms”—balanced solutions both sides find acceptable. Successful mediation grants 1 Boon.

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

Push It: Mediation becomes binding on all parties; refusal to accept terms creates 1 SB (Diamonds) as cosmic balance demands payment.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Debt Exchange [OATH] (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Near; No.* **Materials:** Two personal items representing the debts being traded.

Effect: Facilitate the transfer of one obligation from one party to another. Both parties must agree; you act as neutral arbiter. Successful exchange: each party gains +1 die toward their new obligation, -1 die from old one.

Push It: Exchange becomes magically binding; breach by either party reflects back on you (mark 2 segments on *Mediator’s Burden* clock [6]).

Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Court of the Undead [COMMAND][WARD] (Standard, 7 XP) *Scene; Zone; No.* **Materials:** Circle of judges’ bones and scales of justice.

Effect: Convene Varnek’s Court—neutral ground for disputes between living/dead. Zone becomes [WARD]ed—no hostile magic/deception. All parties gain +1 die to honest negotiation, suffer -1 die to lies/deception.

Push It: Court’s judgment becomes magically enforced; all must comply or suffer Harm 2; mark 2 SB (Hearts).

Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Eternal Ledger [REVEAL][BIND] (**High, 13 XP**) *Scene; Zone; No. Materials:* Pages from Varnek’s own ledgers, written in bone-ink.

Effect: Reveal all karmic debts, obligations, and unfinished business in the zone. All present must make Spirit + Resolve test (DV 4) or be compelled to speak their true debts. You gain +2 dice to mediate any revealed conflicts.

Push It: All debts in zone become immediately actionable; mark 3 SB (Spades/Clubs) as cosmic accounting demands immediate settlement.

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).

Obligation: 7 segments.

Rite of the Final Arbiter [CLEANSE][CURSE] (**High, 14 XP**) *Extended; Touch; No. Materials:* Heart stone from a judge, blood of someone willing to pay any price.

Effect: Serve as ultimate arbiter in any dispute involving life/death. Your judgment is cosmically binding—cannot be appealed, evaded, or ignored. Successful arbitration settles all related debts permanently.

Push It: Judgment becomes absolute law—reality reshapes to enforce it; mark Harm 2 and +2 Obligation as cosmic forces recognize your authority.

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).

Obligation: 8 segments.

Varnek Karn’s Corruption Table

| Tier | Benefit | Cost / Quirk |
|------|---|--|
| 1 | Mediator’s Sight: +1 die to Notice when conflicts have hidden compromises both sides would accept. | Compulsive Arbitration: Must attempt to mediate any obvious dispute witnessed, even when disadvantageous. |
| 2 | Balanced Deal: Once per scene, propose a solution that benefits all parties; +1 die to negotiate it. | Debt Magnet: Automatically attract offers of “fair trades” that always have hidden costs for you. |
| 3 | Court Authority: Gain +2 dice when mediating disputes; parties find your proposals unusually persuasive. | Obligation Sensitivity: Suffer 1 Fatigue when in areas of unresolved conflicts or broken agreements. |
| 4 | Karmic Insight: Once per session, see the full karmic web connecting any dispute—what each party truly needs/wants. | Judgment Fatigue: Suffer -1 die to rolls not involving conflict resolution; the weight of endless disputes wears on you. |
| 5 | Death’s Advocate: Once per session, perfectly represent either the living or dead in any negotiation. | Burden of Neutrality: Suffer -1 die to personal relationships; you’re seen as detached from mortal concerns. |

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| 6+ | Cosmic Arbiter: Once per session, your judgment becomes temporarily law—reality bends to enforce just decisions. | Eternal Mediator: Mark +2 Obligation when using; risk becoming permanently bound to arbitrate cosmic disputes, unable to rest. |
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Vorthak, the Consuming Void

Lore. Vorthak is the Hunger that Hungers for Itself—the void that devours not just what exists, but the very potential for existence. He is the appetite that grows stronger with each feeding, yet remains eternally unsatisfied. His followers become conduits for this cosmic hunger, able to channel it to consume not just physical matter, but the conceptual frameworks that give reality meaning. But beware: feed Vorthak's hunger and he will eventually turn his appetite upon you.

Feed the hunger, or let it feed you. The choice ends when the hunger begins.

Rite of the Appetite's Edge (Low, 4 XP) *Scene; Self/Touch; No.* **Materials:** A hunger that has already been felt (empty stomach, unfulfilled desire, missing memory).

Effect: Channel Vorthak's hunger to enhance consumption—next act of taking/gaining something is +2 dice. If consuming resources: gain 1 additional unit. If taking knowledge: ask 1 extra question. Create 4-segment *Hunger Fueled* clock.

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

Push It: Hunger becomes contagious—nearby willing targets also gain +1 die to their next consumption; mark 1 SB (Clubs) as the hunger spreads.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Conceptual Feast (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Zone; No.* **Materials:** The framework of something that could exist but doesn't (blueprints, plans, potential).

Effect: Devour potential itself—prevent one planned/expected event from occurring. Gain +1 die to rolls involving denial, refusal, or prevention. Affected parties suffer -1 die when trying to manifest that potential.

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

Push It: Feast becomes gluttonous—devour multiple potentials but mark Fatigue 1 as satiating hunger proves impossible.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Hunger's Vessel [VOID][BIND] (Standard, 8 XP) *Scene; Touch; No.* **Materials:** Container that has held something precious/valued.

Effect: Create a vessel that can store hunger itself. When triggered, releases stored hunger to consume one specific thing (object, effect, memory). Vessel can hold 3 charges. Each charge: target makes test (DV 3) or suffer appropriate consumption effect.

Push It: Vessel becomes intelligent—chooses what to consume but may not align with your desires; mark 1 SB (Spades).

Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Feast of Understanding [CURSE][REVEAL] (Standard, 7 XP) *Scene; Near; No.* **Materials:** The complete consumption of something complex (entire library, intricate mechanism, detailed plan).

Effect: Gain perfect understanding of consumed subject—+3 dice to related knowledge rolls this session. But you also inherit its hunger—you must consume something of equal complexity within the arc or suffer Harm 1.

Push It: Understanding becomes overwhelming—gain insight into the hunger that drives the consumed thing; mark 1 SB (Hearts) as you glimpse Vorthak's true nature.

Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Infinite Appetite [WARD][FOLLOW-UP] (**High, 13 XP**) *Scene; Zone; No. Materials:* A space that has known great hunger (famine-struck land, abandoned feast hall, battlefield).

Effect: Zone becomes [WARD]ed against satisfaction—no fulfillment, completion, or satiation possible within. All consumption attempts must exceed normal requirements by 50% or fail. You gain +2 dice to all consumption/negation rolls in zone.

Push It: Ward becomes a feeding ground—anything consumed in zone feeds you directly; mark +2 Obligation as Vorthak’s attention intensifies.

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).

Obligation: 7 segments.

Rite of the Self-Consumption [TRANSFORM][CURSE] (**High, 14 XP**) *Extended; Self; No. Materials:* Complete dedication of your own essence to Vorthak’s hunger.

Effect: Offer yourself as the ultimate feast—gain tremendous power (+3 dice to all actions) for one scene, but create a permanent hunger within yourself. After use, you suffer -1 die to all rolls involving satisfaction, completion, or fulfillment.

Push It: Hunger becomes your constant companion—gain the ability to consume your own limitations but mark Harm 2 and +2 Obligation as you become partially consumed by the act.

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).

Obligation: 8 segments.

Vorthak’s Corruption Table

| Tier | Benefit | Cost / Quirk |
|------|---|--|
| 1 | Hunger’s Guidance: +1 die to Notice when something can be consumed more efficiently or completely. | Metabolic Hunger: Must consume physical sustenance at 150% normal rate or suffer Fatigue 1 and -1 die to physical rolls. |
| 2 | Efficient Consumption: Once per scene, consume something completely without waste—gain maximum benefit from minimum input. | Appetite Amplification: Suffer -1 die to rolls involving restraint, patience, or delayed gratification; hunger demands immediate satisfaction. |
| 3 | Hunger’s Strength: Gain +2 dice to rolls involving taking, claiming, or appropriating resources from others. | Consumption Aura: Allies within Near range suffer -1 die to rolls involving personal possessions or cherished items. |
| 4 | Feast Master: Once per session, orchestrate a consumption event that feeds multiple hungers simultaneously—gain 2 Boons but create 6-segment <i>Sated Hunger</i> clock. | Glutton’s Burden: Suffer 1 Fatigue when witnessing others consume/satisfy desires; their fulfillment feeds your emptiness. |

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| 5 | Void's Palate: Once per session, consume abstract concepts (hope, fear, memory, skill) and gain their essence temporarily. | Conceptual Hunger: Suffer -1 die to rolls involving personal identity or core beliefs; you hunger to consume even yourself. |
| 6+ | Avatar of Appetite: Once per session, become the living embodiment of consumption—devour anything conceptual or physical within Near range, but mark +3 Obligation and begin permanent <i>Consuming Self</i> condition. | Hunger Incarnate: Mark +3 Obligation when using; risk becoming a permanent hunger that must constantly feed or cease to exist. |

The Witness (Truth & Revelation)

Lore. The Witness remembers what others bury. Every shadow cast and oath broken is a line in her unending ledger. She is the keeper of inconvenient truths, the patron of those who seek to expose lies or recover forgotten knowledge. Her followers learn that knowledge comes with a price—the weight of remembering what others would forget.

I will show you what you would rather forget. But first, you must forget what you think you know.

Rite of the Lingering Glimpse (Low, 4 XP) *Instant; Near; Yes (Investigation/Notice only).*

Materials: A trace of the thing to be remembered (hair, dust, a spoken name).

Effect: Gain +1 die to your roll to investigate or notice something directly related to the trace within the current scene.

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

Push It: Gain +2 dice instead, but mark 1 segment on a **Memory Strain Clock** [4]. If the clock fills, you gain Fatigue 1 and suffer -1 die on Investigation/Notice rolls until the end of the next scene due to mental exhaustion from forced recall.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of Piercing Scrutiny (Low, 5 XP) *Scene; Zone; No.* **Materials:** A circle drawn with chalk or string while focusing on the truth to be sought.

Effect: Within the zone, gain +1 die to rolls to detect deception (Insight vs. Deceit, spotting social tells) or to recall hidden knowledge (Lore/Investigate for memory). Social interactions within the zone begin one Position step worse for those attempting to deceive.

Invoke: 1 action; mark +1 Obligation.

Push It: One target within the zone must make a Wits test (DV 3) or involuntarily reveal one pertinent lie or hidden fact they are currently concealing (Keeper determines relevance). Regardless of the test result, mark Exposure +1 for the target(s) in the zone.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Echoing Truth [OMEN] (Standard, 8 XP) *Instant; Near; No.* **Materials:** A reflective surface (mirror, still water, polished metal) used to focus on the target.

Effect: Target must make a Resolve test (DV 3) or suffer -1 die to rolls involving memory, deception, or resisting interrogation for the scene. If they fail, you may ask one specific, factual question about something they know, and they must answer truthfully or suffer 1 SB (Hearts) as the memory is forcibly drawn forth.

Push It: If the target fails their Resolve test, you may ask a second question, but the mental intrusion causes them Harm 1 (Stress/Mental).

Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Immutable Record [OATH] (Standard, 7 XP) *Scene; Near; No.* **Materials:** A document signed by all parties within the zone, or a spoken pact witnessed by the caster.

Effect: Bind the agreement. Any party who knowingly breaches it suffers 1 SB (Hearts) immediately and gains a persistent **Oathbreaker's Mark** Condition (-1 die on social rolls involving honor, trust, or oaths until amends are made or a significant act redeems them).

Push It: The bond becomes magically enforced for one specific, crucial clause: violation automatically inflicts Harm 1 (Stress) on the breaker in addition to the SB and Mark.

Requires: Familiar + Codex (Invoke: 1 Boon).

Rite of the Unveiled Heart [OMEN] (**High, 12 XP**) *Scene; Near; No. Materials:* A private setting where the target feels safe or is speaking freely.

Effect: The target suffers -2 dice to all attempts to conceal true emotions, intentions, or lies for the scene. Any successful social roll (Sway, Command, Deceit) made by the target generates 1 SB (Hearts) as the effort to maintain falsehoods under the Witness's gaze creates internal discord.

Push It: You may designate one specific, complex question about the target's motivations, fears, or hidden loyalties. If you successfully use Sway or Insight against them this scene, you automatically learn the answer to that question. The intense scrutiny marks 1 SB (Spades) for you as the Witness's attention lingers.

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).

Obligation: 6 segments.

Rite of the Final Reckoning [OMEN] (**High, 13 XP**) *Scene; Zone; No. Materials:* A formally called gathering (court, council, family meeting) within the consecrated zone.

Effect: All present must speak their greatest debt, wrongdoing, or hidden truth related to the gathering's purpose. Those who lie or withhold suffer Harm 2 (Stress/Reputation). Truth-tellers gain +2 dice to social actions for the remainder of the scene within the zone.

Push It: The truth becomes inescapable - even indirect lies or evasions related to the core topic suffer the Harm 2 penalty. The absolute nature of the revelation creates 2 SB (Diamonds) as the disruption to fates and secrets resonates.

Requires: Familiar + Codex + Tier III (Invoke: 2 Boons).

Obligation: 7 segments.

The Witness's Corruption Table

| Tier | Benefit | Cost / Quirk |
|------|--|--|
| 1 | Truth's Sight: +1 die to Insight when detecting deception or hidden motives. | Burden of Knowledge: Suffer -1 die to social rolls involving lies or deception; others become uncomfortable with your piercing gaze. |
| 2 | Memory's Keeper: Once per scene, recall one specific detail from a previous scene with perfect clarity. | Compulsive Honesty: Must correct obvious falsehoods witnessed, even when tactically disadvantageous. |
| 3 | Revelation's Power: Gain +2 dice to rolls involving exposing secrets, uncovering lies, or forcing confessions. | Truth-Blind: Suffer 1 Fatigue when exposed to comforting lies or willful ignorance. |

| | | |
|----|--|--|
| 4 | Witness's Authority: Once per session, force one target to make a Resolve test (DV 4) or reveal a significant hidden truth. | Isolation: Suffer -1 die to rolls requiring trust or close relationships; others fear your ability to uncover their secrets. |
| 5 | Omniscient Gaze: Once per session, see through all deceptions and lies for one exchange, gaining +3 dice to related actions. | Paranoia: Suffer -1 die to rolls involving personal peace or rest; the weight of all truths witnessed creates constant mental strain. |
| 6+ | Absolute Witness: Once per session, become the living embodiment of truth. For one scene, all deceptions within Near range automatically fail, but mark +2 Obligation and risk permanent Harm (Stress) from the crushing weight of absolute knowledge. | Truth's Prison: Mark +3 Obligation when using this power; become unable to tolerate any form of deception, making normal social interaction nearly impossible. |

No True Acolyte Interpreting a patron’s will is often a dangerous prospect in and of itself. Many a Runekeeper has found themselves on the opposite end of machinations from others from the same patron.

“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.

7.13 Patrons & Rites

Table 7.33: Universal Push It Costs

| Cost Component | Effect |
|-----------------------------|---|
| +1 SB | Escalate effect immediately |
| +1 Fatigue | Immediate physical/mental strain |
| +1 Corruption Clock Segment | Long-term Patron influence (unless otherwise specified) |
| GM spends 1 SB | Thematic complication (unless otherwise specified) |

Note: Some talents, Rites, or magical paths may specify alternative corruption costs or additional consequences for Push It actions. When explicitly stated, those specific rules override the universal costs.

Clearing Corruption Corruption may be reduced through *purging rituals*, such as exorcisms, sacred songs, or rites of contrition. These require a test (typically **Lore + Spirit**) against a DV equal to the character’s current corruption level. On success, reduce corruption by 1. On failure, the corruption manifests violently, imposing a temporary Condition or advancing its narrative expression.

Optional: A **Story Beat** may also be spent to attempt such a ritual, representing the personal cost of atonement. Patrons may demand specific acts of service, sacrifice, or obligation as part of the purging process.

| Patron | +1 Thematic Skill | Gift / Lore Bestowal |
|---|-------------------|---|
| Aliyah (Curses, Corruption) | Command | Grants the shadow in salvation, a gift that devours from within. |
| Aveh (Freedom, Erasure) | Stealth | Grants the storm's passage: the gift of vanishing paths, freedom unbound by law or memory, but at the cost of leaving nothing behind. |
| Carrion King (Carrion, Renewal) | Survival | Grants the feast of decay, where what is dead becomes seed for what lives. |
| Clockwork Monad (Mechanism, Process) | Tinker | Grants the certainty of repetition: a cycle that never falters, a gear that never slips. |
| Gallows Bell (Doom, Last Rites) | Command | Grants the toll of ending, a voice that closes stories and calls debts due. |
| Ikasha (Shadow, Penumbra) | Stealth | Grants the hush between footsteps and the raven's omen at every threshold. |
| Inaea (Mercy, Hearth) | Persuade | Grants the hearth's warmth, shelter to the weary and mercy for the lost. |
| Inquisitor Prime (Purity, Persecution) | Insight | Grants the hunter's sight, piercing illusions and revealing supernatural corruption. |
| Isoka (Serpents, Shedding) | Skirmish | Grants the serpent's coil, strength in sudden strike and wisdom in renewal. |
| Khemesh (Abyss, Pressure) | Skirmish | Grants the crushing silence of the deep, where strength is drowned in weight. |
| Livaea (Temptation, Desire) | Persuade | Grants the lure of longing, beauty sharpened into power over hearts and alliances. |
| Lunara (Reflection, Hidden Truths) | Notice | Grants the silver quiet, finding seams and reflections that reveal what is concealed. |
| Mab (Glamour, Courts) | Persuade | Grants the mask of favor, a voice that bends courtiers and kindles desire. |
| Maelstraeus (Infernal Bargainer) | Persuade | Grants the contract's weight, every deal sealed in fire and shadow. |
| Morag the Hag (Bargains, Transformation) | Deception | Grants the cunning of deals, seeing hidden costs and twisting fate through negotiation. |
| Mor'iraath (Entropy, Destruction) | Skirmish | Grants the entropic touch, seeing weakness and consuming value in fire and ruin. |
| Mykkiel (Zeal, Flame, Judgment) | Command | Grants the blazing verdict, a covenant carried in fire and oath, binding law to blade. |
| Nidhoggr (Deep Earth, Rot) | Skirmish | Grants the weight of ages, the strength of stone and the hunger of roots. |
| Oath of Flame & Light (Dawn, Vows) | Command | Grants the fire of dawn, a vow that shields the faithful and sears the faithless. |
| 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. |
| Pale Shepherd (Thresholds, Guidance) | Stealth | Grants the shepherd's whisper, guiding through liminal spaces and comforting the dying. |
| Palinode (Performance, Rapture) | Performance | Grants the breath of inspiration, turning craft into captivating art that binds audiences. |
| Raéyn (Storm, Tides) | Skirmish | Grants the sailor's fortune: winds that shift, |

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) | Oath of Light & Flame (Dawn, Vows) | Desecrated shrines, dawn-lit altars, sacred vows broken. | SB: a vow sanctifies but inflicts pain; flame purges yet leaves despair. |
| Aliyah (Curses, Corruption) | The Witness (Truth, Revelation) | Confessionals, false miracles, dark reliquaries. | SB: a blessing unmask a curse; truth rodes faith; relics mock salvation; the ness must name corruption. |
| Aveh (Freedom, Erasure) | Oath of Light & Flame (Dawn, Vows) | Crossroads, abandoned gates, wind-scoured battlefields. | SB: vows dissolve in the storm; liberty s ters oaths; the dawn sears absence into mory. |
| Aveh (Freedom, Erasure) | Varnek (Necromantic Archives) | Karn Forgotten cairns, erased ledgers, storm-blown libraries. | SB: records fade into silence; the storm vours testimony; archive cannot hold exiled. |
| Aveh (Freedom, Erasure) | Sealed Gate (Boundaries, Closure) | Crumbling thresholds, broken wards, breached tombs. | SB: the Rider tramples seals; closure lapses to exile; freedom births chaos bey boundary. |
| Aveh (Freedom, Erasure) | Carrion King (Decay, Renewal) | Open steppes, plague winds, unmarked graves. | SB: storm scatters the feast; renewal has soil to root; liberty dissolves the cycle i absence. |
| Aveh (Freedom, Erasure) | Gallows Bell (Justice, Judgment) | Storm-dark tribunals, deserted execution grounds. | SB: judgment unheard in storm’s roar; r snaps in gale; freedom mocks justice, leav silence. |
| Carrion King (Carrion, Renewal) | Varnek (Necromantic Archives) | Karn Catacombs, bone-fields, osuary halls. | SB: the feast of decay disputes record; sk reorder themselves; scavengers mock archive. |
| Clockwork Monad (Process, Iteration) | The Traveler (Ways, Roads) | Caravans, milestones, repeating relays. | SB: schedule collapses; detour offers saf routine blinds to ambush. |
| Gallows Bell (Justice, Judgment) | Mykkiel (Law, Writ) | Courts, tribunals, execution grounds. | SB: judgment pronounced but preced denied; sentence demands haunting; v echoes in the toll. |
| Ikasha (Shadow, Penumbra) | Oath of Light & Flame (Dawn, Vows) | Twilight thresholds, oath-fires, vigil sites. | SB: light corners a secret; vow drags sha forth; escape costs more than silence. |
| Ikasha (Shadow, Penumbra) | The Witness (Truth, Revelation) | Silent cloisters, shaded rooms, hidden alcoves. | SB: hush worsens Position; shadows tray your step; deferred answers arrive v weight. |
| Inaea (Mercy, Hearth) | Livaea (Temptation, Desire) | Feasting halls, chambers of intimacy, hearth-feasts. | SB: desire strains hospitality; passion rodes mercy; kindness is answered with mand. |

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| Patron | | Rival | Edge Loci | Friction & Prompts (SB) |
|--|-----------------------------|--|---|--|
| Inquisitor (Purity, Persecution) | Prime | Morag the Hag (Bargains, Transformation) | Crossroads, trial fires, cursed markets. | SB: bargain taints purification; soul scour clean but scarred; purity test twists hunger. |
| Khemesh (Abyss, Pressure) | (Abyss, Pressure) | Raéyn (Storm, Tides) | Lightless holds, trenches, flooded caverns. | SB: abyss groans; storm maps fail; press crushes speech; tide demands oath. |
| Livaea (Temptation, Desire) | (Temptation, Desire) | Maelstraeus (Infernal Bargains) | Masked balls, deal-feasts, salons. | SB: desire sweetens the bargain; pact seal in touch not ink; temptation costs more than coin. |
| Lunara (Reflection, Hidden Truths) | (Reflection, Hidden Truths) | The Witness (Truth, Revelation) | Mirrored chambers, silver pools, moonlit halls. | SB: reflection shows harsher truth; seal shine; witness misses what Lunara reveals. |
| Mab (Glamour, Courts) | (Glamour, Courts) | Palinode (Performance, Rapture) | Masques, salons, theaters. | SB: glamour demands encore; truth offered mask; favor must be sung aloud; crowd erupts at song's climax. |
| Maelstraeus (Infernal Bargains) | (Infernal Bargains) | Oath of Light & Flame (Dawn, Vows) | Oath-stones, consecrated doors, witness trees. | SB: vow sears loophole shut; bargain paid due early; sacred contract becomes trap. |
| Morag the Hag (Bargains, Transformation) | (Bargains, Transformation) | Maelstraeus (Infernal Bargains) | Markets, bargain-halls, crossroads. | SB: deal's true cost unveiled; haste breeds ruin; balance exacts more than offered. |
| Mor'iraath (Entropy, Destruction) | (Entropy, Destruction) | Sacred Geometry (Order, Pattern) | Shattered temples, collapsing bridges, ruined cities. | SB: pattern dissolves into static; perfect form breaks; compass needle spins; order devoured by entropy. |
| Nidhoggr (Dreaming Antiquity) | (Dreaming Antiquity) | The Witness (Truth, Revelation) | Ruins, ancestor shrines, truth-seeing rites. | SB: revelation awakens the old; myth preserved or destroyed; ancestor demands speech. |
| Oath of Light & Flame (Dawn, Vows) | (Dawn, Vows) | Varnek Karn (Necromantic Archives) | Memorial crypts, plague pits, testaments. | SB: bone ledger demands payment; corruption threatens archive; unfinished oaths resurrects feud. |
| Pale Shepherd (Thresholds, Guidance) | (Thresholds, Guidance) | Varnek Karn (Necromantic Archives) | Graveyards, liminal crossroads, shrines of passage. | SB: shepherd offers peace, Karn demands duty; soul cannot rest; death's duty silences death's silence. |
| Palinode (Performance, Rapture) | (Performance, Rapture) | Sacred Geometry (Order, Pattern) | Concert halls, ritual theaters, metered dances. | SB: form clashes with feeling; perfect dulls art; audience craves chaos in pattern. |
| Palinode (Performance, Rapture) | (Performance, Rapture) | Thrysos (Revels, Ecstasy) | Festival grounds, taverns, moots. | SB: song feeds revel; revel swallows song; crowd erupts beyond control; inspiration burns to mania. |
| Raéyn (Storm, Tides) | (Storm, Tides) | Oath of Light & Flame (Dawn, Vows) | Consecrated decks, sunrise rites at sea. | SB: dawn sears back abyss; vow drags court into peril; storm promises aid with debt. |
| Sealed (Boundaries, Closure) | Gate (Void, Negation) | The Ninth Rim (Void, Negation) | Failing wards, thinning thresholds, sealed vaults. | SB: door rattles; ward flickers; void seals past; seal admits what it bars. |

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| Patron | | Rival | Edge Loci | Friction & Prompts (SB) |
|-------------------------------|------|--------------------------------------|--|--|
| Sealed (Boundaries, Closure) | Gate | The Traveler (Ways, Roads) | Customs houses, locks, liminal crossings. | SB: ledger wrong; key refuses; toll extract; desire path collapses to law. |
| Thrysos (Revels, Ecstasy) | | Carrion King (Carrion, Renewal) | Feast halls, bonfires, festival graves. | SB: revel spills to carrion; death becomes dance; feast breeds seed of decay. |
| Thrysos (Revels, Ecstasy) | | Livaea (Temptation, Desire) | Bacchic revels, decadent salons, wine-feasts. | SB: revel loosens restraint; passion binds harder; temptation drunk becomes vow. |
| The Ninth (Void, Negation) | Rim | The Witness (Truth, Revelation) | Forgotten vaults, failing records, silent ruins. | SB: truth swallows itself; record fades to dust; memory refuses recall. |
| The Traveler (Ways, Roads) | | Clockwork Monad (Process, Iteration) | Pilgrim routes, caravans, timetables. | SB: routine bends to detour; detour grants swiftness but ambush; schedule cannot hold. |
| Varnek (Necromantic Archives) | Karn | Mykkiel (Judgment, Writ) | Audit halls, courts martial, ledger-vaults. | SB: writ binds restless; sentence offers precedent; archive haunts judgment. |
| Vorthak (Consumption, Void) | | Sealed (Boundaries, Closure) | Gate Wards, vaults, guarded thresholds. | SB: hunger devours lock; seal becomes no barrier broken by appetite. |

Quick Rulings.

- **Position Nudge:** In a home locus, start one step better; in a rival locus, one step worse.
- **Effect Shade:** Where a Patron dominates, consider an Effect bump; where opposed, consider Limited Effect unless paid for.
- **Symbol Interference (Invokers):** Carrying both sides' Symbols increases narrative noise: first ritual each scene may mark +1 Obligation (Keeper's call).
- **SB Color:** When spending SB in these matchups, prefer suits that fit: Hearts (social), Spades (harm/escalation), Clubs (material cost), Diamonds (numinous disturbance).

7.14 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 §8.7).

7.15 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.

7.15.1 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.

7.15.2 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.

7.15.3 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.

7.15.4 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.

7.15.5 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.

7.15.6 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.

7.15.7 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.

7.16 Acts of Service — Examples

Patrons delight in resonance, not labor. Use these examples as prompts—*petty* butterflies and *involved* operations both count when on-theme. Each entry lists a scale suggestion and what it might clear.

GM Notes

- **Novelty Over Volume.** Repeating the same petty act does not keep clearing segments; vary the symbol or site.
- **Precision Beats Difficulty.** A sharp thematic hit at “petty” scale can clear 1 segment as surely as a muddled “modest.”
- **Hook the World.** Many of these acts conveniently create future clocks, NPC ties, or bargains—use them.
- **Patron's Largess** A Patron's will is mysterious, but their displeasure is rarely subtle. For narrative reasons, the GM may rule that a Patron is especially offended—perhaps by a neglected omen, a rival gaining favor, or simple caprice—and exact an additional toll beyond the usual cost.

7.16.1 Patron Fear Influence Table

| Patron | Domain Tags | Influence Type | Fear Effect Modifications |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------------|----------------|---|
| Aliyah, the Chained Angel | Curses, Corruption | Amplify | Fear tagged <i>Curse</i> , <i>Despair</i> , <i>Shadow</i> worsens. On 3 (Freeze), victim may lapse into catatonic acceptance of corruption. |
| Aveh, the Rider Behind the Storm | Freedom, Exile, Erasure | Reroll | Fear tagged <i>Storm</i> , <i>Exile</i> , <i>Freedom</i> shifts unpredictably. On 5 (Hide), victim seems to vanish—companions may forget their presence until reminded. |
| Carrion King, Lord of Renewal | Decay, Feast, Scavenging | Reroll | Fear tagged <i>Decay</i> , <i>Hunger</i> , <i>Feast</i> mutates. On 1 (Fight), frenzy devolves into cannibalistic hunger. |
| Clockwork Monad, Engine of Iteration | Order, Repetition, Mechanism | Amplify | Fear tagged <i>Order</i> , <i>Pattern</i> , <i>Repetition</i> becomes mechanistic horror. On 3 (Freeze), victim is trapped in endless loop. |
| Gallows Bell, Doom of Endings | Doom, Last Rites | Resonance | Fear tagged <i>Ending</i> , <i>Toll</i> , <i>Justice</i> deepens. On 2 (Hide), victim hears the bell toll and accepts inevitable demise. |
| Ikasha, She Who Sleeps | Shadow, Whispers, Latent Potential | Amplify | Fear tagged <i>Shadow</i> , <i>Voice</i> , <i>Hidden</i> deepens. On 3 (Freeze), victim may be paralyzed by whispered secrets. |
| Inaea, Angel of the Spider | Mercy, Hearth, Connection | Reroll | Fear tagged <i>Home</i> , <i>Family</i> , <i>Comfort</i> twists to terror of loss. On 4 (Flee), victim abandons loved ones "for their own good." |
| Inquisitor Prime, Purity's Flame | Purity, Zeal, Persecution | Amplify | Fear tagged <i>Purity</i> , <i>Heresy</i> , <i>Persecution</i> turns fanatical. On 1 (Fight), victim attempts self-destructive martyrdom. |
| Khemesh, the Abyssal Maw | Abyss, Pressure, Depths | Amplify | Fear tagged <i>Depth</i> , <i>Pressure</i> , <i>Dark</i> crushes. On 1 (Fight), victim dives berserk into consuming dark. |
| Livaea, Crimson Courtier | Temptation, Desire, Passion | Amplify | Fear tagged <i>Desire</i> , <i>Passion</i> , <i>Temptation</i> becomes seductive and lethal. On 6 (Submit), victim surrenders willingly to corrupt longing. |
| Lunara, Mirror of Truths | Reflection, Mirrors, Secrets | Amplify | Fear tagged <i>Reflection</i> , <i>Mirror</i> , <i>Truth</i> disturbs. On 3 (Freeze), victim may be trapped by their own image. |

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| Patron | Domain Tags | Influence Type | Fear Effect Modifications |
|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|----------------|---|
| Mab, Queen of Courts | Glamour, Courts, Deception | Reroll | Fear tagged <i>Illusion, Social, Performance</i> may be reshaped. On 6 (Submit), victim suffers elaborate humiliation instead of surrender. |
| Maelstraeus, Infernal Bargainer | Contracts, Deals, Fire | Resonance | Fear tagged <i>Bargain, Deal, Contract</i> imposes Complication Points. Fear of infernal agreement has lasting cost. |
| Morag the Hag | Transformation, Bargains, Cunning | Reroll | Fear tagged <i>Transformation, Trickery, Deal</i> warps into faustian dread. On 5 (Hide), victim changes shape grotesquely. |
| Mor'iraath, Ashen Maw | Entropy, Destruction, Endings | Amplify | Fear tagged <i>Destruction, Entropy, End</i> becomes apocalyptic. On 2 (Hide), victim seeks oblivion in decay. |
| Mykkiel, Arbiter of the Writ | Judgment, Law, Authority | Resonance | Fear tagged <i>Authority, Judgment, Law</i> adds marks to Fear Track. The burden of judgment lingers. |
| Nidhoggr, World-Worm | Dream, Antiquity, Buried Truths | Resonance | Fear tagged <i>Dream, Ancient, Truth</i> also inflicts Fatigue. Weight of aeons drains resolve. |
| Oath of Flame & Light | Dawn, Vows, Purity | Resonance | Fear tagged <i>Light, Sacred, Vow</i> also imposes Fatigue. Divine light turns terror into bodily strain. |
| Pale Shepherd, Guide of Thresholds | Thresholds, Souls, Passing | Reroll | Fear tagged <i>Death, Guidance, Soul</i> becomes existential. On 6 (Submit), victim follows willingly into afterlife path. |
| Palinode, Queen of Encores | Performance, Song, Rapture | Resonance | Fear tagged <i>Performance, Art, Audience</i> adds Complication Points. Fear of failure binds mechanically. |
| Raéyn, Mistress of the Sea | Sea, Tides, Travel | Reroll | Fear tagged <i>Water, Lost, Travel</i> shifts unpredictably. On 5 (Hide), victim may slip into fog or sink beneath waves. |
| Sealed Gate, Keeper of Thresholds | Boundaries, Closure | Amplify | Fear tagged <i>Confinement, Threshold, Trapped</i> worsens. On 4 (Flee), victim may injure themselves clawing at sealed barriers. |

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Continued from previous page

| Patron | Domain Tags | Influence Type | Fear Effect Modifications |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|-------------------|--|
| The Ninth Rim, the Unseen Ninth | Void, Negation | Reroll | Fear tagged <i>Void</i> , <i>Absence</i> , <i>Silence</i> may be rerolled to reflect conceptual horror. On 2 (Hide), victim may vanish into existential erasure. |
| The Traveler, Road-Sworn | Ways, Journeys, Cross-roads | Resonance | Fear tagged <i>Lost</i> , <i>Path</i> , <i>Journey</i> also inflicts Complication Points. Terror of losing the way becomes mechanical hindrance. |
| The Witness, Unblinking Eye | Truth, Revelation | Amplify | Fear tagged <i>Truth</i> , <i>Knowledge</i> , <i>Revelation</i> intensifies. On 6 (Submit), target may confess dark secrets under perceived divine judgment. |
| Varnek Karn, Bone King | Necromantic Death | Archives, Amplify | Fear tagged <i>Death</i> , <i>Undead</i> , <i>Necromancy</i> becomes horrific. On 2 (Hide), victim feigns death among corpses. |
| Vorthak, Withered Crown | Hunger, Void, Consumption | Amplify | Fear tagged <i>Hunger</i> , <i>Consumption</i> , <i>Void</i> devours. On 4 (Flee), victim frenzies to consume others. |

7.16.2 Implementation Guidelines

Tag Matching

When a Fear effect is triggered, compare the effect's Magic Tags against the active Patron's Domain Tags. If any tags match, the Patron's influence applies.

Multiple Patrons

If multiple Patrons are present with overlapping domains, the GM may:

- Choose the most thematically appropriate influence
- Apply influences sequentially (reroll then amplify)
- Allow players to choose which influence affects them

Player Agency

Players should be informed when Patron influence is active and given the opportunity to:

- Spend resources (Boons, Willpower) to resist the influence
- Narrate how their character resists or embraces the effect
- Choose from available influence options when multiple apply

7.16.3 Embracing Corruption

A character with **2+ levels of Corruption** may choose to **Embrace** it, transforming creeping decay into a permanent **Talent**. Embracing never reduces Corruption — it reshapes it. The deeper the corruption, the greater the power and the cost.

| Corruption Level | Talent Tier | Cost |
|------------------|---------------------|--|
| 2 (Early) | Minor Talent | +1 Permanent Corruption (cannot Fade below 1) |
| 3 (Deepening) | Major Talent | +2 Permanent Corruption, constant visible tell |
| 4+ (Severe) | Transcendent Talent | Permanently altered, locked at Stage 3+ |

Embraced Talents always reflect the Patron's themes (e.g., shadow, indulgence, empathy, paranoia). They grant great power, but mark the character irrevocably as claimed.

7.17 Summons and Outsiders

7.17.1 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.

7.17.2 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.

7.17.3 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.

7.17.4 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).

7.17.5 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.

7.17.6 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.

7.17.7 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.

7.18 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*)

7.19 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.

7.19.1 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.

7.19.2 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.

7.19.3 Component Economy

Components are levers, not taxes. Use them to signal tone and stakes.

7.19.4 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.

7.19.5 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.

7.19.6 Backlash Integration

Use the condensed table (§??). Calibrate by scene weight: exploratory scenes favor Minor; pivotal moments bait a Major via (SB) +1.

7.19.7 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.

7.19.8 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:** _____

7.19.9 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).

7.19.10 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.

7.19.11 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.

7.19.12 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 (§7.19.7).
- **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

7.20 Talent: Cantor's Path — "Songs of the Low Rites"

Cantor's Path

You echo the liturgies of Patrons through breath and string. Not a sworn celebrant but a perilous mimic, you weave Low Rites into song. It is slower, riskier, and beautiful—but never free.

Type Major Talent (15 XP)

Prerequisites Lore 1+, Performance 2+, Presence 2+

Access Any character (does not require Thiasos membership).

Effect

You may learn and perform **Low Rites as Songs**. Each Song counts as knowing the associated Low Rite for performance purposes only.

- **Casting Test:** *Lore + Performance vs. DV* (default DV = 2–3).
- **Action Economy:** *1 action to begin*; Song *resolves at the start of your next turn* unless accelerated.
- **Scope:** *Low Rites only*. Standard/High Rites remain exclusive to Patrons and Thiasos initiates.
- **Costs:** Pay any *materials* listed. On success you do *not* mark Obligation.

Corruption Clock

- You gain a personal **Corruption Clock** equal in segments to your **Body** rating.
- Each time you cast a Song or whenever the Keeper spends a Story Beat involving you, mark +1 segment.
- When the Clock fills:
 - You immediately gain a trait of corruption from the **last Patron** whose Rite you performed.
 - All of your followers, retainers, or familiars also gain a trait of the same corruption (NPCs manifest visibly unsettling traits).
 - Reset the Clock to empty.
- Corruption traits gained in this way fade at the next *Downtime*, unless reinforced by further Patron influence.

Outcomes

Success:

The Low Rite takes effect as written.

Partial:

The Rite manifests with reduced effect (–1 step) or shortened duration. Mark **Fatigue 1**.

Failure:

No effect; mark **Fatigue 1** and the Keeper gains +1 SB (Hearts).

Interrupted:

Harm, Silence, or disruption before resolution = treat as Failure.

Push It

When you Push:

- Song resolves immediately instead of next round.
- Mark **Fatigue 1**.
- Add +1 to your **Corruption Clock**.
- Keeper immediately triggers a **Story Beat**, representing fallout from a Patron, the Road, or social attention.

Limits & Interactions

- **Stacking:** Cannot benefit from the same Rite twice.
- **Visibility:** Songs are inherently noticeable. On Failure or Push, assume observers take note.
- **Silence/Disruption:** Impose -1 to -3 dice at Keeper's discretion.

Downtime Transition

At any *Downtime*, a character with **Cantor's Path** may permanently exchange this talent for initiation into a *Thiasos* and access to its *Codex*. This represents the Patron or their agents taking note of the Cantor's repeated Songs and recruiting them into a formal structure. The Cantor loses their personal **Corruption Clock** and instead adopts the standard **Obligation** and **Codex access** mechanics of a Runekeeper. Any existing corruption traits carry forward as "first marks" of Patronal bond, shaping how the Thiasos views and employs them.

7.20.1 Corruption Fading

Downtime

At the beginning of each Downtime, reduce a character's current Corruption by 1 level.

Accelerated Recovery

Certain Rites, Patron bargains, or narrative acts of atonement may remove additional Corruption at the GM's discretion.

Persistence

Corruption does not clear through rest or Supply. If a character enters Downtime with 0 Corruption, no further reduction occurs.

Table 7.38: 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 8

Combat and Conflict

8.1 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.

8.2 Combat Structure

[Tracking NPC Mechanics] Not every meter needs to be tracked for NPCs.

- **Spotlight First:** NPCs only carry Obligation, Corruption, or similar mechanics if these traits matter to the current story.
- **Skip the Bookkeeping:** Do not track every enemy’s resource pool. If it’s not driving narrative tension, it can be abstracted away.
- **Focus on Impact:** Apply NPC Obligation or Corruption only when it changes how the party experiences them — e.g., a Patron visibly twisting a rival’s fate, or a recurring villain consumed by corruption.
- **Player-Facing First:** Keep full mechanics for PCs, since their journey is the story’s core.

This principle keeps GM effort focused where it matters: driving story beats and consequences, not filling ledgers.

8.2.1 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.

8.2.2 Action Declaration

1. **Approach:** Describe intent and method.
2. **Position:** GM sets *Dominant*, *Controlled*, or *Desperate*.

3. **Pool:** Build dice (Attribute + Skill + situational modifiers).
4. **Roll & Resolve:** Compare to DV and the Outcome Matrix; any 1s generate SB.

8.3 Position States

Dominant

Advantage (cover, flank, surprise, elevation). Failure leaves options; consequences are minor.

Controlled

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.

8.4 Range Bands and Movement

8.4.1 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.

8.4.2 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.

8.5 Combat Actions

8.5.1 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 7).

8.5.2 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).

8.6 Ranged Combat**8.6.1 Firing Profiles****Fast**

(knives, slings, shortbows) — Move *and* Shoot. Reload is incidental. Controlled 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.

8.6.2 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 Controlled shot when a foe crosses your line.

8.6.3 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:** Controlled (Fast) or Desperate (Standard/Slow).

8.7 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.

8.7.1 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.

8.8 Teamwork in Combat

8.8.1 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).

8.8.2 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.

8.8.3 Protection

- Interpose to take harm intended for an ally.
- You must be in plausible Position; resolve as a defense or resist.

8.9 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.

8.10 Position Dynamics

8.10.1 GM-Initiated Shifts

- **Spend 1 SB:** Worsen a character's Position by one step.
- **Narrative Events:** Reinforcements, collapsing cover, weather, smoke, crowding.

8.10.2 Player-Initiated Shifts

- **Spend 1 Boon:** Improve Position by one step for the current action.
- **Maneuvers/Assets:** Flank, gain elevation, trigger tools/terrain/followers.

8.11 Magic in Combat

8.11.1 Casting Actions

Standard Casting

Channel then *Weave*: 1 action each, in order.

Rushed Casting

Combine phases at *Desperate* 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.

8.11.2 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.

8.12 Social Conflict**8.12.1 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.

8.12.2 Social Position & Consequences***Desperate***

You hold leverage, information, or status.

Controlled

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.

8.13 Mass Combat

Treat armies as high-Cap followers with domain tags and clocks.

8.13.1 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.

8.13.2 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.

8.14 Environmental Combat

8.14.1 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.

8.14.2 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.

8.15 Miniatures and Tactical Layer

8.15.1 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.

8.15.2 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.

8.15.3 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.

8.15.4 Facing and Flanking

- Choose a facing at end of movement.
- Flank: +1 die if attacked from opposite arcs; Rear: +1 die and +1 Effect.

8.15.5 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).

8.15.6 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.

8.15.7 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.

Miniatures Mode — Speed Defaults

DV: DV = Tier + 2 + Keywords (Elevation +1, Altar[WARD] +1, Disengage=4).
Crit: Bump Position one step; if already Dominant, Push/Pull 1 hex *or* gain +1 Success.
ZOC: Enter/leave an adjacent hex provokes 1 *Reaction* (Free Strike *or* Shove 1 hex). Each unit has 1 Reaction/round.
Tags: Max 2 active tags per unit. [WARD] = -1 die vs target; attacker may accept 2 Fatigue to ignore once.
Terrain: Difficult=2 MP/hex. Elevation=+1 DV from below.
Heat: On any Crit, GM immediately spends 1 Heat to degrade Position or trigger terrain.

Hex Keywords

Difficult: 2 MP/hex **Elevation:** +1 DV from below **ZOC:** Reaction on cross
Altar [WARD]: -1 die to target (or attacker takes 2 Fatigue to ignore)
Incorporeal: Ignore Difficult; may pass through occupied hexes; cannot end there
Assist (mini): +1 Effect (not dice); max 1 helper

8.16 Quick Reference

8.16.1 Position Effects

| Position | Typical Edge | Consequence Severity |
|------------|---------------------------------|----------------------|
| Dominant | Better options, easier withdraw | Minor |
| Controlled | Standard options | Moderate |
| Desperate | High reward potential | Severe |

8.16.2 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 |

8.16.3 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 |

8.17 Combat Examples

8.17.1 Melee Combat Example

Kael strikes a cultist (*Controlled*, DV 2):

- 5d10 → 9, 7, 5, 2, 1 ⇒ 3 successes, 1 SB.
- **Success with cost:** The cultist falls.
- GM spends 1 SB: *Blood spatters the ritual circle; the summoning clock advances 1.*

8.17.2 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 *Desperate* (stay exposed) *or* take Harm 1 from return fire.

8.17.3 Magic Combat Example

Theron raises a defensive ward (*Desperate*, 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].

8.18 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.

8.18.1 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 \rightarrow DV. Use setting, leverage, and stakes:

- **Dominant (DV 2):** private audience, proof in hand, shared values.
- **Controlled (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.

8.19 Melee Combat Talents

8.19.1 Minor Talents

Defensive Survival (3 XP)

Requirements: Melee 2+

Effect: +1 die to defense rolls while engaged in melee. Once per scene, convert first Harm 1 from melee to Fatigue.

Narrative: Years of combat teaching you to read attacks and flow with them.

Tactical Movement (4 XP)

Requirements: Athletics 2+

Effect: Move within engagement zone as Move action (instead of full action). Once per scene, disengage from Close as Move action.

Narrative: Footwork and positioning that keeps you alive in the press.

Conditioning (4 XP)**Requirements:** Body 3+**Effect:** Body attribute counts as +1 for Fatigue track calculations. +1 die to resist Fatigue overflow effects.**Narrative:** Physical conditioning that lets you endure punishment.**Weapon Master (5 XP)****Requirements:** Melee 2+**Effect:** +2 dice (instead of +1) with chosen weapon category. Once per scene, +1 Effect with signature weapon.**Narrative:** Mastery of specific weapons that makes them extensions of yourself.**8.19.2 Major Talents****Flurry Strike (7 XP)****Requirements:** Melee 3+, Body 3+**Effect:** When engaged with multiple opponents, make 2 attacks as one action. Each attack at -1 die.**Narrative:** Training that lets you fight multiple enemies simultaneously.**Duelist's Edge (8 XP)****Requirements:** Melee 3+, Wits 3+**Effect:** When engaged with single opponent: +1 die to all melee rolls. Once per scene, ignore first Harm 1 or 2 from that opponent.**Narrative:** Psychological and tactical dominance in one-on-one combat.**Battlefield Mastery (8 XP)****Requirements:** Melee 4+, Wits 4+, Command 2+**Effect:** Once per scene, when engaged with 3+ opponents, declare "Battlefield Mastery." For next 3 exchanges:

- All melee attacks gain +1 Effect
- Enemies act at -1 die due to disorientation
- Your Position improves by one step
- Convert one Harm 1→Fatigue per exchange

Narrative: When surrounded, you enter a state of perfect combat flow where enemies become obstacles rather than threats.**8.19.3 Prestige Talents****Battlefield Terror (12 XP)****Requirements:** Melee 4+, Body 4+, Harm 2+ experience**Effect:** Enemies in Close range act at -1 die due to intimidation. Once per scene, convert enemy's success to partial with cost.**Narrative:** Reputation and presence that makes opponents hesitate.

8.19.4 Epic Talents

Blade Dance (18 XP)

Requirements: Melee 5+, Duelist's Edge, Flurry Strike

Effect: Engage and attack up to 3 targets in one action. Each attack at -1 die, but Position improves by one step.

Narrative: Legendary skill that makes you a whirlwind of death.

8.19.5 Combat Balance Notes

These talents are designed to enhance melee viability while maintaining Fate's Edge's core tension between risk and reward. Melee combat should remain **manageably deadly** - dangerous enough to require tactical skill, but with meaningful options for skilled fighters to excel.

Key Principles:

- Talents enhance existing mechanics rather than replace them
- Specialization provides clear advantages for focused builds
- High-cap opponents remain genuinely threatening
- Positioning and tactical decision-making remain crucial
- Story Beat escalation continues to compound challenges

Role Balance: Enhanced melee fighters complement rather than overshadow other roles. Ranged characters maintain mobility advantages, magic users provide battlefield control, and support characters enable team effectiveness.

8.20 Monk Talents

Core Concept

Monks channel inner discipline into supernatural martial prowess, combining unarmed combat mastery with spiritual focus.

Starting Talent

Disciplined Body (3 XP — Minor Talent) **Requirements:** Melee 1+, Body 2+.

Benefits:

- +1 die to unarmed combat attacks.
- Convert 1 Harm to Fatigue once per scene.
- Once per scene, improve Position by one step.

Advanced Talents

Iron Fist Way (6 XP — Minor Talent) **Benefits:** +1 die to unarmed attacks; strikes count as enchanted.

Flowing Spirit Way (8 XP — Major Talent) **Benefits:** Convert up to 1 Harm into Fatigue per attack; +1 die against fear or charm.

Perfect Timing Way (7 XP — Major Talent) **Benefits:** Twice per scene, improve Position by +1 step; +1 die to reactions.

Untouchable Way (12 XP — Major Talent) **Prerequisites:** Iron Fist + Flowing Spirit.
Benefits: +1 die to unarmed attacks; convert 2 Harm into Fatigue; cannot be grappled.

Inevitable Way (15 XP — Major Talent) **Prerequisites:** Iron Fist + Perfect Timing.
Benefits: +2 dice to unarmed attacks; ignore 1 Armor; may counterattack when an enemy misses.

Transcendent Harmony (18 XP — Epic Talent) **Prerequisites:** Flowing Spirit + Perfect Timing, Spirit 4+.
Benefits: Convert 2 Harm into Fatigue; once per session become immune to Harm; allies gain +1 defense.

Progression Path

Monks specialize early (6–8 XP), combine paths mid-tier (12–15 XP), and achieve transcendence late (18 XP). Each path represents a distinct combat philosophy and playstyle.

Chapter 9

Lore-Heavy Backgrounds, Skills, and Talents

9.1 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.

9.2 Regional and Cultural Skills

9.2.1 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.

9.2.2 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.

9.2.3 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.

9.2.4 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.

9.2.5 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.

9.3 Specialized Talents

9.3.1 Ways-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).

9.3.2 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.

9.3.3 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.

9.3.4 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).

9.3.5 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.

9.3.6 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.

9.4 Background Packages

Background packages combine cultural roles with signature talents, perks, scene keys, and narrative hooks.

9.4.1 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

9.4.2 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

9.4.3 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

9.4.4 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

9.4.5 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

9.5 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.

9.5.1 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.

9.5.2 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.

9.5.3 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.

9.5.4 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.

9.5.5 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.

9.6 Magic System Integration

Lore-heavy backgrounds integrate seamlessly with Fate's Edge's magic systems, creating unique synergies between knowledge and supernatural power.

9.6.1 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.

9.6.2 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.

9.7 Social and Leadership Applications

9.7.1 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.

9.7.2 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.

9.8 Advanced Skill Uses

9.8.1 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.

9.8.2 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.
- Ways-Walker's Step can resolve ancient mysteries or conflicts.
- Curse-Breaker background can lift region-wide afflictions.

9.9 Balance and Implementation

9.9.1 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.

9.9.2 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.

9.10 Character Creation Examples

9.10.1 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**

9.10.2 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.

9.11 Guidance for Game Masters

9.11.1 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.

9.11.2 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 10

GM Reference Tables

Core Cycle & Outcomes

| | |
|--------------------------------------|--|
| Core Resolution (at a glance) | Declare Action & Approach → Set DV → Roll d10 pool → Count Successes (6+) and 1s = SB → Apply Position reroll rule → Compare to DV and resolve. |
|--------------------------------------|--|

| Result | Boons | SB (GM) | GM Guidance |
|--------------------|-------|--------------------|--|
| $S \geq DV, C = 0$ | 0 | Spend 1s as needed | Clean Success: grant intent crisply. |
| $S \geq DV, C > 0$ | 0 | Spend/bank 1s | Success & Cost: intent + immediate complication. |
| $0 < S < DV$ | 1 | Spend/bank 1s | Partial: proportional progress; open a fork/complication. |
| $S = 0$ | 2 | Spend/bank 1s | Miss: no progress; escalate clocks/pressure. |

Position, DV, Effect, Criticals

| Position | Mechanical Edge | Consequence Severity | Typical |
|------------|--|----------------------|----------------------------------|
| Dominant | Re-roll <i>one failure</i> (1–5) | Minor | Ambush, superior prep, leverage. |
| Controlled | (No built-in reroll) | Moderate | Even footing; ready. |
| Desperate | Must re-roll <i>one success</i> (6–10) | Severe | Cornered, outmatched, wounded. |

| DV | Difficulty | Use Cases |
|----|------------|--|
| 2 | Routine | Clear intent, modest stakes, controlled environment. |
| 3 | Pressured | Time limits, mild resistance, partial information. |
| 4 | Hard | Hostile conditions, active opposition, precision. |
| 5+ | Extreme | Stacked constraints, dramatic failure risk. |

| Effect | Impact | Examples |
|----------|----------|--|
| Limited | Minor | Scratch damage; inch forward; narrow opening. |
| Standard | Expected | Normal damage; hit the objective as framed. |
| Great | Major | Significant harm; rapid progress; surplus benefit. |

| | |
|---------------------------------|---|
| Criticals & Counting | 10s count as <i>two</i> successes each. 1s always create SB (even on rerolls). Criticals <i>do not</i> auto-succeed a DV if $S < DV$. Apply Position rerolls <i>after</i> the initial count; re-rolled dice can add SB if they show 1. |
|---------------------------------|---|

Story Beats (SB) & Boons

| SB Cost | Scale | Examples |
|---------|------------------|---|
| 1 SB | Minor pressure | Noise/trace; +time; chip Position; strain a resource. |
| 2 SB | Moderate setback | Alarm; lose cover; lesser foe arrives; close a route. |
| 3 SB | Serious trouble | Reinforcements; key gear breaks; front twists. |
| 4+ SB | Major turn | Authority arrives; scene shift; disaster trigger. |

| Boon Cost | Effect | Limits |
|-----------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| 1 Boon | Re-roll one die (after Position) | Once per action. |
| 1 Boon | Improve Position by 1 step | Max +1/action. |
| 1 Boon | Activate on-screen Asset | Plausibility test if needed. |
| 2 Boons | Convert to 1 XP | Max 2 XP/session via conversion. |
| Var. | Power talents/rites | As specified. |

Clocks, Harm, Fatigue

| Clock | Size | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | Trigger/Effect |
|-------|-------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|--|
| _____ | 4/6/8 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | What advances it / What it does when filled. |
| _____ | 4/6/8 | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | |

| | Fatigue Level | Effect |
|----------------------------|---------------|--|
| [Fatigue & Harm Reference] | 0 | Fresh: no effect. |
| | 1 | Winded: downgrade one Controlled roll to Desperate per scene. |
| | 2 | Strained: Controlled rolls add +1 SB on 1s. |
| | 3 | Exhausted: downgrade one Controlled roll to Desperate per scene. |
| | 4 (Max) | Collapse: further exertion = DV 3 Body test or Severe Harm. |

| Harm Level | Casting Impact |
|------------|---|
| Minor | Concentration taxed; channeled effects DV +1. |
| Moderate | Risk of disruption: roll DV 2 to maintain channels. |
| Severe | Channel breaks; freeform casting auto-generates +1 SB. |
| Critical | No further casting; Patron may impose terms for reprieve. |

Chapter 11

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

Dominant

Advantageous position, minor consequences.

Controlled

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 | Controlled (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 §8.6):

- **Fast** — Move *and* Shoot; reload is incidental. Controlled 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 §8.7). 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 §8.7).
- 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 Controlled shot on a clear trigger crossing your line.

Appendix C

The Whispered Grimoire (Rituals: Condensed SRD)

Rituals (SRD Format)

Each ritual lists: **Purpose**, **Prereqs** (minimum pools), **Time**, **Duration**, **Test** (typical DV), **Effect**, **Backlash** (**SB tiers**).

Position: Unless stated, assume **Controlled**. Consecrated/strong leverage may grant **Dominant**; hostile site/opposition may impose **Desperate**.

Criticals: A roll of **10** counts as *two successes*; does not auto-succeed if total < DV.

Exorcism (Core)

Purpose: Expel a possessing entity.

Prereqs: Spirit 3+, Lore 3+, Insight 2+. **Team:** 1+ helpers (Lore/Spirit/Insight/Command/Presence).

Time: Significant Time (phased). **Duration:** Encounter.

Structure: *Contested clock* = max(4, min(8, 2 + Subject Tier)). Each **segment** resolves three beats:

1. **Invocation:** Spirit+Lore vs DV (Tier).
2. **Confrontation:** Presence+Insight *or* Command vs DV (Tier).
3. **Binding:** Wits + relevant (Tinker/Arcana/Rites) vs DV (Tier).

Entity Resists/Acts: On any beat where entity meets/exceeds total successes, it attempts one response (*Whispers, Manifestation, Assault, Distortion*) at DV (Tier); on a fail to resist, *advance the Exorcism clock +1 segment*.

Effect (Success): Three consecutive beats exceeding DV by 2+ across segments expel the entity; subject stabilizes (Harm 2 care); participants mark Fatigue 1 per entity Tier. Mark 1 XP for major spiritual conflict.

Failure: Clock fills → exorcism fails; entity empowered (+1 die on future possessions), subject worsens (Harm +1 level or Corruption), all participants Fatigue 2; start *Haunting* [6].

Backlash (SB): 1–2 *SB* minor phenomena; 3–4 *SB* splintering influence (bank +2 *SB* later); 5+ *SB* possession flares (impose Desperate next beat).

PC Possession (Ongoing): If a PC remains possessed: bank *Tier I–II: 1 SB, III–IV: 2 SB, V+: 3 SB* per session as intrusion fuel (player retains meaningful agency; resistance is always offered).

Cleansing Fire

Purpose: Purify curses/contamination; weaken hauntings.

Prereqs: Spirit 4+, Arcana 3+, Lore 2+. **Time:** Significant Time. **Duration:** Immediate; site/object

is clean for 1 month.

Test: Spirit+Lore (prep) then Presence+Arcana to enact, DV 3–4 (by strength).

Effect: Remove one curse/taint; beneficiaries gain +1 die to resist similar effects for a scene. If target is possessed, entity suffers –1 die this scene.

Backlash: 1–2 *SB* partial; returns at half strength next day. 3–4 *SB* agitation (+2 *SB* next encounter). 5+ *SB* inward scorch (caster Harm 1; minor fire-themed flaw).

Bell of Truce

Purpose: Compel parley before violence.

Prereqs: Presence 4+, Spirit 3+, Command 2+. **Time:** Some Time. **Duration:** Some Time (30 min).

Test: Spirit+Command then Presence+Performance, DV 3.

Effect: Sentients within 200y must pass Spirit+Resolve (DV 3) to initiate violence. Early violators create +2 *SB* when violence starts; resisters gain +1 die to Sway with party.

Backlash: 1–2 *SB* weak tone (–1 die to Sway next social). 3–4 *SB* spillover (GM banks +2 *SB* in next crowd). 5+ *SB* perceived weakness (–2 dice to Command 1 session).

Mist-Road Veil

Purpose: Route-bound concealment for stealthy travel.

Prereqs: Wits 3+, Arcana 2+, Survival 2+. **Time:** Some Time. **Duration:** Significant Time (1 hr).

Test: Wits+Survival (channel) then Wits+Arcana (weave), DV 3.

Effect: 100y misted path; party gains +2 dice to Stealth on path; sound halved; mundane tracking nearly impossible in area.

Backlash: 1–2 *SB* patchy (–1 die to Stealth). 3–4 *SB* hunters notice (+2 *SB* next encounter). 5+ *SB* whiteout (–2 dice to navigation for a scene).

Lantern Weir

Purpose: Calm/guide crowds; prevent panic surges.

Prereqs: Wits 3+, Arcana 3+, Performance 2+. **Time:** Some Time. **Duration:** Significant Time (1 hr).

Test: Wits+Performance then Presence+Arcana, DV 3.

Effect: 50-ft soft light fence; +2 dice to crowd management; reduce panic effects by 2 *SB* inside; moonlight illumination.

Backlash: 1–2 *SB* flicker (–1 die to crowd control). 3–4 *SB* wrong attention (+2 *SB* next social). 5+ *SB* glare (–1 die to Perception nearby).

Oath of Shared Breath

Purpose: Distribute Fatigue; blunt chip damage.

Prereqs: Presence 4+, Spirit 3+, Sway 2+; 2+ willing. **Time:** Some Time. **Duration:** Significant Time (1 hr).

Test: Spirit+Sway then Presence+Command, DV 2–3.

Effect: Pool Fatigue, divide evenly (round up). When one would take Harm 1, group may instead each take 1 Fatigue. Sense ally health + location (100y).

Backlash: 1–2 *SB* uneven load (+1 Fatigue to one). 3–4 *SB* clingy bond (–1 die to social with outsiders this scene). 5+ *SB* overshare (unwanted empathic bleed).

Key of Locked Gates

Purpose: Open magical seals/wards/locks.

Prereqs: Wits 4+, Arcana 4+, Tinker 2+. **Time:** Some Time. **Duration:** Instant; bypass may persist 1 day.

Test: Wits+Arcana (analyze) then Presence+Tinker (unravel), DV 3–4 (by complexity).

Effect: Bypass one seal/ward; +2 dice to further lock/ward analysis rolls this session; may mint a one-day passkey.

Backlash: 1–2 *SB* partial (relatches soon; –1 die to keep open). 3–4 *SB* alarms/wards trigger (+2 *SB* next area scene). 5+ *SB* containment breached (new threat enters play).

Stone's Memory

Purpose: Read imprinted history of places/objects.

Prereqs: Spirit 4+, Insight 3+, Lore 2+. **Time:** Some Time. **Duration:** Scene (insights last session).

Test: Spirit+Insight (attune) then Wits+Lore (parse), DV 2–3.

Effect: Witness 1–3 significant echoes; +2 dice to related Investigation/Lore this session; detect current magical influence.

Backlash: 1–2 *SB* fragmented (–1 die to related Investigation this scene). 3–4 *SB* psychic residue (Fatigue 1; –1 die social for a scene). 5+ *SB* memory snare (outside aid required).

Mirror's Gaze

Purpose: Remote senses through a target.

Prereqs: Wits 4+, Arcana 3+, Insight 2+. **Time:** Some Time. **Duration:** Some Time (30 min).

Test: Wits+Arcana (link) then Spirit+Insight (merge), DV 3; requires token or line of sympathy.

Effect: Perceive target's senses; if willing, +1 die to Investigation/Stealth via their view; guide them remotely.

Backlash: 1–2 *SB* unstable feed. 3–4 *SB* target senses intrusion (gains +2 dice to detect/resist you this session). 5+ *SB* caster's spirit adrift (body goes limp until broken).

Appendix D

Disabling Traps and Wards

Traps are mechanical obstacles (barriers, Harm, Fatigue/poison). **Wards** are the magical analog (sensors, bindings, anchored effects). Resolve like any obstacle: **state the fiction**, **set Position**, **assign DV**, **roll**, **spend SB**.

At the Table: Fast Structure

Step 1: Name the Ward/Trap. What it senses (heat, oath, Patron), what it does (alarm, bind, blast), and *where* it anchors (sigil, keystone, idol, threshold).

Step 2: Reveal Two+ Handles. Always surface multiple approaches in fiction:

- **Arcane Pattern** (*Wits+Arcana*)
- **Mechanism/Anchor** (*Wits+Tinker*)
- **Pathing/Timing** (*Body+Agility/Move*)

Tools, rare components, or Patron symbols count as handles.

Step 3: Set Position, then **Set DV (from access/pressure)**:

- **Position:** *Dominant* (one fail die re-roll), *Controlled*, *Desperate* (severe consequences).
- **Typical DV (do not bind to Position):**

DV 2

Clear access, right tools, time to work.

DV 3

Partial access, time pressure, mild interference.

DV 4–5+

Hostile field, active trigger, ancient/large scale.

Step 4: Declare Stakes. Say what a Partial/Miss does. If relevant, put a **Ward Clock** and an **Alert Clock** on the table.

Common Ward Types & Anchors

| Type | Trigger | Anchor Examples |
|---------------------|---|---|
| Sentry | Threshold, line-of-sight, cadence | Lintel sigil, eye-gem, bell filament |
| Binding | Touch item, break seal, oath-breach | Wax seal, chain knot, iron brand |
| Punitive | Trespass + timer, named foe | Idol tooth, ash glyph under rug, curse knot |
| Displacement | Path inversion, gravity twist, dream-step | Floor mandala, mirror post, sleep pin |
| Anti-Magic | Casting in zone, symbol/pact use | Null plate, cold-iron frame, void ampoule |

Approaches & Aids

- **Wits+Arcana:** parse glyph grammar; salt/ink ground; counter-hum frequency.
- **Wits+Tinker:** wedge keystone; snip filament; route charge to safe sink.
- **Body+Agility:** thread safe arc; pin plate; time the chime.
- **Teamwork:** one steadies *Position* with gear while another rolls. An assistant may *accept 1 SB* to grant +1d once.
- **Talents/Tools:** lockpicks, ward-ink, tuning forks, mirror-shards; aligned Patron sign may improve *Position one step*.

Clocks that Matter

Ward Integrity (4):

proximity to *disarm or rupture*. Partial: +1. Miss: +2.

Alerted Attention (4):

guardians/spirits/owners notice tampering.

Escalation (4/6):

punitive effects ramp (more Harm/area/tags).

Outcome Palette

- **Strong Hit:** Disabled or cleanly redirected. Optionally *bank a tell* (you recognize this signature later).
- **Partial:** Suppressed but unstable; pick one: tick ALERTED ATTENTION+1; apply a small elemental/Patron backlash; leave a trace that can be read later.
- **Miss:** Ward holds or barks. GM may (a) advance WARD INTEGRITY toward rupture, (b) trigger a reduced effect now, (c) spend SB for a hard complication.

Counter-Ward (Arcana focus; optional). On a success choose: **Suppress** (one scene) *or* **Disarm** (permanent; pay rare material or mark +1 Obligation) *or* **Invert** (first trigger redirects to a safe sink; start UNINTENDED ECHO 1/4).

Difficulty Dials (GM)

- **Scale:** Vast/ancient lattice: +1 DV or add a second clock.
- **Haste:** Rushing worsens *Position* one step.
- **Right of Names:** Knowing the warder's true name improves *Position* one step *or* grants +1d.
- **Opposed Patron:** Using hostile symbols imposes -1d *or* +1 DV (table call).

Fiction-First Hooks

- Telegraph tells (ozone, cold breath, hair rising) before the roll.
- On **Partial**, change the room: new cover lines, shimmered zones, boon-dead spots.
- On **Miss**, offer a choice: eat a lesser effect now to avoid full trigger later, or press on and risk rupture.

Worked Mini-Example. *Vault Sentry (DV 3, **Controlled**)*. Anchor: eye-gem set in an idol. Crew uses *Wits+Tinker* with ward-ink and a mirror shard. **Partial:** WARD INTEGRITY+1, ALERTED ATTENTION+1; beam is shunted for this scene. Later, a rival recognizes the mirror signature—trace pays off.

Approaches & Aids

- **Wits+Arcana:** parse glyph grammar; salt/ink ground; counter-hum frequency.
- **Wits+Tinker:** wedge keystone; snip filament; route charge to safe sink.
- **Body+Agility:** thread safe arc; pin plate; time the chime.
- **Teamwork:** one steadies *Position* with gear while another rolls. An assistant may *accept 1 SB* to grant +1d once.
- **Talents/Tools:** lockpicks, ward-ink, tuning forks, mirror-shards; aligned Patron sign may improve *Position one step*.

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- Telegraph tells (ozone, cold breath, hair rising) before the roll.
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Appendix E

Poison as Story Beats

Principle: Poison should move the scene forward, not just drain health. It begins with **Fatigue**, escalates via **SB**, and resolves through fiction.

Core Model

- Poison applies **Fatigue** first.
- GM may **spend SB** to escalate: Fatigue → Condition → Harm. Always narrate the change.
- Track with a POISON CLOCK (e.g. *Neurotoxin Load* 1/4).
- Resist as normal; antidotes, masks, or purge rites improve Position or cancel ticks.

Delivery Routes

| Route | Base DV | Cues / Position |
|---------------------|---------|---|
| Contact | 2 | Sweat, numbness; Controlled with gloves/tools. |
| Ingested | 3 | Bitter taste, oily film; Controlled if tested. |
| Inhaled | 3–4 | Perfume haze, dust motes; Desperate in tight spaces. |
| Injury/Venom | 3–4 | Fang strike, tainted blade; Controlled unless braced. |

Outcomes

Strong Hit.

Clear 1 tick and ignore the dose.

Mixed.

Mark **Fatigue** +1 *or* minor **Condition** (DIZZY, SHAKING); GM may tick clock.

Miss.

Mark **Fatigue** +1 and tick clock 1–2; GM may spend SB to escalate to Harm 1.

GM SB Dials

- **Pressure Valve:** Spend SB to delay impact, but advance clock.
- **Spike:** Spend SB to frontload with a Condition (BLIND, CRAMPING).

- **Echo:** Bank SB to trigger a relapse later in play.

Sample Poisons

| Name | Primary Effect | Escalation (via SB) |
|-------------------------|--------------------------------|---|
| Bitterglass | Fatigue +1; copper breath. | 1 SB: DIZZY; 2 SB: Harm 1 (air hunger). |
| Widowroot | Fatigue +1; numbed grip. | 1 SB: drop item; 2 SB: SHAKING. |
| Dream-Marrow | Fatigue +1; memory slow. | 1 SB: FOGGED; 2 SB: ASLEEP. |
| Serpent's Borrow | Fatigue +1; swelling puncture. | 1 SB: CRAMPING; 2 SB: Harm 1. |
| Courtier's Kiss | Fatigue +1; sweet aftertaste. | 1 SB: SWAYED; 2 SB: BLURRED VISION. |

Example

Gala Balcony. Inhaled perfume trap (DV 3, Desperate). Mixed: PC marks Fatigue +1, GM ticks POISON CLOCK. Later, GM spends 1 SB → DIZZY. PC leans on a friend, forging a bond.

Summary

Poison starts with **Fatigue**, escalates with **SB**, and drives fiction through clocks, conditions, and consequences.

Appendix F

Boss Generator

F.1 Core Concept

Bosses mirror player archetypes:

- **Solo Boss (The Brute):** A singular, overwhelming threat with unique mechanics.
- **Mixed Boss (The Commander):** A strong figure who empowers and directs minions.
- **Mastermind Boss (The System):** A schemer, institution, or environment that opposes players through assets and schemes.

This chapter provides a deck-based tool to generate any of these archetypes.

F.2 Deck Structure

F.2.1 Standard Deck (52 Cards)

Suits Define Core Aspects:

- **Spades (Structure):** Body, form, core mechanics.
- **Hearts (Drive):** Motivations, goals, psychology.
- **Clubs (Complication):** Hazards, minions, environmental twists.
- **Diamonds (Reward):** Loot, knowledge, or narrative shifts.

Ranks Define Scale/Intensity:

- **2–5 (Minor):** Elite foe. 4-segment Phase Clock.
- **6–10 (Standard):** Significant boss. 6-segment Phase Clock.
- **J/Q/K (Major):** Set-piece villain. 8-segment Phase Clock.
- **A (Pivotal):** Campaign-defining threat. 10-segment Phase Clock.

[Fatigue and Boons in Action] **Situation:** Cael (Cantor) is channeling a ward during a pitched fight. He already has **1 Fatigue**, meaning his next roll will force him to re-roll one success.

Roll: Spirit 3 + Arcana 3 = 6d10 → {6, 9, 1, 3, 2, 8} Result: 3 successes, 1 SB. DV = 3 (meets requirement).

Fatigue Effect: Because Cael has 1 Fatigue, he must re-roll one success die. He re-rolls the 6 → result = 4 (failure). New total = 2 successes → now a Partial.

Player Action: Cael spends **1 Boon** to negate the Fatigue penalty. Instead of losing the success, the roll stands at 3 successes.

Outcome: The ward stabilizes as a clean success. GM still gains 1 SB from the roll.

Lesson: Fatigue pressures characters by threatening their rolls, but Boons let players push back—turning failure into agency without erasing the risk.

F.3 Boss Archetypes

F.3.1 1. The Solo Boss (Brute)

- **Focus:** Raw presence, unique mechanics, escalating phases.
- **Structure ():** Defines resistances, body, and attack type.
- **Drive ():** Shapes targeting and tactics.
- **Complication ():** Ongoing hazard or condition (e.g., reality warp, poison cloud).
- **Reward ():** Narrative payoff, artifact, or twist.

Example: A Titan, J Vengeance, 10 Phased Attacks, Q Command Obedience. Interpretation: A colossal, vengeful giant who phases through attacks, defeated only to yield dominion over its kin.

F.3.2 2. The Mixed Boss (Commander)

- **Focus:** A dangerous leader plus followers. Defeating them requires managing both.
- **Structure ():** Body plus a *Minion Clock*. Followers act each round unless disrupted.
- **Drive ():** Directs how the leader uses minions (e.g., sacrificial pawns, coordinated strikes).
- **Complication ():** Minions escalate scene hazards (fire spreading, reinforcements).
- **Reward ():** Control of followers, faction leverage, or treasure guarded by both.

Example: 6 Swarm Core, K Domination, J Minion Control, 10 Faction Favor. Interpretation: A commander directing a swarm. Defeating them secures the loyalty of a faction.

F.3.3 3. The Mastermind Boss (Systemic)

- **Focus:** A schemer, institution, or environment resolved through multiple scenes.
- **Structure ():** Organization or environment. Represented by multiple linked clocks.
- **Drive ():** The villain's overarching scheme.
- **Complication ():** Ongoing schemes/assets—rival factions, crises, economic pressure.
- **Reward ():** Narrative leverage: reform, control, or expose the system.

Example: Q Hive Mind, A Cosmic Hunger, K Reality Distortion, A Worldly Truth. Interpretation: A cult network feeding a god-fragment, warping reality until the players dismantle the cult's assets.

F.4 GM Procedure

1. **Choose Archetype:** Solo, Mixed, or Mastermind.
2. **Draw Four:** One per suit. Highest rank = Phase Clock size.
3. **Interpret:** Combine Structure, Drive, Complication, Reward.
4. **Mechanize:**
 - **Solo:** Pure mechanics and hazards.
 - **Mixed:** Add Minion Clock(s).

- **Mastermind:** Use Scheme/Asset clocks, faction moves.
5. **Phase Escalate:** Break into 2–3 phases. Increase dice pools or trigger complications.
 6. **Tie to Story Beats:** SB fuel Drives and Complications—rage, reinforcements, systemic backlash.

F.5 Example Bosses

The Tyrant-Engine (Solo) A corrupted war-machine (8 Adaptive Core, K Domination, Q Reality Distortion, K Rewriting Fate). 8-segment Phase Clock. Gains dice each phase, warps battlefield, reveals code that can rewrite its kin.

The Swarm Marshal (Mixed) A necromancer (6 Swarm Core, K Domination, J Minion Control, 10 Faction Favor). Commands undead; defeating them wins allegiance of a death cult faction.

The Black Ledger (Mastermind) A corrupt guild (10 Phased Form, Q Preservation, Q Soul Drain, A Shifting Balance). Scheme clocks track bribery, debt, and reputation. Defeat reshapes political power in the city.

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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