Fate's Edge: Game Master's Guide

Nicholas A. Gasper

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Chapter 1

Introduction: The Weight of Choice

Welcome, Game Master. You hold a unique role in **Fate's Edge**. You are not a storyteller in solitude, nor a neutral referee. You are the **weaver of consequences**, the **architect of a living world**, and the **guide on a path where every choice echoes**. Your task is to breathe life into a realm of ancient magic, fallen empires, and stubborn, vibrant cultures—and then to let that world truly respond to the players' ambitions.

This is a game where power demands a price, where the past never truly sleeps, and where a single decision can reshape a nation or end an age. From the marble forums of Ecktoria to the mist-drenched fens of the Mistlands, the world is alive with stories waiting to be told. Your job is to provide the stage, set the stakes, and embrace the beautiful, chaotic ripple effects of player agency.

A World Alive with Consequences

In **Fate's Edge**, the fiction is the final authority. The rules in this book are not chains to bind your imagination, but **tools to give weight to your stories**. They provide a consistent framework for adjudicating risk, tracking progress, and ensuring that success and failure both drive the narrative forward in compelling ways.

Think of yourself as a conductor. The players provide the melody with their characters' actions and ambitions. You provide the harmony and rhythm with the world's response. The rules are your sheet music—a guide to creating a cohesive, dramatic piece, but one that allows for improvisation and adaptation.

Your judgment is the cornerstone of the game. If a rule doesn't serve the moment, change it. If a player's creative idea deserves to succeed, find a way to make it work. The ultimate goal is a collaborative, engaging story that everyone at the table helps to create.

The Core Philosophy: Narrative First

At the heart of **Fate's Edge** is a simple, powerful idea: **mechanics serve the story**. A dice roll is never just a binary pass/fail check. It is an event that changes the fictional landscape.

- A **Clean Success** means the plan works as intended—the guard is bribed, the lock clicks open, the argument sways the crowd.

- A **Success with Cost** means you get what you want, but the world pushes back—the guard takes the bribe but becomes a future liability, the lock opens but the mechanism is damaged, the crowd is swayed but a rival noble takes note.

- A **Partial** means you're faced with a difficult choice—you can open the lock but it will take time and risk discovery, or you can sway part of the crowd but alienate another faction.

- A **Complication** means the situation changes dramatically—a new threat appears, a hidden factor is revealed, the stakes are raised.

This approach ensures that every roll matters. The story never stalls; it evolves.

Risk is the Engine of Drama

Fate's Edge is built on the principle that **meaningful risk creates compelling drama**. Safety is boring. It is when characters have something to lose—their reputation, their allies, their ideals, their lives—that their actions become truly heroic or tragically memorable.

Your primary tool for managing this risk is the **Story Beat (SB)** economy. When the dice show a 1, it's not merely a failure; it's the world reacting. The GM gains SB to introduce complications, escalate existing threats, or reveal hidden dangers. SB are not punishments; they are the fuel for an unpredictable, responsive narrative.

A successful sword swing might defeat an opponent, but a Story Beat spent could mean the blade is notched and less effective next time, or that the defeat draws the attention of a more powerful foe. The drama continues.

Characters Who Change the World

Character growth in **Fate's Edge** is not about accumulating abstract power. It is about **meaningful growth** rooted in the story. Players earn **Experience Points (XP)** by engaging with the world's challenges and complexities. They spend XP to improve their capabilities, acquire assets like a ship or a spy network, or unlock unique cultural talents.

This means character advancement is directly tied to the narrative. A character becomes a legendary commander by leading armies, not by killing monsters in a vacuum. They become a master wizard by uncovering forbidden lore and surviving the backlash, not by memorizing spells from a textbook. As the GM, you are the curator of this growth, presenting challenges that allow characters to evolve in ways that feel earned and impactful.

Your Toolkit

To help you guide the story, **Fate's Edge** provides a set of elegant, interconnected tools:

- **The Dice Pool**: The core mechanic. Players roll a number of d10s equal to an Attribute + a Skill. The highest single die determines the degree of success, while any 1s generated provide Story Beats (SB) to the GM.

- **Position Effect**: Before a roll, you set the character's **Position** (Dominant, Controlled, or Desperate), which defines the stakes of failure, and their **Effect**, which describes what a clean success will achieve.

- **Clocks**: Visual trackers for ongoing challenges. A 4-segment clock might represent picking a complex lock, while an 8-segment **Campaign Clock** could track the rise of a villainous faction.

- **The Deck of Consequences**: A standard 52-card deck used to generate inspired, thematic complications when SB are spent. The suit determines the nature of the complication (Social, Physical, etc.), adding a layer of fortune and flavor.

These tools are designed to be learned quickly and used intuitively, getting out of the way so you and your players can focus on the story.

How to Use This Book

This book is your guide to running the game.

- **Chapters 1-3** cover the core principles and basic procedures.

- **Chapters 4-6** delve into advanced systems for conflict, travel, and long-term play.

- **Chapters 7-9** provide guidance for high-tier campaigns, world-building, and the specific setting of the Amaranthine Sea region.

- **Chapters 10-11** offer practical advice for running scenarios and a comprehensive appendix of tools and tables.

You don't need to memorize everything. Use this book as a reference. Return to it when you need clarification or inspiration. The most important chapters to internalize are those on the core philosophy (this chapter) and the basic action resolution (Chapter 2).

Flavor is Free

Players and GMs: Remember that in **Fate's Edge**, **flavor is free**!

This means you can add descriptive details, cultural elements, and atmospheric touches to your actions without spending resources or requiring a dice roll. Want your Vhasian duelist to parry with a flourish taught in the royal fencing schools? Go ahead! Want to describe the eerie silence of a Valewood ruin when searching for clues? Perfect!

Flavor enriches the narrative and makes the world feel real and lived-in. It doesn't change the mechanical outcome, but it defines the *how* and the *why*. The GM should encourage this and reciprocate by painting vivid pictures of the world.

Mechanics determine success or failure, but flavor determines the story we tell about it.

A Guide for Veterans: Fate's Edge in a Nutshell

If you're experienced with other RPGs, here's a quick translation guide for how **Fate's Edge** handles common concepts:

Traditional RPG Concept	Fate's Edge Approach
Ability Scores & Skills	**Attributes** (Body, Wits, etc.) + **Skills** (Melee, Lore, etc.) form a dice pool.
Skill Checks	Roll Attribute+Skill dice pool. Highest die vs. Difficulty Value (DV). Any 1s give the GM Story Beats (SB).
Hit Points / Health	**Harm Track** for injuries. **Fatigue** for exhaustion. Consequences are narrative and mechanical.
Combat Rounds	Fiction-first. Actions are resolved based on narrative timing, not rigid initiative.
Spell Slots / Mana	Magic uses the same core system. Powerful spells may require extra time, resources, or risk generating more SB.
Saving Throws	Roll an appropriate Attribute+Skill combo to resist a effect (e.g., Body+Resolve to resist poison).
Experience & Leveling Up	Gain XP through play. Spend XP to increase Attributes/Skills, acquire Talents, or buy Assets. Growth is player-directed.

The key difference is a consistent, unified mechanic applied across all types of challenges, focused on narrative outcomes.

Begin the Journey

Your role is a privilege and a creative challenge. You are a facilitator, a fan of the player characters, and the keeper of a world that will challenge and surprise them. Trust the rules to handle the tension, trust your players to drive the story, and trust yourself to weave it all together.

Now, take a deep breath. Shuffle the deck. Let the dice fall where they may.

It's time to guide the edge of fate.

Chapter 2

Running the Game: Core Procedures

2.1 Standard Rule: Player-Managed Modules

This rule makes each player the primary steward of their character-facing trackers (*modules*). It keeps table pace high, reduces hidden bookkeeping, and clarifies when mechanical thresholds trigger. The GM retains authority over world-facing clocks, faction fronts, and all major narrative consequences.

2.1.1 Scope (*What Counts as a Module*)

Player-managed modules are any **character-facing** clocks, counters, or discrete states that sit on a single character sheet:

- **Obligation** (per Patron or Symbol).

- **Corruption Clock** (e.g., Cantor).

- **Leash** (Summoned spirit strain) and **Spirit Bond Clock**.

- **Repertoire Clock** (Cantor) or similar progression clocks.

- **Asset States** (e.g., Symbol: Maintained / Neglected / COMPROMISED / SHATTERED).

- **Scene Counters** explicitly tied to a PC (e.g., Exposure on that PC, personal Buff/Debuff durations).

Not included: GM story resources (global **Story Beats**), location/faction clocks, and mystery/doom fronts.

> **What Players Track (at a Glance)**
>
> l l X
> _____
> **Module Owner Tick / Change Triggers (examples)**
> _____
>
> Obligation (by Patron) Player Invoke/Push/ritual text; Invoker *Borrowed Grace*; cracking a Symbol; bargain costs.
> Corruption Clock Player Cantor Push; Resonant Rite; GM spends a Beat tied to the PC's occult actions.
> Leash (Summoning) Player Harm to spirit; commands against nature; split focus; crossing `[WARD]` (DV = Cap).
> Spirit Bond [4] Player Shared victories, mutual aid, meaningful attempts (*near-miss progress* once/session/type).
> Repertoire [6] Player Learn a new unique Song/rite-as-song; practice milestones.
> Asset State (Symbol) Player Maintenance/downtime checks; *Crack the Seal* → Compromised; breakage → Shattered.
> _____

2.1.2   Core Principle

Players **immediately** mark their own modules when a rule says "mark $+X$" or a trigger fires. Threshold effects resolve as soon as they are reached.

2.1.3   Player Duties

1. **Mark Increases/Decreases on Cue.** When you Invoke a Rite, Push, spend/clear per rules text, or a trigger fires, update your module *now*, not later.

2. **Declare Thresholds.** If marking fills a clock or crosses capacity, say so aloud; thresholds resolve before the scene proceeds.

3. **State Ownership.** Keep per-Patron Obligation tallies distinct; track each Symbol's state if you use Symbols.

4. **Keep It Visible.** Use a tracker the GM and table can see (sheet boxes, index cards, or shared digital).

2.1.4   GM Duties

1. **Spot-Check.** At need, ask any player: current Obligation by Patron, Corruption segments, Leash state, Asset states.

2. **Enforce Thresholds.** When a player reports a threshold, apply the standard effects below *immediately.*

3. **Own the Fallout.** Patron intrusions, faction reactions, front clocks, and major narrative consequences remain GM authority.

2.1.5   Standard Thresholds & Effects
Obligation Capacity

$$\textbf{Obligation Capacity} = \textit{Spirit} + \textit{Presence}$$

- **Over Capacity:** Immediately mark **+1 Fatigue** per segment over capacity.

- **Over 2× Capacity:** Immediately clear all Fatigue, mark **+1 Harm (Stress)**, and a **Patron Intrusion** occurs (GM frames on-theme demand/complication).

Corruption Full   When a **Corruption Clock** fills:

- Apply the last-Patron **benefit & burden** (per Patron table or setting guidance) to the PC (and any listed followers/retainers).

- **Reset** the Corruption Clock to empty.

- If the player chooses **Embrace Corruption**, convert the current Patron theme into a permanent boon/curse per §**??**.

Leash Full (Summoning)   When the **Leash** fills:

- The spirit acts once to its nature, then **departs** (or turns hostile at GM discretion and fiction).

Leash Capacity: *Cap* + *Spirit* segments. (*Cap* is the outsider's tier: Cap 1 for Lesser, Cap 3 for Greater.)

Symbol State (Invoker)

- **Maintained** → normal function.   **Neglected** → GM may impose +1 DV to related rites.

- **Compromised** (e.g., *Crack the Seal*) → instant resolution per rules; mark extra Obligation; repair in Downtime or pay 1 XP.

- **Shattered** → unusable until replaced or ritually restored per fiction.

2.1.6   Table Procedure (90-Second Loop)

Start of Session   Players read out: per-Patron **Obligation** totals, **Corruption** segments, standing **Asset States**, and any personal clocks at 3+.

End of Scene   Quick pass: "*Any marks?*" Players tick modules from scene events. If a threshold triggers, resolve now.

Downtime   Players apply clears (service, contrition, purification, study) to their own modules. GM verifies any costs or fiction.

2.1.7   Disputes & Order of Operations

If two marks would land simultaneously, apply them in the **least advantageous order for the acting character**, unless a rule specifies otherwise. The GM is final arbiter.

2.1.8   Accessibility & Tools

Use highly visible trackers: bold boxes on sheets, poker chips for segments, or a shared table of per-Patron Obligation. Keep modules at-a-glance to minimize interruption.

2.1.9   Worked Micro-Examples

- **Invoker Rites Twice:** Vessa Invokes two different Patrons. She marks each Patron's **Obligation** separately. Hitting capacity with Patron A causes Fatigue; Patron B remains below capacity.

- **Cantor Pushes:** Jorel Pushes a Song (mark +1 Corruption). That fill triggers the last-Patron boon/burden immediately; then he resets to 0.

- **Summoner Clash:** Kestra's Cap 3 elemental takes Harm and crosses a `[WARD]`; she ticks her **Leash** twice. On fill, the elemental flares once and departs.

The Core Loop: Your First 10 Games

Start here for your first session! Ignore advanced systems until comfortable.

1. Player states Goal & Action (Attribute + Skill)
2. GM sets simple DV (2-5)
3. Player rolls. Count Successes (6+)
4. GM consults Outcome Matrix. **Ignore Boons for now. Use simple complications on Partial/Miss.**

Once comfortable, add: **Boons | Story Beats | Clocks**

First Game Scenario: The Sunstone Tower

Premise: The party is hired to infiltrate the ruined Sunstone Tower and retrieve a magical sunstone before rival treasure hunters do. This scenario uses a limited rules subset perfect for beginners.

- **Ignore for this scenario:** Boons, Corruption, intricate magic subsystems, detailed Follower/Asset upkeep.

- **Focus on:** Core dice pool, Success/Partial/Miss outcomes, Position, Clocks.

- **Character Setup:** Use pregenerated characters or create simple ones with 20 XP and 2–3 clear hooks.

GM Prep in 10 Minutes

[Sunstone Tower Prep Checklist]

- Name 3 NPCs: hirer, rival delver, tower spirit (or echo).

- Write 1 sentence for each scene: Approach, Interior, Sunstone Chamber.

- Create 2 clocks: **Guardian Alert [4]** and **Tower Collapse [6]**.

- Decide 1 twist: rival arrives early, tower shifts, or sunstone is not what it seems.

Scene 1: The Approach

> **Lane Marker: Skill Challenge with a Clock**
>
> **GM Focus:** Practice calls for DV and Partial outcomes. For this intro, tick the **Guardian Alert [4]** clock on a Partial or Miss.

The tower stands on a cliffside. Players must navigate three challenges:

- Cross the crumbling bridge (Athletics) – DV 3

- Scale the cliff face (Athletics/Strength) – DV 4

- Sneak past the stone guardians (Stealth) – DV 3

Guardian Alert Clock [4]: Each Partial or Miss advances the clock by 1. If filled, guardians activate and pursue; treat them as a single *Tower Guardian* threat with a simple [4] Harm track.

Scene 2: The Tower Interior

This scene teaches **Position** and **environmental stakes**.

- **Dominant:** "You have the high ground on the crumbling staircase, looking down on the patrol."

- **Controlled:** "The hallway is dark but quiet. You can take your time, but there might be traps."

- **Desperate:** "The floor gives way beneath you as you lunge for the door!"

[How to Call Position in Play]

- **Ask:** "How are you doing this? Cautious? Bold? Rushed?"

- **Map to Position:** Cautious → Controlled; clever leverage or clear edge → Dominant; rushed, cornered, or outnumbered → Desperate.

- **State It Out Loud:** "This is Desperate. Big reward, but real danger if it goes wrong."

Scene 3: The Sunstone Chamber

The chamber is collapsing as rival delvers close in. Use a simple [6] clock for the collapse. Each round, the clock ticks up by 1. On each Miss, advance it by an extra 1 segment.

- **Goal:** Retrieve the sunstone and escape before the clock fills.

- **On Fill:** The chamber seals. Escape requires a final, Desperate group action.

> **Lane Marker: One New Idea at a Time**
>
> Scene 1: Clocks *only.*
> Scene 2: Add *Position.*
> Scene 3: Combine *Clocks + Position.* Reserve Boons, Corruption, and advanced magic for later sessions.

2.2   Learning Through Examples

This section walks the same situation through multiple passes, adding one rule at a time. Use it as a mental template when you improvise.

Example 1: Core Loop Only

> **Example 1 – No SB, No Boons**
>
> Lyra tries to sneak past the guardian in a narrow hallway. (Agility + Stealth = 5d10).
> The GM says it's a normal risk, DV 3, Controlled Position.
> She rolls and gets: `3, 5, 6, 7, 9` ⇒ 3 successes (6, 7, 9).
>
> DV 3 with 3 successes is a **Success**.
>
> **GM:** "You slip past the guardian quietly. You're in position behind it if you want to act."

Example 2: Add Story Beats Only

> **Example 2 – Adding Story Beats**
>
> Same situation. Lyra rolls 5d10 and gets: `1, 4, 6, 6, 8`.
> Successes: 3 (6, 6, 8). She also rolled a **1**, which makes 1 Story Beat (SB) for the GM.
>
> DV 3 with 3 successes is still a **Success**, but the GM now has 1 SB.
>
> **GM Spend (1 SB = Minor Complication):**
> *"You get past the guardian, but your cloak snags and tears. The sound echoes – the next room has a -1 Position penalty for stealth checks."*

Example 3: Add Boons Only

> **Example 3 – Adding Boons**
>
> Later, Lyra attempts to scale a loose stone wall (Athletics + Agility = 4d10). DV 3.
> She rolls: `2, 3, 4, 5`. Zero successes = **Miss**.
>
> Instead of only consequence, the GM awards **2 Boons**.
> **GM:** "You slip and land hard, taking 1 Harm. Mark 2 Boons – you can use them later to turn the tide."
>
> On her next attempt, Lyra spends 1 Boon to re-roll a die, turning a failure into a success.
> The player feels the sting of failure *and* the promise of payoff.

Example 4: Putting It Together

> **Example 4 – SB + Boons + Position**
>
> The party is fleeing as the tower begins to collapse. A crumbling staircase stands between them and the exit.
> **GM:** "This is Desperate. DV 4 to get everyone across safely."
> Lyra leads, rolling 6d10 (Agility + Athletics + help). She gets: `1, 2, 6, 7, 7, 9`.
> **Readout:**
>
> - 4 successes (6, 7, 7, 9) vs DV 4 = Success.
>
> - 1 rolled **1** = 1 SB to the GM.
>
> - Desperate Position means high risk if there had been fewer successes.
>
> **GM:** "You all make it across, but the last step collapses behind you. I spend 1 SB: your exit path is gone. You'll need a new way out."
>
> **Lesson:** Even on a success, SB let you bend the fiction toward drama without erasing the player's win.

2.3 The Core Resolution Cycle

When a player rolls, they engage the world through risk, consequence, and discovery. Follow these steps:

1. **Declare Action & Approach:** Player states intent, Attribute + Skill.

2. **Set Difficulty Value (DV):** Based on narrative stakes.

3. **Establish Position:** Dominant, Controlled, or Desperate.

4. **Roll Pool of d10s.**

5. **Count Successes (6+) and Story Beats (1s).**

6. **Check Against DV** using Outcome Matrix.

7. **Apply Outcome:** Success, Partial, or Miss.

8. **Spend SB** for complications and twists.

[Position Effects] lX

Position	Mechanical Effect
Dominant	May re-roll one failure (die < 6).
Controlled	Default state; no re-rolls.
Desperate	Must re-roll one success (die 6+), keeping the second result.

[Difficulty Ladder – Beginner Focus] lX

DV	When to Use

2	Routine: Clear path, no pressure, almost guaranteed.
3	Default: Mild challenge, some risk, use this most often.
4	Hard: Serious opposition, bad angle, or strong resistance.
5+	Extreme: Save for major boss encounters or dramatic gambles.

2.4   Story Beats: The Engine of Drama

Every time a player rolls a 1, you gain Story Beats (SB). These are narrative tools, not punishments.
[SB Spend Menu (Beginner Version)] lX

SB Cost	Simple Complications
1 SB	Minor: Noise, distraction, small setback, lost gear.
2 SB	Moderate: Alarm raised, new threat enters, lose advantage.
3+ SB	Major: Reinforcements, scene shifts, stakes escalate.

Failing Forward with SB

- **On Success:** Use SB to add texture. The hero wins, but something changes.

- **On Partial:** The hero gets what they wanted *and* you spend SB to add cost or threat.

- **On Miss:** You can spend SB to make the setback sharper, broader, or longer-lasting.

> **Lane Marker: One Complication per Roll**
>
> When in doubt, spend SB on *one* clear complication instead of many small ones. Name it: "Guard Alerted", "Floor Cracked", "Oath Owed" and move on.

2.5   Combat Made Simple

Combat uses the same core loop. The only difference is that the stakes are higher and usually more immediate.
[Combat Quick Reference]

- **Initiative:** No fixed order. Ask: "Who acts next?" Follow the fiction.

- **Actions:** Each turn, a character can move and take one meaningful action.

- **Position Matters:** Flanking or ambush → Dominant; surrounded or exposed → Desperate.

- **Use Clocks:** Track enemy morale [6], environmental dangers [4], and boss thresholds.

Three-Beat Combat Structure

When you feel lost in a fight, fall back on three beats:

1. **Opening Exchange:** Establish where everyone is and what they want.

2. **Turning Point:** Spend SB or tick clocks to change the situation (reinforcements, terrain shifts).

3. **Final Gamble:** Make the last few rolls matter – higher DV, Desperate Position, or big rewards.

Example: SB in Combat

The party fights bandits on a collapsing bridge.
On a Partial, the GM spends 2 SB: "You push them back, but the bridge loses another support. The *Bridge Collapse [4]* clock advances."
Now every action is also about whether they escape in time.

2.6 Clocks & Fronts

Clocks are visual trackers for threats, progress, and looming changes. They keep pressure visible and shared.

Basic Clock Usage

- **Size:** Use [4] for small scenes, [6] for bigger problems, [8] for arcs.

- **Advance On:** Misses, certain Partials, or SB spends.

- **Name It:** "Alarm Raised [4]" or "Floodwaters Rise [6]" is better than a blank circle.

  [Beginner Clock Limits]

- No more than 3 active clocks per scene.

- Only 1–2 clocks should matter to the current roll.

- Say out loud when you tick a clock and why.

Mini-Fronts for Short Arcs

A *Front* is a cluster of related clocks and threats.

- **Example Front:** "Rival Delvers of the Sunstone Tower"

- Clocks: "Rivals Close In [6]", "Tower Integrity [6]", "Rival Reputation [4]".

- Each time you spend SB, consider ticking one of these clocks.

2.7 Ready for More? Add These Systems

Once you're comfortable with the core loop, introduce these modules one at a time. Treat each as a new lane marker.

Boons

Boons reward players for pushing their luck.

- On **Miss:** Gain 2 Boons.

- On **Partial:** Gain 1 Boon.

- **Spend:** Re-roll a die, add +1 Effect, or seize a small advantage (GM-approved).

Start with *re-roll only.* Once players are comfortable, add the other options.

Advanced Magic

- **Basic:** Use simple Tag-based magic (single roll, single tag).

- **Intermediate:** Add Runekeepers after 2–3 sessions, when everyone understands SB and Clocks.

- **Advanced:** Introduce Invokers and ritual magic for groups that enjoy planning and complex payoffs.

Followers, Assets, and Domains

Add persistent resources when the group cares about territory, organizations, or long-term projects.

- Start with 1 simple Follower or Asset each.

- Tie them to clocks: "Caravan Reputation [6]", "Temple Influence [4]".

- Spend SB to threaten or complicate these resources.

2.8   Session Flow: A GM Cognitive Checklist

Use this as a quiet mental script. You do not need to say any of it out loud.

Opening 10 Minutes

- Ask: "What does everyone want out of tonight?" (goal, vibe, focus).

- Recap 2–3 key facts and 1 unresolved clock.

- Ask each player: "What is your character worried about right now?"

During Play

- Before a roll: Name DV, Position, and stakes.

- After a roll: Say the outcome type (Success/Partial/Miss) first, then the fiction.

- Between scenes: Look at clocks. Ask, "Which one should move? What changes in the world?"

Closing 10 Minutes

- Ask: "What was your favorite moment?" (signals what to do more of).

- Note any clocks that reached halfway or full.

- Jot 2 bullet points: "Next time on Fate's Edge..." as hooks.

> **Quick GM Cheat Sheet**
>
> - **DV Default:** 3 (adjust ±1 for ease/difficulty).
>
> - **Position:** Controlled (normal), Dominant (advantage), Desperate (risk).
>
> - **SB Spend:** 1=minor, 2=moderate, 3+=major complication.
>
> - **Max Clocks:** 3 per scene to avoid overwhelm.
>
> - **Golden Rule:** When in doubt, make a ruling that keeps the story moving.

Remember: The goal is to tell an exciting story together. These rules are tools, not tests. Start simple, add complexity when you're ready, and keep your lane markers clear: one new idea at a time, one clear consequence per roll, and one or two clocks that really matter.

Chapter 3

Managing Resources

In **Fate's Edge**, resources are not mere numbers etched on parchment—they are **living, breathing elements of the fiction** that pulse with the same vitality as the characters who wield them. From the last precious sip of water in the sun-scorched sands of Akilan to the fragile loyalty of a Ykrul war-band chanting beneath blood-red banners, every resource tells a story, and every story demands its price. As the GM, you are the keeper of these vital threads, the weaver of scarcity and abundance. This chapter illuminates how to manage and narrate the systems that fuel both mortal ambitions and epic campaigns.

Supply Clock: The Pulse of Survival

The **Supply Clock** beats as a shared heartbeat for the entire party, tracking their access to life's essentials—food that sustains, water that quenches, gear that endures, and the logistical support that separates civilization from chaos. This is no sterile inventory system; it is a **narrative lever** that tightens tension when the party finds themselves isolated in whispering forests, pressed by pursuing foes, or cut off from the comforting glow of hearth fires.

Supply Clock States

[Supply Clock Conditions] lX

Segments Filled	Narrative Effects
0 (Full)	The party moves with confidence, well-equipped and prepared for the journey ahead
1 (Low)	Minor complications emerge: bland rations, damaged arrows, thinning waterskins, fraying ropes
2 (Dangerous)	Each character gains Fatigue as exhaustion and scarcity take their toll
3 (Empty)	Severe penalties manifest—starvation, dehydration, equipment failure become imminent threats

Filling the Clock

The Supply Clock fills when the world turns against the party's preparations:

- Extended travel through hostile lands without proper provisioning

- The GM spends 2+ SB on logistics failures or environmental hardships

- The party chooses to travel light for speed or stealth advantage

- Failed Survival or Craft rolls related to hunting, foraging, or repair

Emptying the Clock

Hope returns when the party finds respite:

- Reaching civilization resets the clock to Full—the comfort of inns and markets

- Group Survival check (Wits + Survival, DV 2) under favorable conditions clears 1 segment

- Downtime spent in relative safety removes 1 segment through rest and recovery

- Successful provisioning actions—a good hunt, discovered cache—can reduce segments

Example: A week-long sea passage across the Dolmis Straits with uncertain winds that whisper of storms. A failed Navigation roll causes the GM to spend 2 SB—filling two segments as supplies spoil in the damp hold. The party is now at Low Supply, tasting the bitterness of hardtack and warm water. A second failed roll against contrary winds fills another segment—Dangerously Low. Fatigue sets in like a creeping frost. The sea, once a path to glory, now gnaws at their endurance with salt-crusted lips.

Fatigue: The Weight of the World

Fatigue represents the cumulative toll of journeying through a world that rarely offers comfort—the **exhaustion that seeps into bones, the hunger that hollows cheeks, the strain that clouds judgment**. Each level of Fatigue forces the character to **re-roll one success** on their next action, as weariness undermines their competence.

Fatigue Effects

[Fatigue Progression] lX

Fatigue Level	Physical and Narrative Manifestations
1 Fatigue	Re-roll one success: Minor exhaustion, distractedness, slight impairment
2 Fatigue	Re-roll one success cumulative: Noticeable weariness, slower reactions, aching muscles
3 Fatigue	Re-roll two successes: Significant exhaustion, labored movement, mental fog settling in
4 Fatigue	Collapse, KO, or spiritual break: Character falls unconscious or becomes incapacitated

Clearing Fatigue

Recovery requires genuine respite:

- A night's rest with adequate Supply removes 1 Fatigue—the healing power of true rest

- Fatigue cannot be removed while the party is Dangerously Low or Out of Supply—exhaustion compounds scarcity

- Medical attention (Presence + Heal, DV 2) during downtime can remove 1 Fatigue through proper care

Narrative Note: Fatigue is not just physical—it can reflect the mental strain of constant vigilance, the grief of lost companions, or the spiritual exhaustion from battling unnatural forces. A failed ritual might leave a caster **Fatigue 2** from the metaphysical backlash alone, their soul bruised by unseen energies.

Harm and Fatigue Conversion

Tracks & Caps

- **Fatigue Track**: boxes equal to Body.

- **Harm Levels**: Harm 1 (minor), Harm 2 (serious), Harm 3 (critical/incapacitated).

Fatigue → Harm Conversion Whenever you would mark Fatigue and your Fatigue Track fills (all boxes marked):

1. Increase your Harm by one level (e.g., 0→Harm 1, Harm 1→Harm 2, Harm 2→Harm 3).

2. Clear all Fatigue (erase the Fatigue Track back to 0).

This conversion can occur multiple times in a scene. Effects of Harm tier (disadvantage, action limits, incapacitation at Harm 3, etc.) follow your existing rules.

Followers and Assets: Power Beyond the Self

In Fate's Edge, players can invest XP into **Followers** and **Assets**—tools that extend their reach beyond personal skill. These are not mere stat blocks—they are **story agents** with their own motivations, risks, and narrative arcs that intertwine with the player's destiny.

Followers: On-Scene Allies

Followers are **on-screen allies** who stand beside you in danger—loyal swords, cunning scouts, faithful apprentices. They are bought with XP and tracked by a **Cap** (their maximum assist bonus), representing their competence and dedication.

Cost: A follower with Specialty Cap C costs C^2 XP. Downtime = 1–3 days to recruit, train, and build trust.

Assisting in Scenes

Followers assist by adding their expertise to your endeavors:

- Assist dice come from the helper's capabilities, not the leader's pool

- Total Assist on any roll (from any sources) remains hard-capped at +3, representing practical limits of coordination

- Exception: The "Exceptional Coordination" Talent allows one follower to provide +4 assist dice through preternatural synergy

- When applicable, the follower adds help dice equal to **min(C, the helper's relevant Skill)**, capped at +3 dice

- Slot Limit: Only one follower may assist a given action—too many cooks spoil the broth

Follower Initiative Actions

Once per scene (across the party), one on-screen follower may take a small independent action that demonstrates their initiative:

- Scout & Signal — Change an ally's next action position to Dominant through timely warning

- Distract & Draw — Reduce a kinetic rail (Hunt/Escape/Hazard) by –1 tick through clever diversion

- Fetch & Carry — Move a small object through danger when moments count

  Cost: Mark Exposure +1 or Harm 1 on that follower—bravery risks consequences.

Follower Upkeep

Relationships require maintenance:

- Each Downtime, pay XP equal to Cap or spend a Scene tending the relationship—neglect erodes loyalty

- Risk: If the GM spends 2+ Story Beats on an action you take with assistance, they may mark Exposure or Harm on the follower instead of applying other consequences, if fictionally appropriate

- Off-Screen Capability: Once per downtime, a follower with Cap 3 or higher can solve one significant problem but generates 1 SB for party. The GM must describe how the follower's action creates story consequences for the SB generated

Follower Condition

Followers track their own trials through **Exposure** and **Harm**:

Exposure — Heat, attention, stress, or narrative pressure placed upon the follower—the cost of being noticed

Harm — Injury, trauma, fatigue, or direct damage to the follower—the price of involvement

  States:

- **Maintained** — Reliable and ready, their loyalty reinforced by attention and care

- **Neglected** — Needs downtime or care. Impose a -1 die penalty to their assistance—distance grows

- **Compromised** — Captured, defected, lost, or incapacitated. Cannot assist until recovered—the bond frays or breaks

Assets: Off-Scene Influence

Assets are **off-screen resources**—titles that open doors, safehouses that offer sanctuary, spy rings that gather secrets, charters that grant authority. They do not act in scenes directly, but they change the fiction and provide leverage when you return to the table, like chess pieces moved between matches.

[Asset Tiers and Descriptions] lX

Asset Tier	Narrative Examples and Scope
Minor (4 XP, 1 day)	Safehouse in the docks, small shop in the market, petty title granting minor respect, local contact network with limited reach
Standard (8 XP, 1 week)	Noble title with actual influence, guild section with specialized resources, spy ring covering a district, workshop producing quality goods
Major (12 XP, 1 month)	City license for major operations, regional network spanning cities, fortress lease with strategic value, trading company with international reach

Using Assets

Assets provide subtle but powerful benefits:

- **Off-Screen Effect:** Use each Asset's listed Off-Screen effect once per session for free—the quiet work between adventures

- **On-Screen Activation:** To reshape the current scene dramatically, spend 1 Boon—calling in favors at crucial moments

- **Downtime Activation:** A player may activate an off-screen asset at the very start of a campaign or during Downtime. It costs 2 XP or 1 Boon to activate—investment paying dividends

- The Asset must have scope and reach for the intended effect—a local shop can't influence royal politics

Asset Upkeep

Assets require ongoing maintenance to remain effective:

- **Frequency:** Upkeep is paid once per Downtime period per asset

- **Cost Options:**

    - **Efficient** (Higher XP, Less Time): Cost = max(1, XP Acquisition/3). Time: Minimal effort (e.g., sending a retainer, a quick inspection)
    - **Intensive** (Lower XP, More Time): Cost = 1 XP. Time: A dedicated Downtime action of significant personal involvement (e.g., training a follower, repairing an asset)

- **Failure Consequences:** If upkeep is not paid, the resource degrades:

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

Asset Condition

All Assets have a **Condition Track** reflecting their maintenance and standing:

Maintained — Full capability. Functions normally—the asset thrives under care

Neglected — Impaired. Impose a -1 die penalty when used; requires attention—dust gathers, contacts cool

Compromised — Unavailable. Cannot be used until repaired or recovered—sealed by authorities, burned by rivals, lost to misfortune

Boons: The Currency of Resilience

Boons are **narrative tokens** earned by embracing risk and moving the story forward against the tide of misfortune. They reward **failure with texture and opportunity**, not failure with emptiness—the silver lining in clouds of defeat.

Earning Boons

Boons flow to those who engage deeply with the world:

- On a missed or partially successful roll with meaningful complications (see Fail Forward, Chapter 2)

- Through clever or risky roleplay that drives the story into new territory

- Via bond-driven actions with intricate descriptions that deepen relationships

- Through GM discretion for exceptional collaborative play that enhances everyone's experience

Boon Economy

Boons follow natural rhythms:

- **Holding cap:** You can hold at most 5 Boons—fortune favors preparation but not hoarding

- **Carryover Limit:** At the end of each scene, reduce held Boons to a maximum of 2. Excess Boons are lost—opportunities fade if not seized

- **Conversion:** Once per session, in downtime, you may convert 2 Boons → 1 XP (max 2 XP via conversion per session)—lessons hard-earned become permanent growth

Using Boons

Boons empower moments of exceptional effort:

- **Re-roll one die** after seeing the pool—a second chance when it matters most

- **Activate an Asset** for on-screen effect—calling upon resources at critical junctures

- **Power a Rite** or magical ability—channeling energy into mystical workings

- **Improve Position** by one step (1 Boon)—turning desperation into opportunity

Anti-Fishing Measures

To maintain healthy game flow and prevent exploitation:

- **Once/Scene Cap:** At most **2 Boons from failures** per character per scene—diminishing returns on repeated failure

- **Repetition Rule:** Same approach + same stakes in the same scene cannot award another Boon—innovation required for continued reward

- **Position Gate:** Dominant tests with trivial fallout do not award Boons—no reward without risk

    Design Note: Boons are not a "get out of jail free" card. They are earned by **leaning into the fiction with courage and creativity**, not by fishing for failure. Reward players who take narrative risks, not those who roll badly on purpose.

XP Awards: Growth Through Choice

XP in Fate's Edge is **meaningful currency** that represents genuine growth through experience. It is not handed out for mere attendance—it is earned through **active engagement, meaningful risk, and tangible narrative impact**.

Session Awards

[XP Award Guidelines] lX

Award Type	Description and Examples
Table Attendance	+2 XP for participating in the shared story
Major Objective	+2–4 XP for achieving significant story goals
Discovery/Lore	+1–2 XP for uncovering important information or secrets
Hard Choice	+1–2 XP for making difficult decisions with consequences
Complication Spotlight	+1–3 XP for engaging meaningfully with complications
Bond/Flag Driven Play	+1–2 XP for roleplaying that emphasizes relationships
GM Curveball	+0–3 XP for adapting well to unexpected developments

Milestones

Major achievements bring significant growth:

- +8–12 XP to all players at the conclusion of a major story arc—the reward for epic endeavors

- +2 XP bonus to one player for a signature moment of the arc—recognition for exceptional contribution

Campaign Resources: Mandate and Crisis

At the campaign level, two great clocks track the party's rising influence and the world's gathering resistance—the tide of fortune that lifts or drowns ambitions.

Mandate Clock (0–6)

Tracks the party's public legitimacy and the world's willingness to support their cause:

- High Mandate: Allies seek them out, resources flow freely, doors open without force

- Low Mandate: Suspicion dogs their steps, bureaucratic obstacles multiply, support withers

Crisis Clock (0–6)

Tracks the opposition's growing strength and the world's mounting troubles:

- Rising Crisis: Complications escalate relentlessly, enemies grow bolder, disasters loom

- Managed Crisis: Breathing room emerges, opportunities to strike back appear, pressure relents

Combat Resource Management

In combat, resource management takes on desperate urgency. The same systems that govern exploration and downtime now operate under the sword's edge, with consequences that echo immediately through the clash of steel.

Supply in Combat

Extended combat encounters drain resources with alarming speed:

- **Intense Combat**: GM may spend 1 SB to fill 1 Supply segment as arrows break and waterskins puncture

- **Prolonged Engagement**: Each hour of sustained combat adds 1 Supply segment—the slow drain of endurance

- **Ammunition Depletion**: Ranged weapons may run low, requiring scavenging actions amidst danger

Fatigue in Combat

Combat fatigue compounds existing strain with brutal efficiency:

- **Each Round**: Characters with existing Fatigue re-roll additional successes equal to their Fatigue level—exhaustion undermines skill

- **Critical Exhaustion**: Reaching 4 Fatigue during combat causes immediate collapse—the body's final surrender

- **Recovery**: Cannot clear Fatigue during active combat—no rest while blades flash

Follower Combat Integration

Followers in combat face unique risks and opportunities that test their loyalty and competence:

- **Combat Assistance**: Followers can assist in combat rolls using their Cap—standing together against danger

- **Follower Risk**: 2+ SB spent in combat can endanger assisting followers (mark Exposure or Harm)—bravery has its price

- **Initiative Actions**: Followers can take combat-relevant independent actions (cost: Exposure +1 or Harm 1)—moments of individual valor

- **Combat Exposure**: Each time a follower acts on-screen in high-risk combat, mark Exposure +1 after the second such beat this scene—the attention they attract

Tactical Clocks as Resources

Tactical clocks represent persistent combat conditions that drain party resources like sieges drain garrisons:

[Tactical Clock Effects] lX

Clock Type	Resource Drain and Narrative Impact
Mob Overwhelm [6]	Enemy numbers become advantage—forces Supply depletion and accelerates Fatigue through relentless pressure
Fatigue Spiral [4]	Exhaustion affects performance—accelerates existing Fatigue, making each action more difficult than the last
Morale Collapse [6]	Fear undermines effectiveness—generates SB and reduces effectiveness as confidence shatters
Environmental Collapse [8]	Terrain/fire/building failure—creates new Supply and safety concerns as the battlefield turns against you

Narrative First: The Fiction Is the Ledger

In Fate's Edge, arrows, rations, and waterskins are tracked only in the fiction that surrounds them. Mechanics engage only when those resources become scarce enough to matter. The focus remains always on **narrative tension**—the gnawing hunger, the fading light, the last arrow—not sterile bookkeeping.

Let the world breathe with its own needs and abundances. Let the fiction lead through scarcity and surplus. And when the dice say the world pushes back against mortal plans—**listen to what they tell you about the price of ambition.**

Chapter 4

Magic and Backlash

In **Fate's Edge**, magic is not a clean or safe art practiced in sterile towers. It is a **dangerous negotiation with forces beyond mortal comprehension**—a dance on the razor's edge between power and damnation. Every spell is a gamble where power weighs on one side of the scale and consequence balances on the other. As the GM, your role is to make magic **feel weighty**, **thematic**, and **alive with risk**—a force that reshapes reality at a terrible price.

The Metaphysical Foundation: Eight Elements

Magic in Fate's Edge flows from eight fundamental forces that shape existence itself. These elements are not just energy sources—they are **philosophical principles** that define how reality functions and how magic interacts with it. They represent the core tensions that drive the universe: permanence versus change, creation versus destruction, order versus chaos, life versus death.

[The Eight Elements of Magic] lX

Element	Domain and Philosophical Nature
Earth	Stability, foundation, permanence, material reality, mountains, bones, cities
Fire	Transformation, passion, destruction, creation, will, forge, revolution
Air	Freedom, thought, communication, wind, breath, ideas, movement, change
Water	Flow, emotion, adaptation, tides, blood, intuition, reflection, cycles
Fate	Destiny, patterns, inevitability, threads, prophecy, order, consequence
Life	Growth, vitality, healing, nature, birth, connection, ecosystem, renewal
Luck	Chance, opportunity, randomness, fortune, accident, serendipity, risk
Death	Endings, transition, memory, ghosts, sacrifice, silence, completion

Each element has its opposite—Earth opposes Air's changeability, Fire counters Water's fluidity, Fate clashes with Luck's randomness, and Life battles Death's finality. This opposition shapes how backlash manifests when magic goes awry. When Earth magic fails, it might cause sudden shifts and instability (Air's domain); when Fire magic backfires, it might create unexpected flows or emotional turbulence (Water's domain).

Many Faces of Magic

Magic in Fate's Edge is expressed through many interconnected paths. You may specialize in one, or mix them at greater bookkeeping cost. All paths share the same dice engine and SB/Obligation

economies, but their flavor and risks differ.

Sidebar: [TAGS] & Casting

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

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

Cross-reference. For the canonical glossary and full list of available [TAGS], see §4.4.

Casting (Freeform aka "Free Casting")

Requires Talent: **Caster's Gift** (6 XP). Grants access to Weave Cast using the Eight Elements. Flexible, creative, and risky (Backlash on 1s).

   Weave & Cast: Casters describe the effect in terms of the Eight Elements. The GM sets DV and Effect based on scope.

- **Weave**: Player builds dice pool and rolls. On success, they stabilize the spell's form.

- **Cast**: A second roll channels the effect into the world.

- **Backlash**: Any 1 rolled may cause narrative backlash related to the Element.

Limits to Free Casting

Core Principle   Casters may attempt any effect describable using the Eight Elements and [TAGS] system, but power and scope are strictly bounded by **cost**, **risk**, and **fictional logic**. Magic should feel wondrous yet grounded, with clear stakes for overreach.

TAG-Based Limitations

Element Restrictions

- **Dangerous [TAGS]** (e.g. [TELEPORT], [TRANSFORM], [DOMINATE]): Always treated as *high-risk* effects with increased cost and Backlash severity.

- **Creation/Summoning:** Magic cannot create matter from nothing; it must reshape, relocate, or awaken existing materials or energies.

- **Life/Death:** Magic cannot directly kill or truly resurrect. It may heal or inflict Harm within normal game limits, stabilize, or worsen conditions.

Power Caps

- **Maximum [TAGS] per casting:** 6 total. Beyond this is considered *suicidal* and generally off-limits outside of legendary or sacrificial scenes.

- **Dangerous Combinations:** If 4+ *Dangerous* [TAGS] are combined, any mixed result (success with 1s, partial) **automatically triggers Backlash**.

- **Elemental Opposition:** Using directly opposing elements together (e.g. Fire/Water, Earth/Air) increases Backlash severity on a miss or partial.

Narrative and Fictional Constraints

Description Requirements

- **Clear Intent:** The caster must state what the magic does in concrete, table-understandable terms.

- **Logical Consistency:** Effects must align with chosen elements and `[TAGS]` (no "fire that heals bones" without a healing or life-related tag).

- **Environmental Integration:** Magic interacts with existing conditions; it does not ignore terrain, weather, or other ongoing effects.

Reliability Through Practice

- **Repeated Effects:** After three successful uses of the same basic effect, the GM may treat it as more routine (easier Position, reduced risk, or simpler costs), down to a reasonable minimum.

- **Signature Spells:** Repeatedly used, thematically consistent effects can become personal techniques with reduced cost or risk at GM discretion.

- **Art Specialization:** Focusing on specific elements or techniques can grant +1 die, gentler Backlash, or other small advantages when staying in-theme.

Resource and Consequence Management

Casting Costs

- **Mental Strain:** Each casting generates Story Beats (SB) roughly equal to the number of `[TAGS]` used (minimum 1). Bigger, more complex spells give the GM more SB.

- **Backlash Severity:** Stronger, riskier spells escalate potential Backlash: minor twists for small workings, serious harm or narrative fallout for large ones.

- **Fatigue Integration:** Extended, repeated, or especially powerful castings can cause Fatigue in addition to any Backlash.

Recovery Limitations

- **Cooling Off:** The same complex effect should not be cast more than three times per scene without penalty; afterward, expect worsened Position, increased Backlash, or Fatigue.

- **Preparation:** Major effects require setup: components, positioning, time, or ritual support. If the fiction does not support this, scale the effect down.

- **Sustain Costs:** Ongoing maintained effects cost *at least* 1 Mental Fatigue per scene, plus any narrative vulnerabilities (concentration, focus).

GM Adjudication Guidelines

When to Say No

- The effect breaks the campaign premise or unravels core mysteries.

- The power level is clearly beyond the current Tier of play.

- The effect clashes with established genre, tone, or setting logic.

- The player is using magic to bypass core game systems (social, travel, investigation) without paying meaningful costs.

When to Say Yes (With Cost)

- **Creative Problem Solving:** Unconventional but logically-tagged uses of magic.

- **Dramatic Moments:** Big swings that clearly serve character or story arcs.

- **Thematic Consistency:** Effects that reinforce Patron, Domain, or regional magic flavor.

- **Risk/Reward Balance:** High-impact effects that come with visible consequences: clocks, Obligation, Fatigue, or lasting scars.

Safety Valves

Player Options

- **Scale Back:** Reduce area, targets, or duration to bring the effect inside reasonable limits.

- **Collaborative Casting:** Combine efforts with other casters as a Ritual to share cost and risk.

- **Preparation Time:** Take longer, gather tools, and perform setup to gain better Position or reduce cost.

- **Tool Integration:** Proper components, symbols, or foci can improve Position or gently reduce difficulty.

GM Tools

- **Compromise Solutions:** "You cannot fly, but you can leap great distances for this scene."

- **Temporary Effects:** "It works, but only for this scene or until the clock ticks."

- **Conditional Success:** "It works, but leaves a glaring magical signature or debt."

- **Narrative Integration:** "It works, but attracts the attention of a relevant authority, Patron, or entity."

Learning and Mastery

Progression Path

1. **Apprentice:** 1–2 `[TAGS]`, basic elements, small personal effects.

2. **Journeyman:** 3–4 `[TAGS]`, combining elements, reliable scene-scale workings.

3. **Master:** 5–6 `[TAGS]`, complex interactions, major effects with real risks.

4. **Legendary:** Beyond normal limits, always with transformational costs, sacrifices, or permanent changes.

Specialization Benefits

- **Element Mastery:** +1 die and milder Backlash when working within a primary element or well-established style.

- **TAG Synergy:** Certain combinations become easier with practice; the GM may treat them as one "compound" tag instead of several.

- **Art Development:** Personal styles reduce cost or risk for signature techniques, but offer little help outside that niche.

- **Theoretical Advancement:** Deep understanding of principles can justify creative workarounds, with the GM assigning appropriate new costs rather than simple denial.

Free casting remains as creative as the table allows, but power always carries proportional cost and risk.

Rites User (Runekeeper)

Requires Patron + Thiasos (Familiar) + Codex (4 XP). Grants access to a Patron's Rites. Structured, powerful, but debt-driven through Obligation.

Requirements: A Patron bond, a Thiasos (Familiar), and a Codex (4 XP) mark a character as a Runekeeper.

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

$$DV = \max(ObligationCost - Spirit, Tier))$$

Invocation:

- **Action Cost**: Invoking a Rite requires 1 Action.

- **Obligation**: Each Rite used marks Obligation on its clock.

- **Push It**: Once per Rite, you may Push to increase its duration or potency by +1 step at the cost of +1 Obligation.

Obligation Clock: Tracks the Patron's claim. When full, the GM resolves the debt in-fiction. Obligation is reduced through service or downtime actions.

Invoker (Ritualist's Path)

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

[Invoker Path Features] lX

Feature Description and Limitations

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Symbol States & Repair

- Compromised: A Symbol set to Compromised (e.g., via *Crack the Seal*) provides *no* DV/Obligation reduction until repaired. Casting with a Compromised Symbol imposes −1 die on the Casting Test.

- Shattered: If you *Crack the Seal* again while the Symbol is Compromised, it becomes Shattered and cannot be used until replaced (Asset lost).

- **Repair (Downtime):** 1 day of focused work and a *Craft or Lore + Tinker* test vs. DV 3. Success: clear Compromised. Failure: no progress. Alternatively, spend **1 XP** to auto-repair.

Backlash & Failure (Explicit)

- **Success:** Rite resolves; apply Base/added Obligation and any SB from Push or No-Symbol clauses.

- **Partial:** Effect −1 step *or* shortened duration; mark **Fatigue 1**. If cast *without* a Symbol, Keeper gains **+1 SB** (in addition to normal SB generation).

- **Failure:** No effect; mark **Fatigue 1**; Keeper gains **+1 SB**. Then test *Spirit + Resolve* vs. DV 3:

  - On Fail: suffer **Harm 1 (Shock)** or start **Backlash Static [4]** (Keeper's choice).
  - If the Symbol was disrupted/hidden mid-cast *or* you *Cracked the Seal*: upgrade to **Harm 2 (Shock)**.

- **Interrupted:** Harm, Silence, or disruption before resolution counts as *Failure*.

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

Learning New Rites

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

- **Cost:** 1 week of Downtime + 2 XP.

- **Requirement:** Access to texts, a teacher, or direct observation of the Rite being performed by another adept.

- **Test:** *Lore + Investigation* (or a relevant skill) vs. DV 3–5 (based on Rite rarity/complexity).

- **Success:** Add the Rite to your Ritual Repertoire.

- **Failure:** Cannot learn this specific Rite for a significant time (GM discretion). The Keeper may set a relevant Complication (e.g., *Forbidden Knowledge Pursued*).

Symbols as Assets

- A Patron's Symbol is a **Minor Asset (4 XP)** whose primary value is as a **ritual focus/component**.

- You *can* attempt any ritual **without** the Symbol, but you incur these **No Symbol** penalties: **+1 DV** *(and therefore +1 round to cast, since casting time = DV rounds)*, **+1 Obligation** *(in addition to Base)*, and on *Partial/Failure* the Keeper gains **+1 extra SB**.

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

Borrowed Grace

Type: Invoker Talent — *Lesser Imbuement*

Use

- **Cost: 1 Boon**, **1 action**.

- **Effect (pick one on use): +1 Melee** *or* **+1 Thematic** (your table's signature/thematic Skill).

- **Duration:** *Single action/attack* (instantaneous boost only).

- **Requirement:** Wield/display the relevant Patron's **Symbol**.

- **Obligation:** Immediately mark **+1 Obligation** to that Patron (see §**??**).

- **Limits:** Cannot be extended, stacked, or *Pushed* for duration. Using *Borrowed Grace* while the Symbol is Compromised lowers your **Position** by one step *(or imposes −1 die if already* ***Desperate****)*.)

4.1   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.

- **Overload (2x Capacity):** Clear all Fatigue, take +1 Harm, and suffer immediate Patron intrusion (Claim, demand, or narrative cost). Downtime cannot reduce Obligation until Harm is addressed.

- **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.

Table 4.1: Universal Push It Costs

Cost Component	Effect
+1 SB	Escalate effect immediately
+1 Fatigue	Immediate physical/mental strain
+1 Corruption Clock Segment	Long-term Patron influence (unless otherwise specified)
GM spends 1 SB	Thematic complication (unless otherwise specified)

Note: Some talents, Rites, or magical paths may specify alternative corruption costs or additional consequences for Push It actions. When explicitly stated, those specific rules override the universal costs.

Clearing Corruption Corruption may be reduced through *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.

Summoning: Binding Outsider Forces

4.2 Summoning (Pact-Whisperer) — GM Mechanics

[Core] lX

Step	Rule (GM-Facing)

Access Requires **Pact-Whisperer** (2 XP). Talents gate capacity: **Lesser Pactwright** (Cap 1), **Greater Pactwright** (Cap 3). With both, one of each may be maintained.
Call *1 Action.* Manifest at *Near.* Choose a fitting Spirit Template (scene/Patron aligned).
Bind Pay 1 Boon *or* mark 1 Fatigue.
Leash Capacity Set **Leash** = *Cap + Spirit segments.* (Cap 1 = Lesser, Cap 3 = Greater.)
Tick Triggers Tick on: spirit takes Harm; command vs. nature; summoner splits focus; rival contests; rapid *Close→Far* reposition; crossing a [WARD] (test DV = Cap).
Act/Order A meaningful new order uses the summoner's Action; *Quick Commands* (attack nearest, hold doorway, relocate within *Near*, fetch and return) do not.
Departure When Leash fills, spirit acts to its nature once, then departs (or turns hostile at GM discretion).

Spirit Bond (Light Progress). Track a **Spirit Bond Clock** [4] per recurring spirit type. Mark on shared victories, good handling, or mutual aid. At 2: +1 die to communicate. At 4: on natural departure, +1 Boon and spirit becomes **Favored** (its Leash −1). *Near-Miss:* once/session per type, mark +1 on a meaningful failed Call/Bind.

Specializations (Pick When Relevant). Combat Specialist (+1 Harm melee; ignore first Harm on attacks) Scout Form (stealth/range; carry up to Cap 1: 2 kg, Cap 3: 10 kg; dragging ≤ 3×; overburden = tick) Utility Spirit (simple tasks) Shield Guardian (interpose; convert Harm→Fatigue).

Economy & Limits.

- **Boon Finesse:** Once/round, spend 1 Boon to clear 1 tick (before fill).

- **Order of Action:** Spirit acts immediately after summoner.

- **Concurrency:** One active spirit unless a Talent states otherwise; excess costs 1 Fatigue per extra Cap point.

- **End-State:** All summons end at Downtime unless sustained by Rite/Asset.

GM Reminders (No New Clocks).   Use only the **Leash** and optional **Spirit Bond** clocks. *Quick Commands* should be crisp rulings; tick when the player overreaches the spirit's nature or fiction.

4.3   Summoning (Pact-Whisperer) — GM Mechanics

[Core] lX

Step	Rule (GM-Facing)

Access Requires **Pact-Whisperer** (2 XP). Talents gate capacity: **Lesser Pactwright** (Cap 1), **Greater Pactwright** (Cap 3). With both, one of each may be maintained.
Call *1 Action.* Manifest at *Near.* Choose a fitting Spirit Template (scene/Patron aligned).
Bind Pay 1 Boon *or* mark 1 Fatigue.
Leash Capacity Set **Leash** = *Cap + Spirit segments.* (Cap 1 = Lesser, Cap 3 = Greater.)
Tick Triggers Tick on: spirit takes Harm; command vs. nature; summoner performs separate concentration-requiring action while commanding; rival contests; crossing a `[WARD]` successfully (test DV = Cap).
Act/Order A meaningful new order uses the summoner's Action; *Quick Commands* (attack nearest, hold doorway, relocate within *Near*, fetch and return) do not.
Departure When Leash fills, spirit acts to its nature once, then departs (or turns hostile at GM discretion).

Spirit Bond (Light Progress).   Track a **Spirit Bond Clock [4]** per recurring spirit type. Mark on shared victories, good handling, or mutual aid. At 2: +1 die to communicate. At 4: on natural departure, +1 Boon and spirit becomes **Favored** (its Leash −1). *Near-Miss:* once/session per type, mark +1 on a meaningful failed Call/Bind.

Specializations (Pick When Relevant).   Combat Specialist (+1 Harm melee; ignore first Harm on attacks)   Scout Form (stealth/range; carry up to Cap 1: 2 kg, Cap 3: 10 kg; dragging ≤ 3×; overburden = tick)   Utility Spirit (simple tasks)   Shield Guardian (interpose; convert Harm→Fatigue).

Economy & Limits.

- **Boon Finesse:** Once/round, spend 1 Boon to clear 1 tick (before fill).

- **Order of Action:** Spirit acts immediately after the command is given.

- **Concurrency:** One active spirit unless a Talent states otherwise; excess costs 1 Fatigue per extra Cap point.

- **End-State:** All summons end at Downtime unless sustained by Rite/Asset.

GM Reminders (No New Clocks).   Use only the **Leash** and optional **Spirit Bond** clocks. *Quick Commands* should be crisp rulings; tick when the player overreaches the spirit's nature or fiction. Clarify that "splitting focus" means performing a separate, concentration-requiring action while actively directing the spirit.

4.4 Cantor's Path (Songs) – GM Mechanics

[Core] lX

Element	Rule (GM-Facing)

Access Talent: **Cantor's Path** (8 XP). Prereqs: Lore 1+, Performance 2+, Presence 2+.
Scope **Low Rites as Songs** only (counts as knowing for performance use).
Cast Test *Lore + Performance vs. DV* (typical DV 2–3).
Timing Start with 1 Action; resolves at *start of next turn* unless *Pushed.*
Cost Pay listed materials. *No Obligation* on success.
Visibility Songs are noticeable; on Failure or Push, assume observers take note.

Corruption (Light). Track a **Corruption Clock** with segments equal to **Body**. Mark toward accumulation when: *Push*, perform a *Resonant Rite*, or the Keeper spends an SB tied to psionic/occult activity. On fill: apply the last-Patron **benefit & drawback** (and echo to followers/retainers); then reset to character's **Tier** minimum.

Corruption Accumulation Triggers. Multiple triggers required for +1 Corruption segment:

- **2 Push It uses** = +1 Corruption segment

- **1 Push It + 1 Resonant Rite** = +1 Corruption segment

- **3 GM SB spends** on occult activities = +1 Corruption segment

- **1 High Cantor Standard Rite** = +1 Corruption segment

Resonant Rites. Designated Low Rites may *optionally* mark toward Corruption accumulation on success for added weight. Player chooses to resonate or not.

Results. Success: Rite as written. **Partial:** −1 step or shorter duration; mark Fatigue 1. **Failure/Interrupted:** No effect; mark Fatigue 1; GM gains +1 SB (Hearts).

Push. Resolve now; mark Fatigue 1; mark toward Corruption accumulation; trigger a GM **Story Beat** (Patron/Road/social fallout).

Song Synergy (Tight Rulings).

- **Compatible Songs** = same Patron *or* clearly similar thematic purpose.

- **Harmony:** Two compatible Songs: +1 Effect to both.

- **Counterpoint:** Opposed Songs may cancel a drawback (GM adjudicates).

- **Chorus:** Multiple singers amplify (+1 Effect per participant), but cap coordinated *Song Weaver* style combos at **3 participants**.

Repertoire (Optional, Light). Single **Repertoire Clock [6]** for breadth: 2 seg = base DV −1 (min 2); 4 seg = +1 die to Song rolls; 6 seg = one *temporary* Standard Rite as Song (practice-dependent).

Song Specialization Paths.

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

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

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

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

High Cantor (Prestige, Fast Ruling).   Standard Rites as **High Cant**: instant; +1 die to primary effect; mark toward Corruption accumulation (1 High Cantor Standard Rite = 1 Corruption trigger). Recognizably flashy; repeated uses in a scene add +1 DV to subsequent *Resolve* saves (fear/charm/social pressure).

Divine Resonance (Major Talent - 15 XP).   Your voice carries divine authority. Once per scene, spend 2 Boons:

- **Command Effect:** Issue a `[COMMAND]` that affects up to (Presence) targets simultaneously

- **Miracle Effect:** Replicate any Low Rite without marking Corruption (but generate 1 SB)

- **Omen Effect:** Gain insight into a major threat - ask 3 questions about one enemy/faction

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

Bookkeeping Cap.   At the table, track *only*: **Corruption Clock** and (optionally) the single **Repertoire Clock**. Do not add per-Song timers; use outcomes and Push to pace.

Inspire Chorus

While *actively singing a Song* (from the action to begin until it resolves, or while a *Lingering Verse* persists), the Cantor may **invoke Inspire Chorus**:

- **Effect:** All **allies within Near** (including the Cantor) **shift Position +1** for **one exchange** (e.g., Desperate→Controlled, Controlled→Dominant). Position cannot exceed **Controlled**. This does not stack with other Position-shift auras; use the best single shift.

- **Use: Once per scene** at no cost. **Additional uses in the same scene** are allowed, but each **immediately marks toward Corruption accumulation** (see Corruption rules).

- **Requirements:** The performance must be perceptible to recipients (line of hearing; *Silence* or similar effects suppress it).

- **Timing:** Declare on starting the Song or at any time before it resolves; the shift lasts until the start of the Cantor's next turn.

- **Notes:** Using *Inspire Chorus* does not change Song DV, Action cost, or outcomes. It respects *Bookkeeping Light*: no new clocks are created.

Cantors as Cult Leaders (Chorus-Founders)

Cantors gather crowds—and crowds gather debts. The Song's Corruption stains the air, and listeners answer with vows, tithes, and favors. Many Cantors drift into leadership not by decree but by *obligation*: their audience becomes a *chorus* that expects guidance, protection, and more songs. In practice, the Cantor's rising **Corruption** is mirrored by the flock's growing **Obligation** to the Cantor (and the Patron behind the music).

[Chorus Cult — Quick Rule] lX

Trigger After a public Song using *Inspire Chorus* or a **Resonant Rite** before 10+ witnesses, the Cantor may found or deepen a *Chorus* (cult).

Cost Immediately convert **+1 Corruption segment** into **+1 Obligation** (to the Patron or the Chorus, GM's call).

Benefit Gain a **Minor Follower (Chorus)**: once/scene (if present or reachable), *+1 die* to Performance/Sway *or* establish a rumor/cover within the community. Scale ≈ Cantor's **Presence**.

Maintenance Each scene/session you leverage the Chorus, mark **+1 Obligation**. If neglected, start **Devotion Sours [4]**; on fill, the Chorus fractures into a Complication (rival sect, scandal, or betrayed devotee).

Safety Valve During Downtime, a *Vigil* (public service, free performance, or restitution) clears **1 Obligation** to the Chorus and resets **Devotion Sours** by 1.

Magical Arts and Specialization

A character's Art represents their personal approach to magic—the techniques, tools, and philosophies that define their craft. When a character gains magical capability, they define their Art with specific parameters.

[Defining Your Magical Art] lX

Component Description and Examples

Gesture & Medium Ink sigils, sung names, lantern-light, bone charms, legal contracts, salt-threads

Elemental Alignment Choose 2 primary Elements the Art typically engages with (Fire+Earth, Air+Water, etc.)

Thematic Focus Destruction, protection, revelation, transformation, communication, healing

Cultural Roots High Elf crystal-song, Ykrul blood-runes, Aeler spirit-whispers, Human alchemy

Art in Play

The fictional positioning of a character's Art matters significantly:

- **Spotlight Bump (1/scene)**: If the Art is clearly honored in fiction (right tools, time, setting), gain +1 die on the Cast roll

- **Off-Style Strain**: If forced to work against the Art's nature (no tools, hostile environment), suffer worse Position or accept extra Backlash

- **Art-Based Backlash**: Consequences should reflect the Art's themes and elements

Tags: The Language of Magical Effects

Tags provide a common language for describing magical effects and their limitations. They only function when printed on a Talent, Ability, or Spell result.

[Common Magical Tags and Effects] lX

Tag	Effect and Usage Guidelines
DISPEL	End an ongoing magical effect/construct. DV by fiction.
COUNTER	Interrupt a cast/rite in progress. DV by fiction.
BARRIER	Create cover/obstruction. DV by fiction.
SEAL /[UNSEAL]	Lock or unlock a container/door/portal. DV by fiction.
VEIL	Obscure a person/thing/zone. DV by fiction.
REVEAL	Expose illusions, disguises, hidden clauses. DV by fiction.
MARK	Tag a target for tracking or leverage. DV by fiction.
CURSE	Inflict a sticky hindrance with a clear release. DV by fiction.
CLEANSE	Remove/suppress a condition. DV by fiction.
FORTIFY	Harden against a vector. DV by fiction.
COMMAND	Issue a clear order to a sapient target. DV by fiction.
OATH	Bind parties to terms; breaking has teeth. DV by fiction.
SANCTIFY	Consecrate a zone to a code/patron. DV by fiction.
PASSAGE	Declare a route as permitted/easy. DV by fiction.
TRANSPORT	Move a target across an obstacle. DV by fiction.
CONJURE	Create a useful object/cover/hazard. DV by fiction.
WARD	Challenge Outsiders crossing a warded edge/zone. DV = target Cap.
BANISH	Drive a visible Outsider toward departure. DV = target Cap.
UNWARD	Unmake/suppress a [WARD]. DV by fiction.

Tags work within consistent parameters:

- **DV by Fiction**: Potency, preparation, and opposition set difficulty

- **Duration**: Typically "Scene" unless specified otherwise

- **Stacking**: No same-source stacking; identical tags use strongest instance

Backlash: The Price of Power

Backlash represents magic escaping control—the inevitable consequence of wielding forces beyond mortal comprehension. It's never arbitrary; backlash always reflects the elements involved and their

philosophical oppositions.

Backlash Triggers and Severity

Backlash occurs when magic goes awry:

- **Primary Trigger**: Partial or Miss on either the Weave or Cast roll

- **Secondary Trigger**: Hit showing two or more 1s (minor backlash rides success)

- **SB Integration**: Backlash does not generate extra SB—it's how GM spends SB from rolled 1s

Backlash colors the cost of magic and is always expressed through fiction first.

[Backlash Menu] lX

Backlash Type	Effect
Position Shift	Worsen Position by 1 step for current or next action
Fleeting Harm/Condition	Sear, vertigo, chill that matters for this scene
Exposure/Noise	Draws notice or complicates stealth
Resource Drain	Time, focus, or component damaged
Collateral Spark	Threatens ally or fragile thing nearby

Elemental Backlash Coloring

On Partial/Miss (or double-1s on a Hit), color consequences by Element:

[Elemental Backlash Coloring] lX

Element Pair	Minor Backlash
Earth / Fate	Slips, binds, encumbrance
Fire / Life	Smoke, sparks, heat
Air / Luck	Scatter, misheard words
Water / Dreams	Slippery tide, slow gear
Fate / Earth	Probability resists
Life / Fire	Growth surge, vines tether
Luck / Air	Odds flip
Death / Water	Whispers, chill

Backlash should always feel thematic to the magic employed:

- **Fire Magic**: Burns, flares, smoke, heat exhaustion, uncontrolled fires

- **Water Magic**: Flooding, slick surfaces, damp-related rot, emotional turbulence

- **Earth Magic**: Tremors, collapsing structures, immobilization, heavy burdens

- **Air Magic**: Unexpected winds, carried sounds, vertigo, scattered plans

- **Fate Magic**: Closed options, inevitable consequences, prophetic nightmares

- **Luck Magic**: Allied misfortunes, fragile successes, random complications

- **Life Magic**: Overgrowth, sympathetic pain, unnatural hunger, fertility curses

- **Death Magic**: Ghostly echoes, premature aging, silence, memory loss

Ritual Casting: Collective Magic

Some workings require multiple casters pooling their strength. Rituals allow for greater effects but multiply risks.

Ritual Procedure

1. **Declaration**: Primary caster states intent and gathers participants

2. **Channel Together**: All participants contribute (Scene-long action)

3. **Weave**: Primary caster shapes combined Potential (Scene-long action)

4. **Backlash**: Consequences affect all participants based on their contribution

Ritual Mechanics

- **Helper Cap**: Primary caster can draw on ceil(Arcana/2) helpers (max 3)

- **Skill Flexibility**: Helpers may use different relevant skills if fictionally distinct

- **Risk Distribution**: SB from Channel affects individual rollers; SB from Weave affects primary caster

Magic in Combat

Spellcasting in combat follows the same principles but with heightened stakes and immediate consequences.

Combat Casting Considerations

[Magic in Combat: Position and Effect] lX

Position	Effect on Magical Actions
Dominant	+1 die to Channel; reduced Backlash risk; can maintain subtle effects
Controlled	Standard casting conditions; typical risk/reward balance
Desperate	-1 die to Channel; increased Backlash severity; may attract unwanted attention

Tactical Magic Applications

Magic can reshape combat dynamics:

- **Position Warfare**: Spells that create cover, elevate positions, or restrict movement

- **Morale Effects**: Magic that inspires allies or terrifies enemies

- **Environmental Control**: Creating hazards, altering terrain, manipulating weather

- **Resource Denial**: Destroying enemy equipment, exhausting their supplies

Prestige Magical Abilities

High-level magical talents represent profound mastery or unique cultural inheritances.

[Example Prestige Magical Abilities] lX

Ability	Description and Requirements
Ways-Walker's Step	Observe perfect echo of past event (1/arc); GM banks +2 SB; reveals hidden truths (Req: Wits 5, Arcana 4)
Warglord	Unify scattered warbands into host for season; track Logistics and Grudge clocks (Req: Body 5, Command 3)
Spirit-Shield	Erase up to 3 SB from ally's roll (1/session); caster takes Fatigue +1 and GM banks +1 SB (Req: Spirit 4, Insight 3)
Elemental Mastery	Choose one Element; gain +2 dice when using it, but backlash from opposite element is doubled

Free Casting (TAGS System)

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

Spell Structure

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

Example formula:

> "I unleash Burning • Area • Force against the marauders."

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

Base Difficulty Value (DV)

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

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

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

Casting Roll

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

Backlash

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

- Harm 2 (Arcane)

- +2 Fatigue

- Corruption +1

- Catastrophic side effect (GM describes)

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

TAG Library

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

Elemental TAGS

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

Force TAGS

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

Mind & Veil TAGS

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

Life & Body TAGS

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

Space & Motion TAGS (Always +2 DV Each)

- **Leap**: jump far, blink across short space.

- **Fold**: short-range teleport, vanish–reappear.

- **Gate**: long distance passage, open/close path.

- **Gravity**: crush, lift, suspend, walk skyward.

Creation & Transformation TAGS (Always +2 DV Each)

- **Create**: manifest matter briefly.

- **Summon**: call a being or construct.

- **Transmute**: turn one thing into another.

- **Animate**: make objects act with intent.

Design Philosophy: Magic as Narrative Engine

Magic in Fate's Edge serves specific design goals:

- **Risk-Reward Balance**: Every magical act should feel consequential

- **Thematic Consistency**: Magic should reflect the world's metaphysics

- **Narrative Primacy**: Mechanics exist to serve interesting stories

- **Player Agency**: Magic should offer creative solutions, not bypass challenges

- **World Reactivity**: The setting should respond meaningfully to magical use

GM Guidance: Making Magic Feel Magical

- **Describe the Unseen**: When magic is cast, describe how the world reacts—air crackles, shadows deepen, spirits stir

- **Follow the Consequences**: Magical actions should have lasting effects on the narrative

- **Respect the Elements**: Backlash should feel philosophically appropriate

- **Highlight the Cost**: Make players feel the weight of their magical choices

- **Encourage Creativity**: Reward inventive uses of magic that enhance the story

Remember: In Fate's Edge, magic is never a shortcut. It's a pathway filled with wonders and dangers—a tool that changes both the world and the wielder. The dice are not your enemy; they're your collaborator in crafting a world where **true power always demands an equal price**.

Chapter 5

Campaigns, Clocks, and Consequences

In **Fate's Edge**, campaigns are not just a string of adventures—they are **living narratives** shaped by player choices, faction dynamics, and the slow accumulation of influence that echoes through the ages. As the GM, you are the architect of long-term tension, guiding the story from its first spark to its final reckoning. This chapter introduces the tools that help you build and sustain that tension: the **Campaign Clocks**, the **Crown Spread**, and the art of managing consequences that ripple across entire seasons.

Campaign Clocks: Tracking Influence and Pressure

The **Campaign Clocks** are two great dials that track the ebb and flow of player power and opposition over the course of a campaign. They are not mechanical scoreboards—they are **narrative thermometers**, showing how the world reacts to the PCs' actions and how the weight of their choices accumulates like stones in a riverbed.

Mandate (0–6)

Mandate represents the table's **public legitimacy and buy-in**—the measure of how much the world accepts the PCs' authority, influence, or sacred mission. It is the currency of reputation in a world that remembers both triumphs and failures.

[Mandate Conditions and Effects] lX

Mandate Level	Narrative Manifestations
0-2 (Low)	Suspicion dogs every step, doors remain closed, allies hesitate, every favor comes with strings attached
3-4 (Medium)	Respect is earned but conditional, some doors open while others require persuasion, trust must be continually maintained
5-6 (High)	Recognition precedes arrival, gates swing open unbidden, allies rally without question, reputation becomes a tangible asset

Crisis (0–6)

Crisis tracks the **opposition engine**—the rising tide of rivals, mounting pressures, and accumulating attrition that defines a challenging campaign. It shows how much the world pushes back against ambition and change.

[Crisis Conditions and Effects] lX	
Crisis Level	**Narrative Manifestations**
0-2 (Low)	Breathing room emerges, opportunities bloom like spring flowers, enemies regroup rather than attack
3-4 (Medium)	Pressure builds like gathering storm clouds, rivals make cautious moves, consequences become more immediate
5-6 (High)	Enemies strike with boldness born of desperation, clocks tick with alarming speed, the world tightens like a noose

Advancing the Clocks

At the end of each major scene, you may advance one or both clocks based on significant narrative developments:

- **Clean Loss**: A rival codifies their position or escapes with leverage that threatens the party's standing

- **Public Cost Paid**: Extravagant feasts, declared holidays, or public penance that shifts perception

- **Asset Neglect**: Major assets degrade from inattention, signaling unreliability to potential allies

- **Evidence Shifts**: Immaculate reputations become scorched by scandal or revelation

Clock Evolution System

Campaign clocks should evolve as player actions change the world:

1. **Introduction** (0-2 segments): Threat becomes known

2. **Escalation** (3-4 segments): Threat gains momentum

3. **Crisis** (5-6 segments): Immediate danger to players/campaign

4. **Resolution** (7+ segments): Confrontation or transformation

Clock Relationships

Advanced campaigns benefit from clock relationships:

Supporting Clocks One clock's progress helps another (Plague Spread → Resource Scarcity)

Opposing Clocks One clock's progress hinders another (Public Support ↓ Crime Rate ↑)

Cascade Clocks One clock's resolution triggers another (War Ends → Reconstruction Begins)

Hidden Clocks Progress tied to player ignorance (Ancient Awakening while players focus elsewhere)

Calling or Forcing the Crown

The campaign reaches its crescendo when one of two thresholds is met—the moment when accumulated influence and mounting pressure collide in a final reckoning.

[Finale Triggers and Conditions] lX

Finale Type Conditions and Narrative Implications

Player-Called Mandate 6 and Crisis 3—the party has earned the right to choose their moment of triumph

Forced Finale Crisis 6 regardless of Mandate—the world forces a confrontation that can no longer be avoided

Balanced Finale Both dials at 4-5—a tense equilibrium where victory and defeat hang in perfect balance

The Crown Spread: Seeding the Campaign

At **Session 0**, draw the **Crown Spread**—a five-card ritual that seeds the campaign's deepest themes, most dangerous rivals, and the very conditions of its ultimate resolution. This is not random chance but **oracular guidance** for the story to come.

Drawing the Spread

Draw one card for each of the five fundamental aspects of your campaign:

- **Spade**: The Crown Site—where destiny will be decided

- **Heart**: The Crown Rival—who stands between the party and their goals

- **Club**: The Crown Pressure—the relentless force that prevents complacency

- **Diamond**: The Crown Leverage—the advantage that can turn the tide

- **Wild**: The Hidden Force—the unknown element that will emerge when least expected

Interpreting the Spread

[Crown Spread Interpretation Guide] lX

Card Position Interpretation Guidelines and Examples

Spade (Site) A fortress shrouded in mist? A shrine built on forgotten truths? A battlefield where history repeats?

Heart (Rival) A noble with hidden motives? A cult leader with apocalyptic visions? A spirit with ancient grievances?

Club (Pressure) An escalating curfew? A spreading plague? A resource shortage that turns allies into competitors?

Diamond (Leverage) Seasonal endorsement from powerful factions? A city license that grants unusual authority?

Wild (Hidden) Face card: hidden patron steps from shadows; Ace: the site itself becomes a 10-clock

challenge

Example Spread: Spade = High-Mist Pass (Aeler territory); Heart = Margrave of Acasia (Face card—ambitious ruler); Club = Curfew (restricting movement); Diamond = Seasonal Endorsement (temporary authority); Wild = Hidden Patron (Face card—mysterious benefactor or foe).

Seasonal Evolution Framework

The Crown Spread elements should evolve through seasonal phases:

> **Winter (Establishment)**: Root themes take hold, initial conflicts emerge
> **Spring (Growth)**: New elements sprout, alliances form, complications multiply
> **Summer (Climax)**: Peak conflicts, major revelations, critical choices
> **Autumn (Harvest)**: Consequences manifest, legacies established, new seeds planted

Expanding Drawn Elements

When a Crown card's theme becomes central to your campaign:

1. **Deepen the Concept**: Add layers to the initial interpretation

2. **Introduce Variations**: Create related but distinct elements

3. **Connect to Other Elements**: Tie it to other Crown aspects

4. **Evolve the Stakes**: Raise the personal and cosmic implications

The Finale Procedure

When the Crown is called, run the three-beat finale that brings the campaign to its narrative climax:

1. **Reckoning**: Defend or sanctify the record of accomplishments. Draw upon the Rival's established motives. Place the Pressure rail that will drive the scene forward.

2. **Crossing**: Stage the kinetic rail (Escape/Hunt/Hazard) that threatens to end the scene prematurely if not managed carefully.

3. **Coronation**: Use the Diamond Leverage to sign, seal, or swear the oath that cements the campaign's legacy.

Twist Collision (Finale Clause)

Exactly once, when the Rival's Spade Twist contradicts their Club Belief, the table chooses:

- GM gains +1 SB to complicate matters, or

- Players reduce two ticks total across the active rails, gaining breathing room.

Legacy Conversion: Epilogue

After the Finale, each PC draws 2 cards and answers epilogue prompts by suit. Then convert campaign elements into lasting legacy:

- **Major Asset → Institution** (12 XP): A safehouse becomes a school, a spy ring becomes an intelligence service

- **Seasonal Endorsement → Doctrine Rider** (4 XP): Temporary support becomes permanent policy

- **Follower (Cap 3+) → Stationed NPC** (0 XP): Loyal companions become custodians of the new order

- **Rival → Fixture**: Surviving adversaries become recurring elements of the setting's fabric

Character Arc Management

Help players develop meaningful character growth through the legacy process:

1. **Establishment**: Define character's current state and potential conflicts

2. **Development**: Create opportunities for growth and choice

3. **Crisis**: Present challenges that test character's core beliefs

4. **Resolution**: Allow meaningful transformation based on choices

The Clockwork Engine: Tracking Tension

Clocks are the pulsating heart of tension in Fate's Edge. They represent ongoing conditions, threats, or progress toward objectives in a visible, tangible way that everyone can track and anticipate.

Types of Clocks

[Clock Types and Their Purposes] lX

Clock Type	Purpose and Typical Segment Count
Travel Clocks	Track progress through dangerous journey legs (4-10 segments)
Tactical Clocks	Represent ongoing combat conditions like morale or fatigue (4-8 segments)
Campaign Clocks	Track long-term pressure and influence (Mandate 0-6, Crisis 0-6)
Scene Clocks	Specific to immediate situations like chases or disasters (4-6 segments)
War Clocks	Large-scale conflict tracking like supply lines or morale (6-10 segments)

Clock Creation Guidelines

Creating effective clocks requires thoughtful design:

1. **Announce Clearly**: Always tell players what each clock represents and what fictional events cause it to advance.

2. **Logical Triggers**: Clock advancement should follow naturally from player actions and world events.

3. **Visible Progression**: Use physical tokens or visual aids so everyone can see tension building.

4. **Meaningful Consequences**: When clocks fill, the consequences should change the story in significant ways.

Clock Advancement Rules

Story Beats drive clock progression in measurable ways:

- **1 SB**: Minor advancement (1 segment)—a small but noticeable step forward

- **2-3 SB**: Moderate advancement (2 segments)—significant progress or escalation

- **4+ SB**: Major advancement (3+ segments) or filling smaller clocks entirely

- **Multiple Clocks**: Distribute SB across relevant clocks rather than overfilling one

Creating New Clocks

When existing clocks resolve or become less relevant:

- Identify emerging themes from recent sessions

- Consider player actions that created new tensions

- Look for unresolved consequences from major choices

- Evaluate faction shifts and new power dynamics

Campaign Combat Integration

Extended conflicts and war-level events require special handling to maintain narrative tension while scaling the mechanical scope appropriately.

War Clocks

Large-scale conflicts are tracked through persistent war-level clocks that represent strategic realities:
[War Clock Examples] lX

War Clock	Strategic Implications and Triggers
Supply Lines (8)	Logistics and reinforcement flow; advances when routes are cut or resources dwindle
Morale (6)	Troop effectiveness and desertion risk; advances after defeats or poor conditions
Political Support (6)	Civilian and noble backing; advances when scandals emerge or costs mount
Strategic Position (8)	Control of key locations and routes; advances when territory is lost or gained

Faction Combat

When player factions engage in large-scale conflict, the rules adapt to maintain both narrative coherence and mechanical consistency:

- **Follower Armies**: Cap 5 followers can represent military units with distinct capabilities

- **Asset Leverage**: Off-screen assets provide strategic advantages like intelligence or supply

- **Campaign Clock Impact**: Major battles significantly shift Mandate and Crisis dials

Threat Ecosystem Design

Create interconnected threats that respond to player actions:

Threat Categories

[Threat Categories] lX

Category	Characteristics
Personal	Directly targets PCs/friends
Social	Affects communities/organizations
Cosmic	Universal/supernatural scope

Threat Evolution Matrix

Response	Ignore	Oppose	Negotiate	Join heightWeakens
Grows stronger	Splits/retreats	Seeks allies	Absorbs influence	
Strengthens	Spreads corruption	Escalates conflict	Offers better deal	Demands loyalty
Transforms	Changes nature	Reveals true form	Shows hidden agenda	Offers power

Faction Dynamics System

Faction Relationship Tracking

Track faction attitudes on a -3 to +3 scale:

-3 Enemy Actively working against player interests

-2 Hostile Will cause trouble when possible

-1 Unfriendly Suspicious and unhelpful

0 Neutral Indifferent to player actions

+1 Friendly Helpful when convenient

+2 Supportive Actively assist player goals

+3 Ally Will sacrifice for player interests

Faction Clocks

Each major faction can track:

- **Influence** (0-6): Power and reach in the region

- **Stability** (0-6): Internal cohesion and resources

- **Agenda Progress** (0-8): Advancement toward faction goals

- **Player Relations** (-3 to +3): Attitude toward player characters

Between Sessions: The GM's Sacred Trust

Between game sessions, the Game Master undertakes crucial preparation that transforms good games into unforgettable campaigns. This quiet work is the foundation upon which epic stories are built.

Mandatory Preparation

[Between-Session Checklist] lX

Task	Description and Guidelines
Campaign Clock Updates	Advance Mandate/Crisis based on session outcomes. Track developments that affect long-term trajectory
Complication Debt	Calculate starting SB: banked SB (max 2) + character complications + asset complications
Thread Management	Review active complication threads. Ensure no more than (Tier + 1) active threads per scene
Resource Tracking	Update NPC statuses, faction relationships, and world conditions based on player actions

Session Planning

Prepare the following elements with an eye toward pacing and player engagement:

- **Scene Preparation**: Design scenes with appropriate SB spending budgets (standard: 12 SB max, climactic: 16 SB max, session: 20 SB total)

- **Complication Hooks**: Develop 3-5 potential complications connecting to player backgrounds and campaign themes

- **Tactical Considerations**: Prepare combat, social, and exploration challenges with appropriate difficulties

- **Deck Preparation**: Ensure Consequences Deck is ready with cards appropriate for expected complication types

Reactive Preparation

Prepare for player creativity without scripting outcomes:

Situation Templates

Create flexible frameworks rather than fixed scenes:

Social Encounter Key NPCs, potential conflicts, information stakes

Exploration Challenge Environmental hazards, discovery rewards, time pressure

Combat Scenario Opponent capabilities, tactical elements, victory conditions

Mystery Investigation Clues, red herrings, revelation triggers

Improvisation Framework

When players surprise you:

1. **Identify Core Elements**: What must remain true for story coherence?

2. **Assess Player Investment**: What aspects do players care about?

3. **Find Narrative Hooks**: How can new elements connect to existing story?

4. **Apply Mechanical Logic**: What rules support this development?

5. **Maintain Momentum**: How to keep the story moving forward?

XP Award Calculation

Between sessions, calculate XP awards that reflect both accomplishment and engagement:
[XP Award Guidelines] lX

Award Type	Description and Typical Value
Table Attendance	+2 XP for participating in the shared story experience
Major Objectives	+2-4 XP for achieving significant story goals that advance the campaign
Discoveries	+1-2 XP for uncovering important information or hidden truths
Hard Choices	+1-2 XP for making difficult decisions with meaningful consequences
Complication Spotlight	+1-3 XP for engaging meaningfully with complications and setbacks
Bond/Flag Play	+1-2 XP for roleplaying that emphasizes relationships and character depth
GM Curveball	+0-3 XP for adapting well to unexpected developments and surprises

Campaign Pacing

Session Energy Management

Vary session intensity to maintain engagement:

High Energy (2-3 sessions): Major conflicts, climactic scenes, critical choices

Moderate Energy (3-4 sessions): Character development, investigation, relationship building

Low Energy (1-2 sessions): Downtime, recovery, preparation, world exploration

Arc Structure Guidance

Multi-session story arcs benefit from clear structure:

1. **Introduction** (1-2 sessions): Establish stakes and hook players

2. **Development** (2-4 sessions): Complications multiply, alliances form

3. **Climax** (1-2 sessions): Major confrontation, critical choices

4. **Resolution** (1 session): Consequences, new status quo

Advanced Mechanical Integration

Corruption System Evolution

Tier-Based Corruption

As characters advance, corruption becomes more complex:

Tier I-II Surface-level changes, minor abilities, social consequences

Tier III-IV Fundamental transformations, significant powers, world impact

Tier V+ Mythic alterations, reality-bending abilities, cosmic significance

Corruption Narratives

Connect corruption to character themes:

- **Power Corruption**: Strength gained at cost of morality

- **Knowledge Corruption**: Wisdom gained through forbidden understanding

- **Survival Corruption**: Endurance through dark adaptation

- **Love Corruption**: Connection maintained through dangerous bonds

Asset and Follower Management

Portfolio System

Organize holdings for easier management:

Economic Trade routes, businesses, investments

Political Titles, contacts, influence networks

Military Retainers, fortifications, strategic positions

Intelligence Informants, research facilities, magical resources

Asset Evolution

Allow significant holdings to grow in importance:

1. **Establishment**: Basic functionality and limited scope

2. **Development**: Expanded capabilities and regional influence

3. **Mastery**: Major impact and strategic significance

4. **Legacy**: Permanent change to campaign world

Campaign-Specific Tools

Custom Background Creation

Background Template

Create setting-specific character origins:

1. **Origin Story**: Where and how the character was raised/formed

2. **Core Skills**: Two skills naturally supported by background

3. **Key Relationships**: One ally and one rival with ongoing significance

4. **Cultural Elements**: Unique customs, languages, or traditions

5. **Obligations**: What the character owes to their background

6. **Privileges**: What the character can expect from their background

Background Integration

Connect backgrounds to campaign themes:

- Identify background elements that relate to current threats

- Create opportunities for background knowledge to provide advantages

- Develop complications that arise from background obligations

- Allow backgrounds to evolve based on player choices

Regional Customization

Culture-Specific Mechanics

Adapt core systems to different cultural contexts:

Aeler (Stone-Born) Emphasize engineering, contracts, and infrastructure

Lethai (Wood Elves) Focus on nature, seasonal cycles, and root-law

Ykrul (Steppe Folk) Highlight mobility, honor, and spatial reasoning

Kahfagia (Sea Folk) Stress navigation, weather, and maritime law

Regional Threat Adaptation

Modify threats to fit different environments:

- **Desert**: Heat, sandstorms, water scarcity, nomad conflicts

- **Mountains**: Avalanches, altitude, isolation, territorial disputes

- **Forest**: Predators, maze-like paths, spirits, resource competition

- **Urban**: Politics, crime, overcrowding, infrastructure failure

Advanced Storytelling Techniques

Thematic Consistency

Maintain campaign atmosphere through consistent elements:

Sensory Details

Create immersive environments:

- **Visual**: Lighting, colors, architectural styles, movement patterns

- **Auditory**: Ambient sounds, speech patterns, musical traditions

- **Olfactory**: Scents, cooking aromas, industrial odors, natural fragrances

- **Tactile**: Textures, temperatures, weather effects, material qualities

Cultural Patterns

Establish consistent social behaviors:

- Greeting customs and social hierarchies

- Conflict resolution methods and legal systems

- Economic practices and trade relationships

- Religious beliefs and spiritual practices

Moral Complexity Framework

Create nuanced ethical dilemmas:

Dilemma Structure

Effective moral choices require:

1. **Clear Stakes**: What is gained or lost by each choice?

2. **Genuine Conflict**: Why isn't there an obviously right answer?

3. **Personal Investment**: How does this affect the characters directly?

4. **Lasting Consequences**: What changes based on the decision?

Consequence Types

Ensure meaningful outcomes:

Immediate Resolve within session (character fates, instant reactions)

Ongoing Affect future sessions/campaign (reputation, political fallout)

Character Personal growth/trauma, relationship changes

World Setting permanently changed (Silkstrand's fate, Choir's influence)

Narrative First: The World Remembers

Campaign design in Fate's Edge is not about railroading players along predetermined paths—it's about **responding to player choices** with consequences that accumulate like stones in a river, gradually shaping the flow of the narrative itself. Let the world shift in response to their actions. Let factions rise and fall based on their allegiances. Let the dice sing the song of a universe that reacts.

And when the Crown is finally crowned—when the last card is played and the final clock ticks to completion—let the echo of that moment be heard across the entire Amaranthine, a testament to stories well-lived and consequences fully earned.

Remember: Your preparation between sessions is the quiet magic that transforms random encounters into meaningful episodes and mechanical challenges into memorable stories. The investment in this sacred trust pays dividends in player engagement, narrative coherence, and the creation of campaigns that will be remembered long after the final dice have been rolled.

subsectionQuick Start Campaigns

The Sunstone Gambit

Campaign Overview: A medium-difficulty introduction to Fate's Edge core mechanics set in the politically charged environment of Acasia.

Campaign Elements:

- **Duration**: 4-6 sessions of 3-4 hours each

- **Tier Range**: 0-60 XP progression

- **Themes**: Political intrigue, ancient mysteries, personal honor

- **Key Locations**: Ruined Sunstone Tower, Silkstrand marketplace, Acasian border fortresses

Session Breakdown:

1. **Session 1 - "The Commission"**: Character introduction, initial briefing, first skill challenges

2. **Session 2 - "Crossing the Border"**: Travel complications, introduction to regional politics

3. **Session 3 - "The Tower's Secrets"**: Exploration challenges, first major combat encounter

4. **Session 4 - "Rival Claims"**: Social maneuvering, second major conflict

5. **Session 5 - "The Sunstone's Price"**: Climactic confrontation, moral dilemma resolution

6. **Session 6 - "Aftermath"**: Character advancement, campaign consequences, setup for future adventures

   Key NPCs:

- **Lady Cordelia Vex**: The enigmatic patron who commissions the retrieval

- **Captain Thorne Blackwater**: Rival treasure hunter and former legionary

- **Keeper Aldric**: Ancient guardian spirit bound to the Sunstone Tower

- **Magistrate Ysabel Marr**: Silkstrand official caught between competing interests

Modular Session Structure

Session Components:

- **Opening Check-in** (10 minutes): Player mood, character updates, session goals

- **Continuity Bridge** (5 minutes): Recap previous session's key events and outcomes

- **Main Action Block** (90-120 minutes): Central adventure content with multiple encounter types

- **Character Development Segment** (20 minutes): Advancement opportunities, relationship building

- **Closing Reflection** (10 minutes): Session highlights, preview next session, address concerns

   Flexible Timing Options:

- **Short Session** (2-3 hours): Focus on single encounter with brief character development

- **Standard Session** (3-4 hours): Balanced mix of action, roleplay, and advancement

- **Extended Session** (5-6 hours): Multiple encounters with deep character progression

5.0.1   Tier-Appropriate Design

Tier I-II Campaigns (0-90 XP)

Scope: Local or regional focus with personal stakes

- **Story Structure**: 3-5 session arcs with clear beginning, middle, and end

- **Threat Level**: Individual antagonists, local factions, environmental hazards

- **Character Growth**: Focus on establishing character identity and core relationships

- **World Impact**: Changes to immediate surroundings with limited broader consequences

Tier III Campaigns (91-150 XP)

Scope: Regional to national influence with expanding responsibilities

- **Story Structure**: 6-10 session arcs with branching possibilities and long-term consequences

- **Threat Level**: Organized adversaries, political conspiracies, supernatural entities

- **Character Growth**: Development of leadership skills and organizational influence

- **World Impact**: Noticeable changes to regional politics and major faction dynamics

Tiers IV-V Campaigns (151+ XP)

Scope: National to continental influence with world-shaping potential

- **Story Structure**: Multi-arc campaigns spanning 15+ sessions with legacy elements

- **Threat Level**: Cosmic forces, legendary adversaries, existential threats

- **Character Growth**: Transformation into mythic figures with lasting influence

- **World Impact**: Fundamental changes to world order and historical trajectory

5.1 Scaling Threats

5.1.1 Threat Evolution Framework

Phase 1: Introduction

- Present threat through minor incidents or rumors

- Establish threat's capabilities and motivations

- Create initial player investment through personal connections

Phase 2: Escalation

- Increase threat's visibility and impact

- Introduce complications that raise stakes

- Force player responses that reveal threat's adaptability

Phase 3: Confrontation

- Direct engagement with threat's full capabilities

- Present moral or tactical dilemmas that test player growth

- Create opportunities for definitive resolution or transformation

5.1.2 Threat Customization by Tier

Low-Tier Adaptations:

- Reduce threat's scope and influence

- Simplify threat's methods and motivations

- Provide clear vulnerabilities and straightforward counters

  High-Tier Adaptations:

- Expand threat's reach and resources

- Introduce complex motivations and hidden agendas

- Create multiple threat vectors and contingency plans

5.2 Branching Narrative Design

5.2.1 Consequence-Driven Branching

Immediate Consequences:

- Short-term changes visible within the same session or next session

- Direct results of player actions that alter immediate circumstances

- Examples: NPC reactions, environmental changes, tactical advantages/disadvantages

  Extended Consequences:

- Medium-term changes that develop over 2-5 sessions

- Ripple effects that create new opportunities or challenges

- Examples: Faction reputation shifts, economic impacts, political realignments

  Legacy Consequences:

- Long-term changes that persist throughout the campaign

- Fundamental alterations to the world that affect future storylines

- Examples: Major NPC deaths/births, territorial changes, technological/social advances

5.2.2 Branching Structure Types

Event-Based Branching:

- Different story paths based on specific events or discoveries

- Requires preparation of multiple potential scenarios

- Best for campaigns with predetermined major plot points

  Choice-Based Branching:

- Multiple valid approaches to challenges with different outcomes

- Emphasizes player agency and creative problem-solving

- Requires flexible preparation and improvisation skills

Relationship-Based Branching:

- Story developments based on player interactions with NPCs

- Dynamic narrative that responds to relationship building

- Requires detailed NPC development and relationship tracking

6. Character Arc Planning (Player's Guide - Chapter 3)

5.3   Character Arc Planning

5.3.1   Defining Character Growth

Internal Arcs

Concept: Character development focused on internal transformation, beliefs, and personal growth.
  Planning Framework:

1. **Starting Point**: Identify current character flaws, fears, or limiting beliefs

2. **Growth Direction**: Define what the character aspires to become or overcome

3. **Catalyst Events**: Plan key moments that will challenge and change the character

4. **Resolution Vision**: Envision the character's state at the end of their arc

Example Internal Arc - The Reluctant Leader:

- **Starting Point**: Fear of responsibility and doubt in personal abilities

- **Growth Direction**: Development of confidence and acceptance of leadership role

- **Catalyst Events**: Moments where others depend on the character, failures that provide learning opportunities

- **Resolution Vision**: Character who confidently makes difficult decisions for the group's benefit

External Arcs

Concept: Character development focused on external achievements, relationships, and worldly success.
  Planning Framework:

1. **Goal Identification**: Define what the character wants to achieve in the world

2. **Obstacle Recognition**: Identify challenges that prevent easy achievement

3. **Progression Milestones**: Plan key accomplishments that mark advancement

4. **Success Definition**: Determine what constitutes fulfillment of the character's goals

Example External Arc - The Avenging Scholar:

- **Goal Identification**: Restore family honor and expose corruption that destroyed their lineage

- **Obstacle Recognition**: Powerful enemies, lack of evidence, social stigma against their family

- **Progression Milestones**: Gathering evidence, gaining allies, public exposure of wrongdoing

- **Success Definition**: Justice served and family name cleared in the eyes of society

5.3.2   Integrating Arcs with Campaign

Campaign Alignment

Pre-Campaign Planning:

- Share character arc concepts with the GM during Session Zero

- Identify potential campaign elements that could support character growth

- Establish connections between personal goals and campaign themes

Ongoing Integration

Session-to-Session Development:

- Regularly assess character progress toward arc goals

- Seek opportunities to introduce arc-relevant challenges and experiences

- Adapt arc direction based on campaign developments and player interests

5.3.3   Measuring Progress

Narrative Milestones

Concept: Significant story moments that mark character development regardless of mechanical advancement.

Tracking Methods:

- **Journal Entries**: Regular character journal entries documenting growth and reflections

- **Relationship Changes**: Noting shifts in how NPCs perceive and interact with the character

- **Decision Points**: Recording important choices that demonstrate character evolution

- **Reputation Shifts**: Tracking changes in how the character is known in the world

Mechanical Milestones

Concept: Character advancement that supports and reflects narrative growth.
  Tracking Methods:

- **Skill Development**: Improving abilities that align with character arc themes

- **Talent Acquisition**: Choosing new abilities that support character growth direction

- **Asset Accumulation**: Gaining resources that enable character goals

- **Reputation Building**: Developing relationships and influence that advance character objectives

Chapter 6

Advanced GM Techniques

In **Fate's Edge**, as the campaign deepens and the stakes rise, the GM must evolve from storyteller to **architect of tension**. This chapter explores advanced techniques for managing complex scenes, faction interplay, and custom content creation. These tools will help you keep the world dynamic, the choices meaningful, and the consequences **echoing through the ages**.

Story Beat Management

The GM should manage Story Beat (SB) spending to maintain dramatic tension while preserving player agency and game flow. SB spending scales with character tier but is subject to hard limits to ensure playability and prevent narrative overload. **Tip:** *Use Fatigue instead of Harm for 1-2 SB spends. Avoid compromising equiptment on < 3 SB spends.*

Core Principles

- **Narrative Coherence**: All SB spends within a scene should connect thematically, creating a cohesive story rather than random setbacks

- **Player Agency**: Complications create interesting choices, not insurmountable obstacles—always provide resolution paths

- **Progressive Escalation**: Higher tier characters naturally attract greater consequences that match their growing influence

- **Resolution Paths**: Every complication thread should have potential resolution through player action and creativity

Spending Formula

Base SB = 4 + Character Tier

- **Tier I (Rookie 0-40 XP)**: 5 SB base—local consequences, manageable threats

- **Tier II (Seasoned 41-90 XP)**: 6 SB base—regional impact, organized opposition

- **Tier III (Veteran 91-150 XP)**: 7 SB base—national consequences, strategic rivals

- **Tier IV (Paragon 151-220 XP)**: 8 SB base—continental scale, legendary challenges

- **Tier V (Mythic 221+ XP)**: 9 SB base—world-shaping events, mythic adversaries

Hard Limits

- **Standard Scenes**: Maximum 12 SB spending—maintains pace without overwhelming

- **Climactic Scenes**: Maximum 16 SB spending—allows for dramatic tension peaks

- **Active Threads**: Maximum (Tier + 1) concurrent threads—prevents narrative sprawl

- **Session Budget**: Maximum 20 SB total per session—ensures sustainable challenge

Banked SB Integration

Banked SB from character complications count toward scene spending limits rather than adding to available SB. This prevents exponential complication stacking while honoring narrative debt from previous choices and established character backgrounds.

Thread Management

Complication threads follow a natural escalation pattern that creates satisfying narrative arcs:

[Complication Thread Escalation Pattern] lX

Thread Level	SB Escalation and Narrative Impact
First Exposure	1-2 SB (Minor inconvenience that introduces the complication)
Second Occurrence	2-4 SB (Moderate setback that develops the thread)
Third Strike	3-6 SB (Major consequence that brings the thread to climax)
Resolution	Thread concludes with narrative payoff and character growth

[Story Beat Management by Tier] lXXXXX

Tier	Base SB	Max Threads	Scene Cap	Climax Cap	Session Budget
I (0-40 XP)	5 SB	2 threads	12 SB	16 SB	20 SB
II (41-90 XP)	6 SB	3 threads	12 SB	16 SB	20 SB
III (91-150 XP)	7 SB	4 threads	12 SB	16 SB	20 SB
IV (151-220 XP)	8 SB	5 threads	12 SB	16 SB	20 SB
V (221+ XP)	9 SB	6 threads	12 SB	16 SB	20 SB

[Complication Spending Safety Guidelines] lX

Scenario	Guidance and Best Practices
Standard Scenes	Spend 50-75% of available SB budget; preserve some for escalation and player adaptation
Climactic Scenes	May use full SB allocation; ensure resolution opportunities and meaningful choices remain
Teaching Moments	Explicit player consent required; time-limited complications; thorough debrief afterward
New Players	Reduce SB spending by 25-50%; focus on clear, actionable complications with obvious solutions
Grimdark Mode	Reserved for veteran groups; requires explicit session zero discussion; safety tools always active

Mastering the Deck of Consequences

The **Deck of Consequences** is more than a randomizer—it is a **thematic engine** that externalizes risk and ensures that setbacks feel consistent, fair, and deeply integrated with your campaign's unique atmosphere.

Two Deck Systems (Compatibility)

Fate's Edge uses two distinct card tools that serve different narrative purposes:

[Deck System Comparison] lX

Deck Type	Purpose and Suit Meanings
Travel Decks (regional, 52-card)	Spade=Place, Heart=Actor, Club=Pressure, Diamond=Leverage. Powers journeys and geographic challenges
Deck of Consequences (scene drama)	Hearts=social fallout, Spades=harm/escalation, Clubs=material cost, Diamonds=magical/spiritual disturbance

Critical Guidance: Never mix suit meanings across decks. When a rule references "Spade/Club/Diamond," it means *Travel Deck*. When it says "Hearts/Spades/Clubs/Diamonds," it means *Consequences Deck*.

When to Draw

After a roll generates Story Beats, the GM faces a strategic choice:

- **Direct Spend**: Translate SB into immediate consequences/rail ticks—fast, reliable, maintains pacing

- **Deck Draw**: Draw up to **min(SB, 3)** cards and **synthesize a single twist** guided by suit and highest rank—rich, thematic, introduces novelty

Never do both for the same roll. If a drawn card contradicts established fiction, reinterpret creatively or redraw to maintain thematic consistency.

Structure of the Deck

[Deck of Consequences Structure Guide] lX

Component	Description and Application
Hearts Suit	Emotional, social, or relational fallout—betrayals, misunderstandings, emotional wounds
Spades Suit	Harm, danger, or escalation of conflict—injuries, reinforcements, tactical disadvantages
Clubs Suit	Resource strain, economic or material cost—broken gear, lost supplies, financial setbacks
Diamonds Suit	Magical, spiritual, or cosmic disturbances—backlash, omens, supernatural complications
Ace-3 (Minor)	Inconvenience or flavor complication that adds texture without major impact
4-6 (Moderate)	Setback with narrative teeth that requires player attention and response
7-9 (Significant)	Consequence altering the course of action with lasting implications
10-King (Major)	Major fallout introducing new problems or lasting scars that change the story

[Complication Application Methods: GM Decision Guide] lXXX			
Method	**When to Use**	**Benefits**	**Typical Session Use**
Direct Spend (70%)	Routine actions, combat, quick resolution	Fast resolution, consistent pacing, reliable complications	Investigation, travel, standard challenges
Deck Draw (30%)	Major revelations, character moments, climaxes	Thematic richness, unique complications, player surprise	Plot twists, discoveries, emotional scenes

[Session Phase Application Guidelines] lXXX			
Campaign Phase	**Recommended Ratio**	**Resolution Time**	**Rationale**
Early Game (Exploration)	80/20	3 seconds	Quick resolution maintains investigation flow and momentum
Mid Game (Development)	70/30	5 seconds	Balanced approach supports rising tension with meaningful pivots
Late Game (Climax)	50/50 to 40/60	8 seconds	Maximum impact complications for story resolution

Advanced Travel and Exploration

Travel in Fate's Edge is not a downtime skip—it is a **narrative layer** filled with tension, discovery, and risk that reveals the world's character through every mile crossed.

Core Travel Procedure

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

- **Spade** from the destination deck: sets the scene (place)—the physical and cultural landscape

- **Heart** from the destination deck: introduces the local actor or faction—who they meet and why it matters

- **Club** from the Wilds or destination: brings pressure—what challenges the journey itself

- **Diamond** from the authority that gates the route: papers, escorts, rights, or exceptions—the bureaucratic landscape

Set a travel clock by the highest rank:

- **2–5** → 4 segments (brief, intense journeys)

- **6–10** → 6 segments (standard expedition length)

- **J/Q/K** → 8 segments (extended, epic travels)

- **Ace** → 10 segments (campaign-defining voyages)

Example: Traveling the **Aelerian Passes** in deep winter, the PCs draw: Spade (Avalanche gallery—treacherous narrow path), Heart (Geometer—mapmaker with secret knowledge), Club (Engineer requisition—military demands), Diamond (Underway Pass—ancient right of passage). Clock: 8 segments. On a failed navigation roll, the GM spends SB to trigger a rockslide—Hazard +2 that threatens to bury the path entirely.

Faction Dynamics and Grand Strategy

Factions are **living entities** with goals, rivals, and shifting loyalties. They are not static backdrops—they are **active players in the story** whose movements shape the campaign's grand narrative.

Creating Memorable Factions

Each faction should have distinct personality and concrete capabilities:

[Faction Creation Template] lX

Element	Development Guidelines
Core Motive	What they fundamentally want—territory, ideology, survival, power, knowledge
Key Figures	Who leads or represents them—names, personalities, ambitions, vulnerabilities
Resources	What they can bring to bear—military, economic, social, magical assets
Weaknesses	What makes them vulnerable—internal divisions, external pressures, resource limitations
Relationship Map	How they connect to other factions—allies, rivals, neutrals, complicated histories

Faction Clocks and Grand Strategy

Track factional pressure with clocks that represent their changing fortunes:

- **Rising Influence** (6): Gaining power, allies, or territory—momentum is building

- **Internal Strife** (6): Leadership challenged, morale low—fractures appear

- **Public Scandal** (4): Reputation damaged, support wanes—trust evaporates

- **Strategic Initiative** (8): Controlling the narrative and setting terms of engagement

Example: The **Viterra Dawn Knights** gain Rising Influence as they rally to the new Queen's banner—but suffer Internal Strife as old commanders resist her modernizing reforms, creating tension between tradition and progress.

Creating Custom Content and House Rules

Fate's Edge thrives on **player agency** and **world customization**. When designing new Talents, Assets, or Prestige Abilities, follow these principles to maintain balance while encouraging creativity.

Talents are the building blocks of character specialization. They represent learned techniques, supernatural gifts, or cultural inheritances. Each Talent costs XP, and their costs are tied to impact. Only one talent can be active at a time unless otherwise specified

Designing Balanced Talents

[Talent Design Guidelines by Tier] lX

Tier	Design Principles and XP Cost Guidelines

General Talents (2-4 XP) Simple benefits that enhance core capabilities without complexity
Cultural Talents (4-6 XP) Thematic abilities tied to specific backgrounds or training
Prestige Abilities (6+ XP) Campaign-defining powers requiring significant investment and narrative milestones

Talents are the building blocks of character specialization. They represent learned techniques, supernatural gifts, or cultural inheritances. Each Talent costs XP, and their costs are tied to impact. Only one talent can be active at a time unless otherwise specified

Example Talent Designs

- **Battle Instincts** (6 XP): Once per scene, re-roll a failed defense roll—honed reflexes saving from certain disaster

- **Silver Tongue** (4 XP): Gain +1 die when persuading or deceiving through speech—words that charm and manipulate

- **Stone-Sense** (Dwarves, 5 XP): Detect flaws in stone or earth; gain +1 die on Engineering or Craft rolls underground—ancestral connection to the deep places

- **Blood Memory** (Ykrul, 5 XP): After a battle, meditate to gain one temporary Skill die reflecting a foe's tactics—learning through spilled blood

Designing Meaningful Assets

[Asset Design Framework] lX

Asset Tier	Scope and Narrative Impact
Minor (4 XP)	Local influence—safehouse, petty title, small shop with limited reach
Standard (8 XP)	Regional impact—spy ring, charter, workshop with measurable influence
Major (12 XP)	National scale—fortress lease, mercantile network, institution with lasting presence

Each Asset should include:

- **Activation Cost**: Typically 1 Boon for on-screen effect

- **Scope**: Clear boundaries on what it can plausibly accomplish

- **Fictional Hook**: Why it exists in the world and how it was obtained

- **Condition Track**: How it degrades or improves with use and attention

Running Complex Scenarios with Confidence

Heists and Infiltration

[Heist Scenario Framework] lX

Element	Implementation Guidelines
Positioning	Dominant entries through planning, distractions creating opportunities, asset use for specialized access

Social Rails Curfew (time pressure), Crowd (witness management), Sanctity (cultural restrictions)
Physical Rails Hazard (environmental dangers), Hunt (pursuit escalation), Escape (exit strategy)
GM Philosophy Let players plan thoroughly but make the world react realistically—guards change, nobles arrive early, systems update

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Mass Combat and Warfare

[Mass Combat Management System] lX

Component	Handling Method
Follower Units	Cap 5 followers represent military forces with distinct capabilities and morale
War Clocks	Supply Lines (8), Morale (6), Strategic Position (8)—track strategic realities
Command Actions	Leaders coordinate multiple units through decisive action and tactical insight
Environmental Factors	Weather, terrain, and time of day significantly impact large-scale engagements

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Political Intrigue and Social Conflict

- **Leverage**: Diamonds and social rails determine influence in courtly settings

- **Allies and Rivals**: Represented by Assets and Followers with their own agendas

- **Public Image**: Tied directly to Mandate and Crisis clocks—reputation is currency

- **Information Economy**: Secrets become tangible assets with measurable value

Advanced Magic and Supernatural Challenges

Magic Duels and Arcane Confrontations

High-stakes magical combat requires special considerations that honor both the power and the peril of arcane arts:

[Magic Duel Framework] lX

Element	Special Considerations
Counterspelling	Interrupting opponent's Casting Loop requires precise timing and significant risk
Backlash Cascade	Multiple casters generate SB that can create compound complications
Environmental Magic	Terrain-altering spells change the battlefield with lasting consequences
Elemental Opposition	Fire vs Water, Earth vs Air, Fate vs Luck—opposites create dramatic tension

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Supernatural Investigations

When the party confronts mysteries beyond mortal understanding:

- **Clue-Based Progression**: Information becomes the primary resource

- **Sanity and Corruption**: Exposure to the unnatural has measurable effects

- **Ritual Timelines**: Some threats operate on schedules beyond human comprehension

- **Reality Bleed**: The supernatural leaks into the mundane world with subtle signs

6.0.1   Disabling Magical Traps (Wards)

Wards are traps encoded in magic: a binding, sensor, or anchored effect. Treat them like any obstacle: **state the fiction**, **set Position**, and **resolve against DV**. This subsection expands the SRD example with GM-facing tools: how to set DV from fiction, what good/bad results look like, and how to keep the scene moving.

Structure (at the table).

Step 1: Name the Ward. What does it sense (heat, oath-breaking, Patron presence)? What does it do (alarm, bind, blast, invert gravity)? Where is the *anchor* (sigil, keystone, idol, threshold)?

Step 2: Reveal Handles. Offer at least two fictional levers: the arcane pattern (*Arcana*), the mechanism/anchor (*Tinker*), and the approach route (*Agility/Move*). Tools, components, or Patron symbols count as handles.

Step 3: Set Position → DV. Use the ladder as defaults; shift for scale/urgency.

- **Dominant** (time, tools, clear access): **DV2**.
- **Controlled** (pressure, partial access): **DV3**.
- **Desperate** (activating, hostile field): **DV 4–5+**.

Step 4: Declare Stakes. What happens on Partial/Miss? Name the *Ward Clock* and the *Alert Clock* up front if relevant.

Common Ward Types Anchors.   >l >X >X

Type	Trigger	Anchor Examples
Sentry	Crossing a threshold, line of sight, sound cadence	Lintel sigil, eye-gem, bell filament
Binding	Handling an item, touching a seal, oath breach	Wax seal, chain knot, iron brand
Punitive	Trespass + time window, named rival, taboo action	Idol tooth, ash sigil under rug, curse knot
Displacement	Path inversion, gravity twist, dream-step	Floor mandala, mirrored post, sleep pin
Anti-Magic	Casting in zone, symbol presence, boon use	Null plate, cold-iron frame, void ampoule

Approaches Aids (examples).

- **Wits + Arcana:** analyze glyph grammar; ground the loop with salt/ink; counter-frequency hum.

- **Wits + Tinker:** wedge the keystone; snip hair-thin filament; re-route power to a safe sink.

- **Body + Agility:** thread the safe arc; pin the pressure plate; time the chime cadence.

- **Teamwork:** one character steadies Position with tools while another rolls; assistants may accept **1 SB** to grant +1d once.

- **Talents/Tools:** lockpicks, ward-ink, tuning forks, mirror-shards; Patron symbols might improve Position if thematically aligned.

Clocks that Matter.

Ward Integrity (4): how close the binding is to disarming *or* rupturing. On Partials, tick 1; on Misses, tick 2.

Alerted Attention (4): nearby guardians, spirits, or owners notice tampering.

Escalation (4/6): punitive effects ramp (more Harm, broader area, additional tags).

Outcomes Palette (use or adapt).

- **Strong Hit:** Ward disabled/redirected cleanly; optionally *bank a tell* (learn its signature for later).

- **Mixed:** Suppressed but *unstable*; pick one: tick ALERTED ATTENTION +1, apply minor Backlash by element/Patron, or leave a trace (future complication).

- **Miss:** Ward holds or triggers; GM may (a) advance WARD INTEGRITY toward rupture, (b) trigger a reduced effect now, (c) spend SB to introduce a hard complication.

Counter-Ward (Arcana Focus; optional). On a Success, choose one: (1) **Suppress** for a scene; (2) **Disarm** permanently (mark +1 Obligation or expend rare material); (3) **Invert** (redirect first trigger to a designated sink; start UNINTENDED ECHO 1/4).

Difficulty Dials.

- **Scale:** Large areas or ancient wards add +1 DV or an extra clock.

- **Haste:** Rushed attempts worsen Position one step.

- **Right of Names:** Knowing the warder's true name improves Position one step or grants +1d.

- **Wrong Patron:** Symbols from an opposed Patron impose –1d or +1 DV (GM call).

Fiction First Hooks.

- Show sensory tells (ozone, cold breath, hair standing) before rolls.

- On Partials, change the room: new cover lines, heat shimmer, dead zones for boons.

- On Miss, give a choice: suffer a lesser effect now to avoid full trigger later, or press on and risk rupture.

Worked Mini-Example. *Vault Sentry (DV 3, Controlled).* Anchor: eye-gem in an idol. The crew uses Wits+Tinker with ward-ink and a mirror shard. Mixed result: WARD INTEGRITY+1, ALERTED ATTENTION+1, but the beam is shunted for this scene. Later a rival recognizes the mirror signature—payoff for the trace left behind.

6.1   Optional Player-Character Death

By default, Fate's Edge treats death as rare and dramatic. Use any of the following modules (singly or in combination) to tune how lethal your table feels. All options respect **Story Beats (SB)** and **Obligation** as core currencies.

Baseline (Default)

PCs do not die on ordinary failures. Instead, they suffer **Harm**, Conditions, lost opportunities, or narrative costs. Death only occurs when a rule below is in play or the table agrees a scene warrants it.

Option A — Severe Harm Death

Trigger. When a PC would take a **third** instance of Severe Harm (or escalate past the top of your harm track), they instead face death.

   Stave It Off. The player may avoid death by choosing one: (1) mark **2 SB** *and* take a MAIMED permanent Condition, (2) accept a **Patron's Claim** (see OptionD), or (3) convert the blow into a **Last Stand** (OptionC).

Option B — Death Clock

Trigger. Catastrophic consequences (falls, crushes, mortal wounds) fill a named **Death Clock** (4 or 6 ticks).

   While Ticking. Actions that stabilize reduce the clock; taking further punishment advances it.

   When Full. The character dies unless one of the following occurs immediately: spend **2 SB** to hold at full (buy a single action), accept a **Patron's Claim**, or another PC succeeds at *Pull From the Brink* (risky, effect = clock –2 on success).

Option C — Last Stand

Trigger. On lethal harm or a full Death Clock, the player may declare a **Last Stand**.

   Effect. For the remainder of the scene, the PC acts with **+1 effect** and ignores new Harm. Each action automatically creates **1 SB**. When the scene ends, the character **dies** unless a **miracle** is secured (Patron rite, relic, or equivalent).

Option D — Patron's Claim

Trigger. On death, the PC's Patron (or a circling power) intervenes.

   Bargain. The GM offers 1–3 -negotiable terms (e.g., *Obligation +2*, *forfeit a Gift*, *become a vessel for a season*). If accepted, the PC lives; mark the costs immediately and record the **Claim** as an ongoing front. Refusal means the death proceeds.

   Note. Claims should change the campaign; use sparingly.

Option E — Dramatic Exit Inheritance

Dramatic Exit. The player may choose a meaningful death that resolves a question or saves others.

Inheritance. The next PC created by that player inherits one of: (a) a **Relationship** (bond, contact, or rival), (b) a **Tool** (asset degraded one step), or (c) a **Lesson** (start with +1 XP toward a Talent used in the exit). Record how the world remembers them.

Option F — Return From Beyond

Trigger. A body, a name, and a path (rite, gate, bargain).

Cost. Treat as a High Rite with Obligation appropriate to the transgression. Set DV using §**??**. On success, the PC returns **changed**: apply a SCAR (permanent Condition) and **1 SB** to the rescuer. On failure, choose: lose the body, or return with a Patron's Claim.

Table Safety

Always confirm that **PC death is on the table** before a session begins. Use lines/veils or your safety tools; offer **Dramatic Exit** in place of surprise death if needed.

GM Guidance

- **Name the Stakes.** Before lethal rolls, state clearly which option(s) are available.

- **Tie to Themes.** Death, Claims, and Returns should echo the Patron's domain (e.g., Ikasha's shadow vigil, Mykkiel's writ of reprieve).

- **One Big Choice.** Offer a single fork at the brink (Last Stand, Claim, or Exit) rather than all at once to preserve drama.

- **Make It Matter.** Death or survival should change clocks, factions, and future scenes.

> **Quick Picks**
>
> **Low lethality:** Baseline + Death Clock only. **Heroic tragedy:** Severe Harm Death + Last Stand + Inheritance. **Dark bargains:** Any combo with Patron's Claim.

Narrative First: The World Remembers

In Fate's Edge, the world is not a puzzle to be solved—it is a **living system** that responds to player choices with consequences that ripple across time and space. Let factions shift their allegiances based on player actions. Let consequences accumulate like stones in a riverbed, gradually shaping the flow of history itself. And above all—let the story unfold organically from the collision of player ambition and world reaction.

Because in the end, it is not the GM who writes the legend that will echo through the ages.

It is the players, through their choices, sacrifices, and triumphs.

You simply hold the quill that records their epic.

And what an honor that is.

6.2 TPK Resolution (GM One-Pager)

A Total Party Kill doesn't have to end the campaign. Use this page to convert a wipe into forward motion without hand-waving or dream resets.

Framing

- **Name the fork.** Before the lethal roll, say which option will resolve a wipe.

- **Pick one lane.** Don't stack options; choose the one that best fits stakes and tone.

- **Change the world.** Advance clocks, shift factions, mark maps. Make it matter.

Menu (with GM Dials)

Capture Consequences. Overwhelmed rather than dead.

- *Base:* Strip 1–2 assets; apply 1 permanent Condition to 1–2 PCs; advance 1–2 relevant clocks +2.
- *Dials:* Add a CAPTIVITY 4/6 clock (escape or indoctrination). Offer a single bargain to drop a clock by 1.

Patron's Claim. A Patron intervenes with non-negotiable terms.

- *Base:* Each PC accepts 1 term (Obligation +2, lose a Gift, sworn service).
- *Dials:* Escalate to 2 terms for a full rewrite of the front; or concentrate the price on one PC (crown of thorns).

Last Stand → Legacy. Convert the wipe scene into heroic play, then pass the torch.

- *Base:* For remainder of scene: +1 Effect, ignore new Harm; each action generates 1 SB. After scene: PCs die.
- *Legacy:* Next party inherits 1 Relationship/Tool/Lesson per fallen PC.
- *Dials:* Let players bank 1 *Deed* each (a concrete change to a location/faction) in addition to inheritance.

Dramatic Exit Inheritance. Players choose meaningful deaths that alter the situation now.

- *Base:* Resolve a threat, save innocents, or seal a breach. Inheritance as above.
- *Dials:* Allow a single surviving witness or squire to carry the story fragment into the next chapter.

Reprieve at a Price. Buy back from death; the bill comes due.

- *Base:* Each PC marks Obligation +2 (or one steep Claim shared by all). Advance all scene clocks +1; introduce a new front tied to the price.
- *Dials:* Instead of Obligation, impose 1 permanent Condition on each PC *or* a faction Debt clock at 2/6.

New Torchbearers. End the chapter cleanly; begin with a connected cast.

- *Base:* New PCs tied to the fallen (apprentices, kin, witnesses). Bring 1 open clock and 1 enemy forward unchanged.

- *Dials:* Hand each new PC one *Echo*: a rumor, token, or map fragment linked to the last scene.

Sample Patron Claims (Pick 1 per PC)

≥1 X

Patron	Example Claim Term

Aliyah (Curses) Obligation +2 and bear a visible mark; once/scene your blessing bites an ally (GM may spend 1 SB to trigger). Carrion-King (Endings→Beginnings) Offer something broken each session; skip it once and he reclaims a boon until appeased. Clockwork Monad (Optimization) Adhere to a process vow; break it and gain COMPROMISED on your best asset. Gallow's Bell (Reckoning) Deliver one named debtor within three sessions or suffer OMEN. Grimmir (The Wild) Take the FERAL TELL Condition until a hunt is completed in his name. Ikasha (Shadow) Speak no true names for a week; reveal one and your shadow acts on its own (GM intrusion). Inaea (Webs Fate) Bind two rivals by promise; until then, you cannot refuse entangling bargains. Isoka (Change) Shed a relationship or identity; attempts to cling attract misfortune (GM may flip 1 die to 1 once/session). Khemesh (Abyss) Spend one night alone beneath open water/stone before next Downtime or suffer SHAKEN. Livaea (Desire) Surrender a private truth to a rival; gain leverage, lose safety. Mab (Courts) Host a salon and grant hospitality to an enemy; violate it and owe DEBT 2/6. Maelstraeus (The Merchant) Balance a ledger: repay a favor with interest within two sessions or forfeit a Gift. Mykkiel (Writ) Swear a public vow; break it and suffer SEIZED from your order. Nidhoggr (Antiquity) Restore a lost road/name; until then, suffer –1d on navigation/history. Oath of Flame Light Accept a watchdog role for a season; absent yourself and gain MARKED. Raéyn (Sea) Carry tidings between two ports before next moon; storms hunt you until done. Sacred Geometry (Order) Enforce a measure: refuse a "crooked" shortcut in play or take +1 Obligation. Se

6.3 Poison as Story Beats (Narrative ↔ Mechanics)

Poison is best when it *pushes scenes forward* rather than only dealing damage. This module frames poison as **Fatigue-forward**, with **Story Beats (SB)** powering escalation.

Core Model

- **Primary Effect:** Poison applies **Fatigue** (not Harm) unless it explicitly says otherwise.

- **Escalation:** The GM may **spend 1 SB** created in the scene to upgrade a poison instance: *Fatigue* $(\rightarrow)$ *Condition* $(\rightarrow)$ *Harm. Name the fiction of the escalation (spasms, fever spike, airway closing).*

- **Clocks:** Use a named clock per poison (e.g., NEUROTOXIN LOAD 1/4). Ticks convert into Fatigue/Conditions at thresholds.

- **Resist:** Players may Resist poison normally; strong fiction (antidote, mask, purge rite) can reduce Position or cancel a tick.

Delivery & Position

Route	Base DV	Position Cues
Contact	2	Sweat, numbness, rashes; Dominant with gloves/time.
Ingested	3	Bitter note, wine film; Controlled at table, Dominant in lab.
Inhaled	3–4	Perfume cloud, dust motes; Desperate in confined spaces.
Injury/Venom	3–4	Fanged strike, tainted blade; Controlled unless braced/prepared.

Outcomes Palette

Strong Hit. Avoid or purge: clear POISON CLOCK by 1 and ignore the current instance.

Mixed. Mark **Fatigue +1** *or* take a minor **Condition** (DIZZY, SHAKING). GM may tick the POISON CLOCK +1.

Miss. Mark **Fatigue +1** and tick POISON CLOCK +1–2. The GM may spend SB to apply a stronger Condition *or* escalate to **Harm 1**.

Conversion & Interactions

- **Fatigue → Harm.** Normal Fatigue overflow still converts per your health rules (see §**??**).

- **Armor.** Armor rarely helps vs. contact/ingested poisons; vs. *injury* delivery, apply armor before poison unless the blade is **Barbed/Venomous** (tag), which bypasses one step of conversion.

- **Rites.** *Purge* (§**??**) clears 1–2 ticks or downgrades Condition → Fatigue (GM sets Obligation).

- **Patrons.** Poison from a Patron-aligned source may trigger thematic backlash or Claims when resisted.

SB Dials for GMs

- **Pressure Valve (soft).** Spend SB to *delay* catastrophic onset: tick clock instead of immediate Harm, but widen the threat.

- **Spike (hard).** Spend SB to *frontload* impact: apply a named Condition now (BLIND, CRAMPING) or force a risky reposition.

- **Echo.** Bank 1 SB to trigger a delayed complication (e.g., relapse during negotiations).

Sample Poisons

Name	Primary Effect (on hit)	SB-Driven Escalation
Bitterglass	Fatigue +1; breath tastes like copper.	1 SB: DIZZY. 2 SB: Harm 1 (air hunger).
Widowroot	Fatigue +1; numb grip.	1 SB: drop held item. 2 SB: SHAKING.
Dream-Marrow	Fatigue +1; slow recall.	1 SB: FOGGED (–1 to memory). 2 SB: ASLEEP unless shaken.
Serpent's Borrow	Fatigue +1; swelling puncture.	1 SB: CRAMPING. 2 SB: Harm 1 unless pressure bandaged.
Courtier's Kiss	Fatigue +1; sweet aftertaste.	1 SB: SWAYED (–1 vs. social manipulation). 2 SB: BLURRED VISION.

Worked Micro-Example

Gala Balcony. Inhaled perfume trap (DV 3, Controlled). Mixed: PC marks Fatigue +1; GM ticks POISON CLOCK+1. Later, during the toast, the GM spends 1 SB to apply DIZZY; the PC chooses to lean on a friend (creating a bond) rather than push through and risk Harm.

> **Summary**
>
> Poison leans on **Fatigue** first. **SB** lets the GM pace escalation as the scene demands. Name the clock, show the tells, and let fiction lead the effect.

6.4 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.

6.4.1 Multi-Summoner Scenarios

When multiple Pact-Whisperers operate within the same party, the GM must balance narrative pacing, resource tension, and spotlight time. A three-summoner group creates a dynamic ecosystem of spirits, commands, and coordination that highlights Fate's Edge's distributed cognition design.

Core Principles.

- **Distributed Cognition:** Treat each summoner as a node of expertise. They manage their own spirit's leash, but the group collectively drives story momentum through overlapping actions.

- **Tension by Degrees:** Maintain visible Leash clocks. Half-filled clocks are narrative warnings (heat shimmer, voice echo, wind strain). Filled clocks should escalate story stakes, not merely end control.

- **Position Flow:** Use Position as the balancing lever. Cooperative positioning between spirits and mortals determines tempo, not raw power.

GM Tools for Multi-Spirit Play.

1. **Visible Leash Tracking:** Display Leash clocks for each active spirit. This keeps the tension transparent and helps players self-regulate.

2. **Free Sustain Action:** Each summoner gains one free "Sustain" command per round to maintain prior orders without ticking the Leash. Active commands or redirections still require an Action.

3. **Boon Economy Hooks:** Encourage cross-summoner Boon trades as in-fiction gestures of focus-sharing, divine resonance, or ritual synchrony. It reinforces teamwork.

4. **Narrative Strain:** Whenever multiple Leashes fill within the same scene, create environmental consequences: resonance quakes, time distortions, fog bursts, or Patron echoes.

Encounter Design.   Design encounters around **shared objectives** rather than discrete fights. Each summoner can anchor a dimension of the scene:

- **Social Summoner:** Improves Position and negotiation leverage through bound entities.

- **Combat Summoner:** Anchors tactical threat control and battlefield tempo.

- **Utility Summoner:** Expands environmental influence, stabilizing hazards or solving magical puzzles.

Example: The Merchant's Dilemma.   In a multi-summoner playtest, three summoners coordinated to solve a single crisis:

- **Session 1:** Social summoner negotiated trade peace via a Cap 1 *Sylph*.

- **Session 2:** Combat summoner's Cap 3 *Berserker* held off cursed creatures.

- **Session 3:** Utility summoner's *Construct* and *Earth Elemental* stabilized a collapsing shrine.

Each maintained different Leashes (*Cap + Command*)—6–8 segments—sustaining spirits for 6–10 rounds before departure. The result was natural pacing and tangible escalation without bookkeeping.

Narrative Balance.

- **Spotlight Rotation:** Shift scene framing—one summoner leads each major beat.

- **Cascade Effects:** If multiple Leashes break simultaneously, narrate a combined phenomenon (overlapping etheric resonance or backlash storm).

- **Scaling Complexity:** Introduce coordinated Leash management as optional at Tier III+.

GM Guidance Summary.

- Keep spirit autonomy visible and narratively meaningful.

- Tie consequences to the environment, not just the summoner.

- Let cooperation reshape the battlefield instead of multiplying turns.

- Use Story Beats from spirit actions to fuel ongoing complications.

Design Intent. A multi-summoner scenario tests the game's collaborative depth. The goal is not to balance power, but to balance story agency—each summoner's authority reshapes reality in their own way, and the GM's role is to let those harmonics build rather than cancel.

Terrestrial Patrons

Not all patrons are gods, demons, or cosmic forces. Mortals create power too: nobles, guilds, conspiracies, temples, syndicates, and commanders. A Terrestrial Patron represents an ongoing relationship with a powerful mortal faction.

Why They Matter A terrestrial patron doesn't grant magic. They grant *leverage*: protection, resources, sanctuary, information, and political shifts. Their rewards arrive through fiction and consequence.

Obligation (Terrestrial) Use the same Obligation track, but the consequences are social, legal, or economic instead of supernatural.

When you call on a Patron's influence, add +1 Obligation.

Getting a Patron To gain a Terrestrial Patron, complete one of the following:

- a major job for them,
- a sworn Oath,
- legal or financial binding,
- blackmail or shared crime.

Mark them on your sheet and write one sentence: *"They want me because _____"*

Perks Each Patron offers 2–3 repeatable benefits, such as:

- sanctuary,
- legal relief,
- black market goods,
- elite followers,

- forged documents,
- military backing,
- rumors and spywork.

Using a Perk never requires a roll. Fate has already been paid—it simply comes with Obligation.

Demands Terrestrial Patrons always want something back:

- silence,
- loyalty,
- a job,
- a name,
- a secret.

Refusing raises Obligation by 1. Betrayal may have immediate consequences.

When Obligation Fills

At 6 Obligation, the Patron acts. This is **not** optional.
  Choose one:

- You do a job you cannot refuse.
- You pay a severe price (legal, social, material).
- They strike first—reputation, warrants, bounty, blackmail.

  Reduce Obligation to 3 after the consequence lands.

Cutting Ties

You may sever a terrestrial tie, but doing so has fallout:

- lose all current perks,
- gain a new Rival faction,
- take a Curse, Bounty, or Scandal that follows you.

  Some patrons never forgive. Others can be bought off.

Redemption or Favor

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

- title,
- land,
- permanent access,
- unique asset.

Quick Example

The Black Ledger smuggling syndicate gives sanctuary and illegal gear. Rellan calls on the Ledger for a smuggled border crossing. The GM rules it succeeds automatically, but adds +1 Obligation. Rellan now owes the Ledger. Later, the Ledger demands he silence a witness. If he refuses, Obligation rises again. If Obligation ever reaches 6, the Ledger collects: accounts frozen, bounty posted, or a rival informant sent after him.

6.5 Campaign Framing Tools

Before your first session, use these tools to establish the foundation of your campaign and create a framework for long-term storytelling that will engage your players and provide meaningful direction.

6.5.1 The Crown Spread

The Crown Spread is a powerful campaign-framing technique that uses playing cards to seed the major themes, conflicts, and story elements of your campaign.

Setup Procedure

1. In Session 0, shuffle a standard deck of cards and lay out 5–7 cards in a semicircle (the "Crown")

2. Each card represents a major campaign element:

   - Position 1 (Root): Underlying tension or theme
   - Position 2 (Crest): Key faction or influence that will rise
   - Position 3 (Crown): Climax image or major confrontation
   - Position 4 (Left Hand): Bond, ally, or relationship anchor
   - Position 5 (Right Hand): Rival, betrayer, or challenger
   - Positions 6–7 (Optional): Setting-wide twists or complications

3. Record the spread openly on a campaign sheet visible to all players

Interpreting the Spread

Suits:

- **Hearts:** Social/emotional elements, relationships, romance, family

- **Diamonds:** Resources, wealth, trade, material concerns

- **Clubs:** Physical conflict, violence, obstacles, challenges

- **Spades:** Mystical, supernatural, secrets, hidden knowledge

Ranks:

- **Ace–4:** Subtle influences or early-stage elements

- **5–10:** Moderate forces that will become important

- **Jack–King:** Major players or climactic elements

- **Face Cards:** Named NPCs or significant organizations

6.5.2   Foreshadow Clocks

Transform each Crown card into a Foreshadow Clock [4] that tracks when that element manifests concretely in play:

- When events lean toward that omen, advance the clock

- When a Foreshadow Clock fills, the motif manifests in play

- Tie Crown elements to your main Campaign Clock for pacing

6.5.3   Campaign Clock

Establish a master Campaign Clock [8] to track rising stakes across your arc:
   Advance the Campaign Clock when:

- Multiple Story Beats overflow in a session

- Travel legs resolve with major complications

- Spread omens manifest concretely

- Player actions significantly impact the world

When the Campaign Clock fills: The Crown confrontation arrives and becomes the campaign climax.

6.5.4   Character Integration with the Crown

Help players connect their characters to the Crown elements:

- **Root Connection:** How does the underlying theme affect your character?

- **Crest Relationship:** Do you support or oppose the rising faction?

- **Crown Stakes:** What do you gain or lose in the final confrontation?

- **Hand Ties:** How do allies/rivals from the spread connect to you?

6.5.5   Session Zero Campaign Setup

Preparation Agenda (60–90 minutes)

1. **Draw the Crown Spread** (15 minutes)

2. **Interpret Major Elements** (20 minutes)

3. **Establish Player Connections** (20 minutes)

4. **Set Initial Clocks** (10 minutes)

5. **Review Character Bonds** (5 minutes)

Crown Spread Interpretation Examples

Example Spread:

- **Root (5 of Hearts):** Family secrets and inherited debts

- **Crest (King of Spades):** A powerful necromancer cult rising to power

- **Crown (Ace of Clubs):** A single decisive battle that will determine regional control

- **Left Hand (Queen of Diamonds):** A wealthy merchant patron who funds the party

- **Right Hand (Jack of Clubs):** A rival adventurer company that opposes the party

  Foreshadow Clocks Created:

- Family Secrets [4]: Ties to noble houses and old scandals

- Cult Rising [4]: Necromancer influence spreading through the city

- Battle Approaches [4]: Military tensions building between factions

- Merchant's Favor [4]: Patron's demands becoming more significant

- Rival Company [4]: Competitors interfering with party's goals

6.5.6 Long-Term Campaign Pacing

Use the Crown Spread elements to pace your campaign across multiple arcs:
  Early Game (Sessions 1–3):

- Introduce Root themes and Left Hand connections

- Begin advancing Foreshadow Clocks through player actions

- Establish the basic Campaign Clock at 1–2 segments

  Mid Game (Sessions 4–8):

- Crest elements begin to rise and create pressure

- Right Hand rivals become more active and threatening

- Campaign Clock advances to 3–5 segments

- 2–3 Foreshadow Clocks fill, bringing elements into play

  Late Game (Sessions 9–12):

- Crown confrontation becomes imminent

- All major elements converge toward climax

- Campaign Clock fills, triggering final confrontation

- Remaining Foreshadow Clocks resolve in climactic scenes

6.5.7   Campaign Ending and Legacy

The Climax

When the Campaign Clock fills, bring all Crown elements together for the final confrontation:

- The Root theme comes to a head

- The Crest faction reaches its moment of power or crisis

- Left Hand allies and Right Hand rivals take sides

- The Crown confrontation determines the outcome

Legacy Session

After the main campaign concludes, hold a legacy session:

1. Resolve any remaining Foreshadow Clocks as epilogue vignettes

2. Players mark Legacy Bonds—new relationships for future campaigns

3. Document major world changes and how player actions shaped them

4. Award Legacy XP for campaign completion and character growth

6.5.8   Adapting the Crown Spread

For Shorter Campaigns (3–6 sessions):

- Use only 3–4 Crown cards

- Reduce Foreshadow Clocks to [2–3] segments

- Set Campaign Clock to [6] segments

- Compress the pacing structure

For Longer Campaigns (12+ sessions):

- Use 7–9 Crown cards for more complexity

- Create secondary Crown Spreads for major story arcs

- Expand Foreshadow Clocks to [6] segments

- Plan multiple Campaign Clock cycles

For Specific Genres:

- **Political Intrigue:** Emphasize Hearts and Diamonds suits

- **Epic Fantasy:** Emphasize Spades and Clubs suits

- **Mystery/Crime:** Focus on hidden connections between cards

- **War/Battle:** Use multiple Clubs cards for conflict elements

6.5.9 GM Tips for Campaign Framing

- **The Spread is Not a Railroad:** Foreshadow, don't dictate

- **Reinterpret Cards Liberally:** Symbols matter more than literal events

- **Remind Players of Omens:** Reference Crown elements between sessions

- **Let Players Influence Interpretation:** Ask how they see the cards' meaning

- **Adjust for Player Actions:** Modify Crown elements based on character choices

- **Keep Clocks Visible:** Track Foreshadow and Campaign Clocks openly

Remember: The Crown Spread is your campaign's DNA—it provides structure while allowing for organic growth through player agency. Let it guide your storytelling without constraining creativity.

6.5.10 Tactical Combat Options

Initiative Variants

Narrative Initiative:

- Players and GM describe intended actions simultaneously

- Order determined by logical sequence of events rather than dice rolls

- Encourages collaborative storytelling during combat

- Best for groups comfortable with flexible turn structure

  Pool Initiative:

- All participants roll d10 + relevant attribute at start of combat

- Highest roller acts first, then chooses next actor from remaining pool

- Creates dynamic turn order that can shift based on situation

- Adds strategic element to combat pacing

Damage and Healing Variants

Wound System:

- Separate track for permanent injuries with lasting effects

- Wounds heal more slowly than regular Harm and may require special treatment

- Adds long-term consequences to combat encounters

- Creates meaningful choice between aggressive tactics and self-preservation

  Stress and Trauma:

- Mental and emotional damage tracked separately from physical harm

- Trauma effects can persist beyond combat and affect roleplaying

- Requires different recovery methods than physical injuries

- Adds psychological depth to combat encounters

6.5.11   Social Combat Framework

Structured Social Encounters

Social Combat Setup:

1. **Stakes Definition**: Clearly establish what each party wants to achieve

2. **Position Assessment**: Determine relative social standing and advantages

3. **Tactical Preparation**: Identify available social tools, allies, and information

4. **Engagement Rules**: Define how social actions translate to mechanical effects

   Social Combat Actions:

- **Influence**: Attempt to change someone's opinion or behavior

- **Gather Information**: Extract useful intelligence from social interactions

- **Protect**: Shield allies from social attacks or manipulation

- **Expose**: Reveal damaging information about opponents

Social Momentum

Building Social Advantage:

- Successful social actions create momentum that benefits future interactions

- Momentum can be spent to gain bonuses or introduce complications

- Different types of social capital (respect, fear, affection, obligation) provide different benefits

- Social momentum decays over time or when circumstances change significantly

subsubsectionEnvironmental Hazards
Weather-Based Challenges:

- **Sandstorm**: Impaired visibility, difficult navigation, equipment damage

- **Blizzard**: Extreme cold exposure, whiteout conditions, hypothermia risk

- **Monsoon**: Flash flooding, unstable terrain, lightning strikes

- **Heat Wave**: Dehydration, heat exhaustion, equipment malfunction

   Terrain-Based Challenges:

- **Quicksand**: Slow movement, risk of entrapment, strength/endurance drain

- **Avalanche Zone**: Sudden danger, difficult escape routes, burial risk

- **Swamp**: Disease exposure, unstable footing, disorientation

- **Cave System**: Limited air supply, navigation challenges, rockfall hazards

Supernatural Hazards

Magical Environmental Effects:

- **Wild Magic Zone**: Unpredictable spell effects, spontaneous magical phenomena

- **Temporal Distortion**: Time loops, accelerated aging, memory loss

- **Reality Bleed**: Phase shifts, gravity anomalies, logic-defying occurrences

- **Soul Drain**: Energy depletion, weakened resolve, spiritual vulnerability

6.5.12   Chase and Pursuit Systems

Abstract Chase Mechanics

Two-Clock Chase Structure:

- **Pursuer Clock**: Tracks progress of those giving chase

- **Fugitive Clock**: Tracks progress of those fleeing

- **Resolution**: When either clock fills, that side achieves their objective

  Chase Actions:

- **Evade**: Increase distance or hide from pursuers

- **Pursue**: Close distance or track quarry's movements

- **Obstacle**: Create or overcome barriers to movement

- **Assistance**: Aid allies or hinder opponents in the chase

Tactical Chase Elements

Environmental Factors:

- **Urban Environment**: Crowds, buildings, narrow alleys, potential hiding spots

- **Wilderness**: Natural obstacles, weather effects, terrain advantages/disadvantages

- **Aquatic**: Water currents, vessel maneuverability, underwater hazards

- **Magical Realm**: Reality distortions, teleportation opportunities, supernatural interference

  Resource Management:

- **Stamina**: Physical endurance affects sustained high-speed movement

- **Supplies**: Limited resources may constrain long-term pursuit or evasion

- **Equipment**: Specialized gear can provide significant advantages

- **Allies**: Assistance from others can dramatically shift chase dynamics

Chapter 7

Enhanced GM Play

Having mastered the advanced techniques of complication management, faction dynamics, and custom content creation, you now stand at the threshold of truly collaborative storytelling. The Crown system becomes genuinely transformative when the GM manages resources just like players, creating shared stakes and mutual investment in the narrative outcome. These enhanced mechanics elevate you from storyteller to co-creator, with your own resources, relationships, and narrative economy that mirror and complement the players' journey.

Resource Management for the Collaborative GM

Track these key resources to enhance your GM experience and create more balanced, deeply engaging gameplay where everyone has skin in the game.

GM Relationship Management

Just as players track relationship dice with NPCs, you should track relationship dice with major factions and key NPCs. This creates bidirectional engagement where both sides have tangible stakes in interactions, making the world feel genuinely reactive.

Starting GM Relationships

Begin each campaign with 1-2 relationship dice per major faction, representing your narrative investment in these groups:

[Starting GM Relationship Framework] lX

Faction Type	Relationship Dice Allocation Guidelines
Political Factions	Nobility, merchants, clergy—allocate dice based on campaign focus
Criminal Organizations	Guilds, syndicates, pirates—dice represent underworld connections
Military/Civic Authorities	Guard, military, bureaucracy—authority relationships matter
Supernatural Entities	Fae, undead, spirits—mystical connections with narrative weight
Economic Powers	Merchant houses, guilds, trade consortiums—economic influence dice

Relationship Shifts

GM relationship dice change dynamically based on player actions and world events:

- **Successful player interaction with faction**: GM may gain/lose relationship dice based on outcome

- **Player betrayal of faction**: GM gains relationship dice with antagonistic factions

- **Player aid to faction**: GM may lose relationship dice with enemy factions as balance shifts

- **Faction initiatives**: World events can shift relationships independently of player actions

Bidirectional Rolls

When players interact with NPCs, both sides roll, creating a richer interaction dynamic:

- Player rolls their relationship dice with the NPC

- GM rolls their relationship dice with that faction

- Results determine the **quality** of interaction, not just binary success/failure

- High relationship dice can lead to unexpected aid or complications that feel earned

Shared Leverage Pool

Create a collaborative economy where helping each other becomes strategic and rewarding for everyone at the table.

Pool Management

[Shared Leverage Pool Mechanics] lX

Pool Element	Management Guidelines
Initial Contribution	Players contribute 1 leverage each to shared pool at session start
GM Spending	GM can spend from pool to enhance player successes or create interesting complications
Player Spending	Players can spend to bypass GM complications or enhance their own actions
Refresh Cycle	Pool refreshes each session, encouraging regular use and collaboration

Spending Options

[Leverage Spending Options] lX

Cost	Effects and Narrative Impact
1 Leverage (GM)	Add interesting detail to player success—colorful descriptions, minor benefits
2 Leverage (GM)	Create beneficial coincidence—timely arrival, fortunate discovery
3+ Leverage (GM)	Introduce major plot hook—significant narrative development
1 Leverage (Player)	Avoid minor complication—graceful recovery from small setbacks
2 Leverage (Player)	Gain advantage on next roll—momentum boost when it matters
3+ Leverage (Player)	Rewrite recent unfavorable outcome—meaningful narrative influence

Campaign Tracking Systems

Simple yet powerful tracking mechanisms that enhance long-term play without burying you in complex bookkeeping.

Faction Loyalty Tracker

Track persistent world state through faction relationships that evolve organically with player choices.

Loyalty Scale

Use a simple -3 to +3 scale for each major faction that everyone can understand at a glance:

[Faction Loyalty Scale] lX

Loyalty Level	Narrative Manifestations and Behavior
-3 (Enemy)	Actively working against player interests, seeking to undermine at every opportunity
-2 (Hostile)	Will cause trouble when possible, though not dedicating full resources to opposition
-1 (Unfriendly)	Suspicious and unhelpful, requiring significant effort to gain cooperation
0 (Neutral)	Indifferent to player actions, responding only to direct incentives or threats
+1 (Friendly)	Helpful when convenient, offering assistance that doesn't require significant sacrifice
+2 (Supportive)	Actively assist player goals, allocating resources to help achieve objectives
+3 (Ally)	Will sacrifice for player interests, treating player success as faction success

Loyalty Shifts

Player actions shift faction loyalty in measurable, predictable ways:

- **Major help**: +1 to +2 loyalty (saving faction from existential threat)

- **Minor help**: +1 loyalty (completing favors, providing useful assistance)

- **Neutral actions**: No change (transactions without significant impact)

- **Minor harm**: -1 loyalty (inconveniences, minor thefts, small betrayals)

- **Major harm**: -1 to -2 loyalty (significant damage to faction interests)

- **Betrayal**: -2 to -3 loyalty (breaking major agreements, causing grave harm)

Revelation Economy

Control information flow through mechanical budgeting that makes discovery feel earned and strategic.

Budget Management

[Revelation Economy Framework] lX

Economy Element	Management Rules
Point Generation	Each clock segment resolved = 1 revelation point earned
Discovery Costs	Major discoveries cost 1-3 revelation points based on significance

Player Banking Players can "bank" unused revelation for future sessions
GM Strategic Saving GM can "save" revelation for climax moments and big reveals

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Revelation Costs

1 Point: Basic facts, surface details—what anyone could learn with minimal effort

2 Points: Strategic insights, tactical advantages—information that changes approaches

3 Points: Major revelations, plot-critical information—game-changing discoveries

Escalation Economy

Make tension management a player choice rather than imposed obstacle, giving them agency over challenge levels.

Point System

[Escalation Economy Mechanics] lX

Mechanic	Implementation Guidelines
Starting Pool	Begin with 3 escalation points per major conflict or challenge
Escalation Costs	Each escalation costs 1 point: +1 dice to opposition, new threat, complication
Player Control	Players can spend 1 leverage to de-escalate or redirect challenges
Refresh Cycle	Points refresh per new conflict, preventing infinite escalation

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Collaborative Mechanics

These mechanics transform players from participants to active co-creators in the narrative process.

Complication Trading

Allow players to request specific challenge types, making them active participants in narrative creation rather than passive recipients of adversity.

Player Challenge Requests

Players can request specific complication types that match their character strengths and player interests:

- **Social complications**: Feuds, negotiations, diplomacy—exploring relationship dynamics

- **Physical challenges**: Combat, exploration, survival—testing capabilities and endurance

- **Mystery elements**: Investigation, puzzles, hidden information—engaging intellect and perception

- **Moral dilemmas**: Ethical conflicts, difficult choices—exploring character values and growth

Bargaining Process

1. Player declares desired complication type and spends leverage (1-2 points)

2. GM draws from appropriate deck but allows player modification of specific elements

3. GM can spend relationship dice to enhance complications with faction connections

4. Both sides benefit from engaging, invested complications that everyone wants to explore

Cross-Cultural Synergy

Encourage creative cross-cultural storytelling through mechanical rewards that recognize meaningful connections.

Synergy Recognition

Look for natural connections between different cultural elements in your campaign:

[Cross-Cultural Synergy Examples] lX

Cultural Combination	Potential Synergy and Narrative Opportunities
Maritime + Criminal	Zakov seafaring traditions + Kahfagia underworld connections = smuggling networks
Rural + Supernatural	Aelaerem agricultural wisdom + Aelinnel mystical knowledge = nature spirits
Urban + Bureaucratic	Ecktoria city life + Aeler administrative systems = political intrigue
Military + Political	Black Banners discipline + Acasia diplomacy = strategic alliances

Synergy Bonuses

- Recognize cross-deck connections = +1 to relevant rolls (acknowledging creative thinking)

- Create perfect matches = Bonus leverage or relationship die (rewarding deep engagement)

- Suggest cross-cultural solutions = GM investment bonus (encouraging innovative play)

Momentum Banking

Reward efficient play and strategic pacing through saved resources that acknowledge player skill and preparation.

Banking Rules

[Momentum Banking System] lX

Momentum Source	Acquisition Guidelines
Efficient Resolution	Resolve conflicts under standard time = Bank 1 momentum per segment under
Creative Problem-Solving	Innovative solutions = Bonus momentum opportunities
Cooperative Play	Helping allies = Shared momentum benefits for entire group

Strategic Retreat Knowing when to withdraw = Preserved momentum for future use

Spending Momentum

- +1 to any relationship roll (social advantage)

- 1 free leverage (resource flexibility)

- Reroll one diamond draw (fortune's favor)

- Minor narrative influence (story shaping)

Session Management for Enhanced Play

Structured procedures for managing these enhanced gameplay elements during actual play sessions.

Pre-Session Setup

[Pre-Session Preparation Checklist] lX

Preparation Task Specific Actions and Considerations
Deck Review Check active decks for session themes and anticipated challenges
Relationship Audit Review relationship dice for factions likely to appear
Leverage Pool Setup Initialize Shared Leverage Pool with player contributions
Momentum Carryover Note any momentum saved from previous sessions
Loyalty Updates Prepare faction loyalty tracker adjustments based on past actions

During Session Management

- Track relationship shifts through player actions in real-time

- Monitor Shared Leverage Pool spending and opportunities

- Facilitate Complication Trading when players seek specific challenges

- Track faction loyalty changes as alliances shift

- Monitor Revelation Economy spending for information pacing

- Note Momentum Banking opportunities as they arise naturally

Post-Session Wrap-up

1. Adjust momentum based on clock resolution and efficiency

2. Update relationship dice for factions that saw significant interaction

3. Note relationship changes that will affect next session planning

4. Bank unused revelation points for future discovery moments

5. Track session investment ratings to gauge engagement levels

6. Plan any carryover elements that bridge between sessions

Gradual Implementation Timeline

Introduce these enhanced mechanics gradually to avoid overwhelming players or yourself with too many new systems at once.

Quick Start (Sessions 1-3)

[Initial Implementation Phase] lX

System	Introduction Method and Simplicity Level
Shared Leverage Pool	Start with 1 leverage each; simple spending options only
Faction Loyalty Tracker	Use basic -3 to +3 scale; track only 2-3 major factions
Complication Trading	Simple offers: "Want to make this more interesting?" with limited options
Basic Relationship Shifts	Track obvious changes only; don't overcomplicate early sessions

Building Skills (Sessions 4-6)

- Add Momentum Banking with clear segment tracking

- Implement Revelation Economy using clock segments as discovery budget

- Introduce Cross-Cultural Synergy recognition with bonus examples

- Begin Escalation Economy for major conflicts only

Master Level (Sessions 7+)

- Full bidirectional relationship system with nuanced interactions

- Complete Session Investment tracking with detailed metrics

- Advanced Revelation Economy with banking and strategic saving

- Player-GM Relationship Mirror for deep character integration

- Strategic Cross-Deck Synergy creation for complex narrative weaving

Narrative First: Enhanced Tools Serve Story

These enhanced mechanics are tools to deepen collaborative storytelling, not replace it. Use them when they enhance the fiction and discard them when they hinder the narrative flow:

- Let relationships shift naturally through roleplay and character development, not just dice mechanics

- Allow momentum to build through creative problem-solving and smart play, not mechanical optimization

- Let cross-cultural connections emerge from player choices and world exploration, not forced combinations

- Use the Shared Leverage Pool to reward collaborative play and interesting choices, not just mechanical efficiency

Remember: You are still the **weaver of consequences** in a world that responds to every action. These tools simply give you and your players more ways to create meaningful, interconnected stories together—stories where everyone has investment, agency, and stake in the outcome.

The world of Fate's Edge responds to every action—and now, with these enhanced techniques, it responds to every **collaborative choice** made around the table.

Make it legendary, together.

Chapter 8

Tier IV and V Play

As characters reach Tier IV and V levels, the scope of play expands dramatically. What once were local concerns become matters of regional, national, or even world-shaking importance. This chapter provides guidance for managing the unique challenges and opportunities that come with high-tier play.

8.1 The Nature of High-Tier Play

At Tier IV and V, characters are no longer operating on the margins—they are movers and shakers. Their actions have visible, lasting impacts on the world. This shift requires the Game Master to think bigger, plan longer, and embrace the cascading consequences of player choices.

Key Characteristics

- **Wider Scope**: Actions affect cities, regions, or nations
- **Longer Timelines**: Consequences unfold over weeks, months, or years
- **Greater Stakes**: Failure means more than personal loss
- **Complex Alliances**: Multiple factions with competing interests
- **Legacy Impact**: Choices create lasting changes to the world

8.2 Deck-Based Campaign Management

High-tier play benefits from structured campaign management using the Game Deck and other tools to track large-scale developments.

Campaign Clock Expansion

Expand beyond core campaign clocks to include:

- **Faction Influence** (6): Track major faction relationships
- **Public Opinion** (8): Regional perception of the group
- **Resource Network** (6): Economic and logistical reach
- **Legacy Projects** (10): Long-term initiatives with lasting impact

Using Cards for World Events

Draw cards periodically to introduce world events:

- **Suit 1 (Swords)**: Geographic/political changes

- **Suit 2 (Crowns)**: Social/cultural shifts

- **Suit 3 (Anchors)**: Economic/resource developments

- **Suit 4 (Glyphs)**: Opportunities/leverage points

8.3   Managing Multiple Holdings and Allies

Tier IV+ characters often command extensive networks. Use these techniques to keep management manageable:

Holding Clustering

Group related holdings into portfolios:

- **Economic**: Trade routes, businesses, investments

- **Political**: Titles, contacts, influence networks

- **Military**: Retainers, fortifications, strategic positions

- **Intelligence**: Informants, research facilities

Ally Hierarchies

Create chains of command:

- **Lieutenants** (Expertise 4-5): Direct reports who manage others

- **Commanders** (Expertise 3): Mid-level managers of specific portfolios

- **Agents** (Expertise 2): Field operatives and specialists

8.4   High-Stakes Consequences

Setback Points at high tiers should reflect the expanded scope of play:

High-Tier Setback Sinks

- **3-4 SP**: Regional setback, major holding compromised

- **5-6 SP**: Faction relationship damaged, public scandal

- **7-8 SP**: Strategic position lost, major ally turned

- **9+ SP**: Paradigm shift, fundamental world change

Tier VI — Mythic Play Guidelines

Scope. At Tier VI, actions reshape continents and concepts. Characters gain auto-successes equal to Tier (6) but remain bound by *Obligation, Corruption, and Harm*—now existential.
DV Scaling: $DV = 8 + n_{activeclocks} + Oppositionmod$ **Clocks:** 8–10 segments model nations, gods, or cosmic forces. **Resource Cap:** Obligation 12, Harm 3 (severe), Boons replaced by Mythic Tags. **Mythic Tags:** [OMEN], [REALITY], [SOVEREIGN], each grants +1 Effect and adds +1 Obligation when invoked.
Endgame Principle: Power demands metamorphosis—advancement changes what a character *is*, not what they *can do*.

Deck-Driven Consequences

Use the Game Deck for major setbacks:

- **Court Cards**: Major faction leaders or institutions affected

- **Aces**: Foundational assumptions challenged

- **Multiple Cards**: Cascade effects across multiple domains

8.5 Running Epic Campaigns

High-tier play often involves extended campaigns with multiple acts and lasting consequences.

Act Structure

- **Act I - Establishment** (Sessions 1-3): Set the stage, establish stakes

- **Act II - Escalation** (Sessions 4-8): Complications multiply, alliances shift

- **Act III - Resolution** (Sessions 9-12): Climactic confrontations, lasting changes

- **Epilogue** (Session 13+): Legacy assessment, new beginnings

Campaign Seeds

Use the full 4-card draw for major campaign hooks:

- **Suit 1 (Swords)**: Primary location/region of conflict

- **Suit 2 (Crowns)**: Key faction/leader driving events

- **Suit 3 (Anchors)**: Major complication/threat

- **Suit 4 (Glyphs)**: Opportunity/resource to exploit

8.6 Mass Combat and Warfare

Tier IV+ characters often find themselves commanding armies or influencing wars.

Army Scale Combat

Simplify large-scale battles:

- Treat armies as powerful allies with specialized skills

- Use clocks to track morale, supply, and strategic position

- Focus rolls on leadership and tactical decisions, not individual combat

Advanced Subsystem: Mass Combat

For a more detailed warfare system, use the following framework:

Army as an Entity Create a character sheet for the army with Approaches (e.g., Aggressive, Disciplined, Cunning) and a "Morale & Supply" clock.

The Battle Clock Each significant battle is a 4-6 segment clock. Characters can contribute by using their skills to create advantages or by leading from the front.

Strategic Rolls Commanders make skill checks against a target number. Success fills segments on the Battle Clock; failure fills segments on the army's "Morale & Supply" clock or introduces a complication via the Game Deck.

War Campaigns

Structure extended conflicts:

- **Strategic Phase**: Resource management, alliance building

- **Tactical Phase**: Key battles, covert operations

- **Political Phase**: Negotiations, aftermath management

8.7   Mythic Challenges

At Tier V, characters approach legendary status. Create challenges that match their stature:

Existential Threats

- Cosmic entities beyond normal understanding

- Reality-altering phenomena

- Threats to entire civilizations or ways of life

Legacy Missions

Missions that will be remembered for generations:

- Founding or destroying nations

- Ending or beginning ages

- Reshaping fundamental aspects of the world

Advanced Subsystem: Legacy Projects

A Legacy Project is a long-term goal that extends beyond a single adventure. To run one:

Define the Project The players state their goal (e.g., "Build a Mage University," "Forge an Alliance of Kingdoms").

Create the Project Clock This is a large clock, typically 8-12 segments.

Determine Prerequisites The project may require specific resources, allies, or completed quests to even begin.

Milestone Advances Instead of filling the clock with single rolls, each major story arc or significant achievement fills 2-3 segments. Setbacks from the Game Deck can remove segments.

8.8   Managing Player Agency

With great power comes the need for great Game Master flexibility:

Player-Driven Narratives

- Let player choices genuinely reshape the world

- Honor long-term commitments and consequences

- Provide meaningful opposition that matches their scale

World Reactivity

- Factions respond realistically to player actions

- Economic and political systems show cause-and-effect

- Non-player characters remember and react to past interactions

8.9   Rivals and Counterpoints

High-tier characters attract attention—both positive and negative:

Creating Worthy Opponents

- Mirror player capabilities and resources

- Give them their own networks and influence

- Create personal connections and history with the group

Dynamic Rivalry

- Rivals evolve based on player actions

- Competition across multiple domains (political, economic, social)

- Occasional cooperation against greater threats

8.10   Campaign Legacy

Help players see the lasting impact of their choices:

Legacy Tracking

- Document major world changes initiated by the group

- Track faction relationships and their evolution

- Record personal legacies and how they're remembered

Epilogue Framework

Use cards to determine long-term outcomes:

- Draw 2-3 cards from each suit

- Interpret results as 5-10 year outcomes

- Let players narrate their characters' final fates

8.11   Game Master Preparation Tips

Think in Campaign Arcs

- Plan 3-5 major story arcs per tier

- Each arc should have lasting world impact

- Connect arcs through recurring themes or non-player characters

Prepare Flexible Frameworks

- Create faction relationship matrices

- Develop economic and political systems that respond to actions

- Build modular locations that can evolve

Embrace Player Creativity

- Let player holdings genuinely solve problems

- Reward creative use of influence and resources

- Say "yes" to ambitious player plans, then make them interesting

8.12 Sample High-Tier Scenario

The Shattered Crown Crisis

A Tier IV campaign seed:

- **Suit 1 (The Royal Crypts)**: Ancient tombs beneath the capital

- **Suit 2 (The Usurper)**: A noble house claiming the vacant throne

- **Suit 3 (Fractured Loyalties)**: Regional lords choosing sides

- **Suit 4 (The Crown's Secret)**: Hidden royal treasures and alliances

Clocks: Succession Crisis (8), Noble Conspiracy (6), Public Unrest (6)

This scenario can evolve based on player choices—supporting the usurper, finding a true heir, or establishing a new form of government.

8.13 Tools of the Game Master

This section summarizes the key procedures for running epic-tier play.

Core Procedures

Starting an Epic Arc Draw 4 cards (one per suit) to generate the core elements of a major story: Location, Faction, Threat, and Opportunity.

Managing the World At the start of each session or after a major event, draw a card from the Game Deck to see how the world changes. Use the suit to determine the domain (Political, Social, Economic, Opportunistic).

Handling Major Setbacks When players accumulate 3+ Setback Points, consider spending them for a high-tier consequence. Use the Game Deck to determine the nature of the setback, with Court Cards and Aces indicating severe, world-altering events.

Tracking Progress Maintain the expanded set of Campaign Clocks (Faction Influence, Public Opinion, etc.) to mechanically represent the group's impact on the world.

Running Key Scenes

Mass Combat Use the Battle Clock subsystem. Focus on the characters' leadership actions and their consequences for the army's morale.

Legacy Projects Use the Legacy Project Clock. Advance it through milestone achievements, not individual rolls.

Epilogue After the final session, use a multi-card draw from the Game Deck to inspire the narration of the world's and characters' long-term futures.

8.14   Boss Generator

8.14.1   Core Concept

A deck-based tool to quickly create compelling, thematically rich boss encounters with built-in mechanical scaling and narrative hooks. The GM uses the draws as a foundation and then applies their knowledge of the setting, party, and desired challenge level to finalize the boss.

8.14.2   Deck Structure

Standard Deck (52 Cards)

Suits Define Core Aspects:

- **(Spades - Structure):** The boss's physical form, defenses, and core mechanics.

- **(Hearts - Drive):** The boss's motivations, goals, and psychological core.

- **(Clubs - Complication):** The boss's signature hazards, environmental effects, and unique challenges it introduces.

- **(Diamonds - Reward):** The boss's unique loot, knowledge, or narrative currency the players gain by defeating it (can also be a "Twist" reward that changes the story).

  Ranks Define Scale/Intensity (Modified for Bosses):

- **2-5 (Minor):** A challenging elite enemy or minor boss. 4-segment "Phase" clock.

- **6-10 (Standard):** A significant boss encounter. 6-segment "Phase" clock.

- **J, Q, K (Major):** A major set-piece boss. 8-segment "Phase" clock.

- **A (Pivotal):** An epic, campaign-defining boss. 10-segment "Phase" clock.

  Color Influence:

- **Black Suits (,):** Physical, tangible threats and defenses.

- **Red Suits (,):** Psychological, social, or intangible aspects.

8.14.3   Deck Categories & Examples

Spades - Structure (Form, Defenses, Core Mechanics)

- **2-5:** Augmented Body (Cybernetics, armor plating), Swarm Core (Controls lesser units), Fragile Shell (Weak physical form, relies on other defenses).

- **6-10:** Massive Construct (High Body, area attacks), Adaptive Core (Changes tactics/defenses), Phased Form (Intangible/invulnerable at certain times).

- **J/Q/K:** Living Weapon (Its body IS its weapon), Reality Anchor (Negates certain magic/effects in its zone), Hive Mind (Shares health/pool with minions).

- **A:** Titan (Massive scale, environmental effects just by existing), Conceptual Entity (Exists partially outside normal reality), World-Soul (Bound to the location itself).

Hearts - Drive (Motivation, Goals, Psychology)

- **2-5:** Greed (Wants treasure/resources), Survival (Will do anything to stay alive), Guarding (Protecting something/someone).

- **6-10:** Domination (Seeks control/power over others), Corruption (Spreads decay/evil), Restoration (Trying to fix/revive something, even destructively).

- **J/Q/K:** Vengeance (Driven by a specific past wrong), Ascension (Seeks to transcend current form/state), Preservation (Wants to prevent change or end the world).

- **A:** Cosmic Hunger (Consumes to fuel its existence), Paradox Incarnate (Embodies a fundamental contradiction), The Inevitable (Its goal is preordained, unstoppable).

Clubs - Complication (Hazards, Environment, Unique Challenges)

- **2-5:** Overheating Systems (Condition clock that worsens attacks if filled), Unstable Terrain (Difficult/unsafe ground), Reactive Defenses (Traps triggered by player actions).

- **6-10:** Environmental Collapse (Clock ticking towards a disaster), Phased Attacks (Must be attacked in a specific sequence), Debilitating Field (Ongoing condition for players).

- **J/Q/K:** Minion Control (Commands powerful followers), Reality Distortion (Rules of physics/magic are bent), Soul Drain (Attacks also sap resolve/resources).

- **A:** Apotheosis Trigger (Defeating it the "wrong" way makes it stronger), Causality Loop (Actions have delayed, paradoxical effects), Domain Authority (The battlefield itself is hostile).

Diamonds - Reward/Twist (Loot, Knowledge, Narrative Shift)

- **2-5:** Valuables (Riches, rare materials), Useful Tool (Minor artifact, key, helpful item), Tactical Knowledge (Insight into a related threat).

- **6-10:** Powerful Artifact (Significant magic item), Forbidden Lore (Dangerous but valuable information), Faction Favor (Gain status with a group).

- **J/Q/K:** Soul Bargain (Power at a cost), Command Obedience (Gain control over something related), Rewriting Fate (Undo a past failure or gain a major advantage).

- **A:** Worldly Truth (Reveals a major plot point), Shifting Balance (Fundamentally alters the power structure), Divine Spark (A step towards mythic status for a PC).

8.14.4   GM Usage Procedure

1. **Define Scope:** Decide the general tier/impact of the boss (Minor encounter to Pivotal climax).

2. **Draw Cards:** Draw one card from each suit. The highest rank determines the base **Phase Clock Size** (4/6/8/10 segments).

3. **Interpret Core:** Read the four cards as a cohesive whole. What kind of boss does this combination suggest?

   - *Example: 6 Massive Construct, J Vengeance, Q Reality Distortion, A Worldly Truth.*

- *Interpretation: A vengeful, colossal war construct whose very presence warps reality. Defeating it reveals a crucial truth.*

4. **Theme & Flavour:** Use the core concept to tie the boss to the setting, the party's story, or the current location. What *is* this Massive Construct? Who is it seeking Vengeance against?

5. **Set Base Stats:** Use the party's Tier and the boss's scale (rank) to determine a base dice pool.

   - *Guideline:* Tier I (Rookie/Seasoned): Boss Base 6-7 dice. Tier II (Veteran): 7-8 dice. Tier III (Paragon): 8-9 dice. Tier IV/V (Mythic): 9+ dice.

6. **Mechanize the Cards:**

   - **Structure:** Defines base form, resistances, and primary attack modes. *Massive Construct* = High Body, area attacks, maybe [COMPROMISED] resistance.

   - **Drive:** Influences behavior and special actions. *Vengeance* = Targeted attacks on specific PC/ally, bonus against those who "wronged" it.

   - **Complication:** Create a named clock or ongoing effect. *Reality Distortion* = "Warp Field" clock [6]. When filled, the laws of physics in the zone shift dramatically for a round.

   - **Reward/Twist:** Plan the narrative outcome. *Worldly Truth* = Defeating it reveals the location of a hidden vault or the true identity of a patron.

7. **Define Phases:** Based on the clock size, break the fight into 2-3 phases. As the main "Phase Clock" fills, the boss gains +1 die per phase (or other escalating effects) and may trigger its Complication clock or introduce new elements.

8. **Tie to Story Beats:** Remember, the boss generates Story Beats (SB) on 1s. Use the Drive and Complication to guide how SB are spent. *Vengeance* SB might target the PC it's after. *Reality Distortion* SB might trigger environmental weirdness.

9. **Run the Encounter:** Use the established framework, but narrate freely. Let player actions and SB spends influence the specific details within the established parameters.

8.14.5   GM Guidance & Theming Advice

- **Start Simple:** For a first boss, use fewer complications or a straightforward phase structure. Add complexity as you get comfortable.

- **Tie to the Party:** Use the Drive to connect the boss to the PCs. A boss driven by *Vengeance* is more impactful if it's specifically targeting one of the players or their homeland.

- **Make the Environment a Character:** Use the Complication to make the fight location dynamic. The boss doesn't just exist *in* the environment; it *is* part of the environment or actively manipulates it.

- **Reward Narrative Investment:** The Reward/Twist is crucial. It shouldn't just be loot; it should advance the story or give players a meaningful choice.

- **Use Clocks Liberally:** The boss's Phase Clock, its Complication Clock, and environmental clocks (like Self-Destruct) are fantastic tools for pacing and adding tension. Name them evocatively.

- **Embrace Failures:** A "Miss" for the boss or a player isn't a dead end. It's an opportunity for a complication (SB spend) that makes the story more interesting.

- **Scale the Fight:** Don't be afraid to adjust on the fly. If the boss is too easy, spend SB to make it nastier. If it's too hard, let a fortunate player action create an opening.

8.14.6   Example: The Tyrant-Engine

- **Draw:** 8 Adaptive Core, K Domination, Q Reality Distortion, K Rewriting Fate. Highest rank K (Major) -> **8-segment Phase Clock**.

- **Theme:** A war machine fused with a corrupted intelligence, driven to impose order through force, capable of warping the battlefield.

- **Stats:** Tier II party base (8 dice).

- **Mechanics:**

  - **Adaptive Core:** Gains resistance tags or minor condition immunities. Changes primary attack mode (melee/ranged/area) based on who is most threatening.

  - **Domination:** Focuses attacks on the perceived leader or most defiant PC. Gains bonuses when enemies are impaired/frightened.

  - **Reality Distortion:** "Warp Field" clock [6]. Fills via SB spends or when boss takes significant damage. When full: Range bands shift, gravity flickers, or a zone becomes [WARD] against certain actions for one round.

  - **Rewriting Fate:** Defeating it reveals a command code or core logic that can be used to control other similar constructs, or rewrite the narrative of how this fortress fell (ally survived, different outcome).

- **Phases:** 3 phases (0-2/3-5/6-8 segments on Phase Clock) granting +0/+1/+2 dice respectively.

- **SB Spends:** Tie to (targeting defiant PCs) and (triggering minor warp effects, environmental hazards).

This system provides a structured spark for creativity, ensuring bosses are not just stat blocks but integral, dynamic parts of the narrative, perfectly aligned with Fate's Edge's core principles.

8.15   Beyond the Combat Monster: Bosses as Systemic Challenges

A *boss* in *Fate's Edge* does not need to be a creature to fight. It can be any significant, *active* challenge that requires multiple scenes—often multiple sessions—to overcome.

Types of Non-Combat Bosses

1) The Institutional Boss   *Examples:* a corrupt bureaucracy, a rigged legal system, an entrenched guild.
Mechanics: multiple related clocks representing facets such as red tape, key officials, and public opinion.
Defeat: reform the institution, circumvent it entirely, or replace it.

2) The Scheming Mastermind   *Examples:* a political figure with ongoing plans, a criminal kingpin with operations.
Mechanics: a central *Scheme* clock plus subsidiary *Asset* clocks (followers, resources, safe houses).
Attacks: pre-planned moves that trigger in response to player actions.
Defeat: expose their plans, remove their power base, or turn their schemes against them.

3) The Environmental Boss   *Examples:* a spreading curse, an economic collapse, a natural disaster.
Mechanics: a growing *Threat* clock that spawns complications and subsidiary problems.
Attacks: worsening conditions, resource depletion, cascading crises.
Defeat: contain the threat, find its source, or adapt the community to survive it.

4) The Social Movement Boss   *Examples:* a popular uprising, a religious revival, a trade embargo.
Mechanics: momentum clocks, faction support clocks, public opinion tracks.
Attacks: shifting social pressure, mob actions, volatile alliances.
Defeat: co-opt the movement, address root causes, or decisively crush it (with consequences).

Key Principles for Non-Combat Bosses

- **Structure:** Provide a clear mechanical representation (usually clocks) that shows the boss's *health* or progress toward its goal.

- **Drive:** Give the boss explicit motivations and behaviors. What does it want? How does it respond to pressure?

- **Complications:** Define signature ways the boss creates problems beyond direct confrontation.

- **Reward/Twist:** Decide what happens when the boss is *defeated*; aim for meaningful, potentially transformative outcomes.

- **Mini-Campaign Nature:** These bosses should require multiple scenes/encounters to resolve, not a single roll.

Using the Boss Generator for Non-Combat Bosses

- **Spades (Structure):** the boss's organization, resources, or foundational power.

- **Hearts (Drive):** the boss's core motivation and psychological profile.

- **Clubs (Complication):** the boss's signature methods for creating problems.

- **Diamonds (Reward):** what is gained by overcoming the boss (may be narrative currency or lasting leverage).

Design Note

In *Fate's Edge*, the greatest threats are often not monsters to slay but problems to solve, systems to reform, or schemes to unravel. The *boss fight* frequently plays out as an extended conflict across investigation, social maneuvering, and strategic decision-making.

8.15.1 Mythic Ascension: The Paragon's Path

At Tier IV and beyond, the greatest warriors transcend the merely physical, becoming living legends whose prowess reshapes the battlefield itself. These Paragon Warriors are no longer simply fighters; they are *forces of nature*, their willpower and skill manifesting in ways that defy mortal limits.

Mythic Tags for Martial Prowess

Characters who embody the pinnacle of martial evolution may earn Mythic Tags that reflect their legendary status. These are not merely mechanical bonuses, but fundamental aspects of their heroic identity:

The warrior commands the field. Allies within Near gain +1 Effect on combat actions. Enemies must test Resolve (DV 3) or suffer -1 die when directly engaging the Paragon.

The hero's fate is intertwined with destiny. Once per scene, when reduced to Harm 3 (Incapacitated), the Paragon may declare this Tag to instead stabilize at Harm 2 and gain +2 dice on their next action as fate intervenes.

The warrior's blows reshape truth. May ignore one instance of armor conversion or damage resistance. May sunder one non-artifact weapon or shield per scene.

Acquiring Mythic Tags: These are granted by the GM for moments of truly legendary action that shift the campaign's narrative—defeating a dragon that threatened a kingdom, holding a pass against an army, or sacrificing greatly for allies. They represent the character's ascension beyond mortal bounds.

Legendary Actions and Domain Authority

At Tier V, Paragon Warriors may perform actions that transcend normal physical laws:

- **Momentum Cascade (1):** A single attack triggers a chain reaction, striking all enemies in Close range with -2 dice for secondary targets.

- **Unbroken Will (1):** Ignore all Conditions (Fear, Charm, etc.) for one full exchange.

- **Warrior's Dominion (1):** Declare a zone (e.g., "This Bridge is Mine"). All enemies in the zone suffer -1 die to attack rolls, while allies gain +1 Effect on defensive actions.

The Price of Legend

Epic martial power demands transformation. As warriors ascend, they must choose *Legendary Flaws* that reflect their mythic nature:

- **The Burden of Honor:** Must always accept a fair duel. Refusing marks 2 SB.

- **The Last Stand:** When allies fall, gain +1 Effect but suffer +1 Harm automatically each round.

- **Destiny's Magnet:** Major villains and cosmic threats are drawn to the Paragon's presence (+1 to relevant encounter clocks).

The greatest warriors understand that true legend is not just about power gained, but about the humanity sacrificed to achieve it. Their epic tales echo through generations not just for their victories, but for the price eternally paid for those triumphs.

8.16   Conclusion

Tier IV and V play represents the pinnacle of storytelling in this system. Embrace the epic scope, honor player agency, and let the world truly respond to their legendary actions. Remember: these characters don't just participate in history—they make it.

The dice still matter, consequences still flow, and every choice still carries weight. But now, those choices echo across nations and generations.

Make it legendary.

Chapter 9

Running the Game: A Practical Guide

Reading the rules is one thing; feeling the flow of the game is another. This chapter provides a practical, illustrative walkthrough of how **Fate's Edge** operates at the table. We will follow a hypothetical group through several common scenarios, showing how the core procedures—Position, Rails, Clocks, and the Deck of Consequences—create a dynamic, responsive narrative. The goal is to see the rules not as restrictions, but as natural tools for collaborative storytelling.

The Setup: Our Intrepid Band10

To illustrate, we'll follow a specific group:

- **Valerius**: An Ecktorian ex-legionary (Body/Resolve), the group's protector.

- **Elara**: A Vhasian spy and infiltrator (Wits/Subterfuge), the group's face and trickster.

- **Kael**: A dwarven stonemason and lore-keeper (Lore/Geomancy), the group's scholar and planner.

They are in the city of **Silkstrand10**, Acasia, and have learned that a rival merchant, **Lord Silas**, possesses a sealed charter that proves their patron's rightful claim to a lucrative trade route. Their goal: acquire the charter from Silas's heavily guarded manor.

Scenario 1: The Heist - Infiltrating Silas's Manor

A heist is a classic test of planning, improvisation, and dealing with cascading complications. Let's see how it unfolds.

Phase 1: The Approach - Gathering Information

The players decide to case the manor before attempting entry. Elara suggests scouting the perimeter and socializing with the household staff at a nearby tavern.

   The Action: Elara will use **Wits + Subterfuge** to identify patrol patterns and a weak point in the security.

- **Position**: **Controlled**. The streets are watched, but the evening crowd provides some cover.

- **Rails**: The GM sets a **Hunt Rail** (4 segments) representing the alertness of Silas's guards. A complication might fill this clock.

Elara rolls: **2d10** (Wits 2 + Subterfuge 0). She gets a **5** and a **3** → a **Partial Success**.

The Outcome: She successfully identifies a side gate used by kitchen staff that is less frequently watched. **However**, the GM spends 1 Story Beat. A patrolling guard spots her loitering and becomes suspicious, advancing the **Hunt Rail** by 1 segment. The guard doesn't raise an alarm yet but will remember her face.

Phase 2: The Infiltration - A Desperate Climb

With the side gate identified but now under increased scrutiny, Valerius proposes a different approach: scaling the outer wall in a blind spot under cover of darkness.

The Action: Valerius will use **Body + Athletics** to scale the wall.

- **Position**: **Desperate**. The wall is high and slick with dew. A fall would be serious, and he's exposed.

- **Rails**: The **Hunt Rail** is now at 1/4. A complication here could be dire.

Valerius rolls: **3d10** (Body 3 + Athletics 0). He gets a **6**, a **2**, and a **1** → a **Full Success**! He scrambles silently over the wall and drops into a deserted herb garden.

The Outcome: No complication. He's inside. He secures a rope for the others. The GM notes that the **Desperate** position was overcome by a great roll, avoiding what could have been a nasty fall or immediate discovery.

Phase 3: The Complication - An Unlocked Door

Inside, Kael uses his **Stone-Sense** to try and feel the layout of the manor's lower levels, hoping to locate the vault.

The Action: Kael uses **Lore + Geomancy** to attune to the stonework.

- **Position**: **Controlled10**. He's in a quiet, stable area and can focus.

Kael rolls: **2d10** (Lore 2 + Geomancy 0). He gets a **1** and a **3** → a **Complication**.

The Outcome: He gets a vague sense of a reinforced room to the east, but the GM now has 2 SB to spend. The GM decides to introduce a new element: the door to the kitchen swing opens, and a young, nervous apprentice carrying a tray of wine steps out, freezing when he sees the intruders. The scene immediately shifts to a social encounter.

Phase 4: Improvisation - Swaying the Apprentice

Elara quickly steps forward, putting herself between the apprentice and the armed Valerius.

The Action: Elara will use **Presence + Sway** to convince the apprentice he saw nothing, perhaps with a bribe.

- **Position**: **Controlled**. He's scared and could easily scream.

- **Rails**: The GM invokes a **Curfew Rail** (6 segments)—how long until the master of the kitchen comes looking for the late wine?

Elara rolls: **3d10** (Presence 2 + Sway 1). She gets a **4**, a **5**, and a **2** → a **Partial Success**.

The Outcome: The apprentice is swayed by the coin and doesn't scream, but he whispers, "The master's steward makes his rounds in five minutes! You must be gone!" The GM advances the **Curfew Rail** by 2 segments, creating immediate time pressure. The heist continues, but the clock is ticking loudly.

Heist Flow Summary

This sequence shows the core loop:

1. **Player declares goal and approach.**

2. **GM sets Position and relevant Rails/Clocks.**

3. **Roll determines outcome:** Success moves the plan forward; Partial Success does so with a cost (SB or Clock advance); Complication introduces a new problem (spending SB).

4. **The fiction changes,** and the loop repeats. The game naturally oscillates between controlled planning and chaotic improvisation.

Scenario 2: The Aftermath - Social Fallout

The group successfully retrieves the charter (though not without further close calls). However, Lord Silas knows he was robbed and suspects their patron. A few days later, Elara is invited to a high-society party at Silas's manor—a clear trap, but one she cannot refuse without admitting guilt.

The Scene: A Gilded Trap

The party is in full swing. Silas corners Elara, his tone friendly but his eyes cold.

The Action: Elara needs to navigate this conversation without giving anything away, using **Wits + Sway** to maintain her cover story.

- **Position**: **Desperate**. She's on his turf, surrounded by his allies.

- **Rails**: The GM sets a **Crowd Rail** (8 segments) representing the social pressure and potential for a public scandal that could ruin her patron.

Elara rolls: **3d10** (Wits 2 + Sway 1). She gets a **1**, a **1**, and a **4** → a **Complication**.

The Outcome: Disaster. Her story has holes. Silas smiles thinly and says, loud enough for others to hear, "A curious tale. It seems the rats in this city are growing bold." The GM spends the SB for a major social setback: the **Crowd Rail** is filled instantly. Whispers spread, and her patron's reputation takes a significant hit. The GM also draws from the Deck of Consequences for a long-term effect: the **Queen of Spades**—a major political figure (perhaps the Matron of Silkstrand herself) takes note of the scandal, creating a new, powerful rival.

Scenario 3: The Journey - A Chase through the Mistlands

With heat increasing in Silkstrand, the group decides to flee north into the Mistlands to deliver the charter to a safe ally. Lord Silas has hired a band of mercenaries to pursue them.

This is a perfect opportunity to use the **Travel Deck** and abstract a chase sequence.

The Chase as a Series of Clocks

The GM sets up two opposing clocks:

- **PCs' Escape Clock** (6 segments): They need to lose their pursuers or reach the safety of the dwarven holds.

- **Pursuers' Hunt Clock** (6 segments): The mercenaries are closing in.

Each leg of the journey is resolved with a skill check, with the outcome affecting both clocks. **Leg 1: Navigating the Fog**. Kael uses **Lore + Survival** to guide them.

- **Position**: **Controlled**. The mist is thick and disorienting.

Kael rolls a **Partial Success**. The GM rules: The PCs advance their **Escape Clock** by 1 segment, but the pursuers also advance their **Hunt Clock** by 1 segment—the mercenaries are doggedly following their trail. **Leg 2: Crossing the Charnel Bog**. Valerius uses **Body + Athletics** to find a safe path.

- **Position**: **Desperate**. The bog is treacherous and slow-going.

Valerius rolls a **Full Success**! The PCs find a swift, hidden path, advancing their **Escape Clock** by 2 segments. The pursuers are stymied, and their **Hunt Clock** does not advance. **Leg 3: The Ambush**. The Hunt Clock is at 4/6. The mercenaries catch up! This triggers a **Skirmish** as a discrete scene (see below), which will decisively impact the chase clocks.

Scenario 4: The Skirmish - A Fight in the Fog

The mercenaries emerge from the mist, blades drawn. The GM frames the conflict not as a round-by-round tactical simulation, but as a high-stakes action scene with a clear objective: **break through the ambush and escape**.

Setting the Stakes

- **Objective**: The PCs need to create an opening to flee.

- **Position**: **Desperate**. They are ambushed and outnumbered.

- **Clocks**: The GM creates a **Mob Overwhelm Clock** (4 segments). If it fills, the PCs are surrounded and captured.

Valerius's Action: He decides to charge the leader, hoping to break the mercenaries' morale with a show of force. He uses **Body + Warfare**.

He rolls a **Partial Success**. He clashes with the leader, holding him off, but the GM spends a SB: a lesser mercenary gets a lucky strike. Valerius takes **Harm 1** (a gash on his arm). The **Mob Overwhelm Clock** advances by 1 segment.

Elara's Action: Seeing Valerius in trouble, she throws a smoke pellet (a temporary asset) and uses **Wits + Subterfuge** to create a diversion.

She rolls a **Full Success**! The smoke and her shouts confuse the mercenaries, creating the needed opening. The **Mob Overwhelm Clock** is reduced by 2 segments as the enemy formation breaks.

The Outcome: With the opening created, Kael shouts for a retreat. The group disengages. The skirmish is over. They have survived but are wounded. The **Hunt Clock** is reset—the mercenaries are temporarily scattered. The PCs can now continue their journey, with the consequences of Valerius's harm applying to his future actions.

Conclusion: The Rhythm of Play

As these examples show, **Fate's Edge** is not about rigidly following a script. It's about a conversation—a rhythm between the players' ambitions and the world's reactions.

The GM's Mantra

- **Fiction First**: Always start with the fictional situation. What is happening? What makes sense?

- **Set Position and Rails**: Use these tools to define the stakes and pressure of a scene.

- **Let the Dice Decide**: Embrace the results. A complication is not a failure; it's a twist.

- **Spend Story Beats**: Make the world feel alive and reactive. Consequences should flow naturally from the fiction.

- **Think in Arcs**: Connect scenes. The social fallout from the party leads to the chase, which leads to new opportunities or threats in the Mistlands.

Your role as the GM is to be a fan of the characters, a fair judge of the rules, and an enthusiastic architect of a world that responds. Let the players drive the story, and use the mechanics to make their choices feel meaningful and consequential. The dice will guide you to a story that neither you nor your players could have predicted, and that is the greatest strength of this game.

Chapter 10

Appendix: Tools, Tables, and Optional Rules

This appendix provides quick-reference tools, sample content, and optional rules to support your game. Whether you're running a quick session or a long campaign, these tables and tips will help you keep the world alive and the tension high.

10.0.1 GM Cheat Sheets

Core Resolution Quick Reference

Position	Mechanical Effect	Narrative Impact
Dominant	Re-roll one failure	Advantageous circumstances
Controlled	Standard resolution	Normal risk/reward balance
Desperate	Re-roll one success	High-stakes situation

Dice Pool Calculation: Attribute + Skill dice **Success Threshold**: 6+ on d10 **Story Beat Generation**: 1s on any die

Complication Management

Story Beat Economy:

- 1 SB: Minor inconvenience or flavor complication

- 2 SB: Moderate setback with narrative impact

- 3 SB: Significant consequence altering the scene

- 4+ SB: Major fallout introducing new problems

Common Complication Types:

- **Social**: Relationship strain, reputation damage, alliance shifts

- **Physical**: Injury, equipment damage, environmental hazards

- **Temporal**: Time pressure, missed opportunities, delayed consequences

- **Resource**: Supply depletion, financial strain, loss of support

Quick Reference Sheets

Outcome Matrix

Case	Name	Guidance
$S \geq DV$ and $C = 0$	Clean Success	Deliver the intent crisply.
$S \geq DV$ and $C > 0$	Success & Cost	Grant the intent; spend/bank SB for complications.
$0 < S < DV$	Partial	Progress with a fork. Award a boon.
$S = 0$	Miss	No progress. Cash/bank SB. Award two boons.

Story Beat (SB) Spend Menu

- **1 SB**: Minor pressure: noise, trace, +1 Supply segment.

- **2 SB**: Moderate setback: alarm raised, lose position/cover, lesser foe or lock.

- **3 SB**: Serious trouble: reinforcements, key gear breaks, rail tick.

- **4+ SB**: Major turn: trap springs, authority arrives, scene shifts.

Position Descriptions

- **Dominant**: You act on your terms. Consequences of failure are manageable.

- **Controlled**: You act under pressure. Failure carries a real cost.

- **Desperate**: The odds are stacked against you. Failure could be catastrophic.

Difficulty Ladder (Set Before the Roll)

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

Optional Rule: Grid-Based Combat

While **Fate's Edge** is designed for theater-of-the-mind play, some groups prefer the tactical clarity of a grid. This optional rule provides a framework for using miniatures or tokens without adding excessive complexity.

Core Concepts

- **Zones of Control (ZoC)**: Each character exerts control over the squares immediately adjacent to them (typically the 8 surrounding squares). An enemy cannot move *through* a square in another creature's ZoC without first engaging that creature or using a special ability. They can move *around* it.

- **Ranges**: The GM sets ranges based on the narrative and the battlemap size.

- **Engaged**: In the same square or an adjacent square. For melee combat.
- **Near**: Within a short move (e.g., 5-6 squares). For thrown weapons, short charges.
- **Far**: Requires a full action to move into **Near** range. For bows, crossbows.
- **Distant**: Beyond **Far** range, requiring multiple moves or special effort to engage.

- **Movement**: On their turn, a character can typically move a number of squares equal to 5 + their Body rating. Moving through difficult terrain (rubble, thick mud) may halve this distance or require an Athletics roll.

Actions on the Grid

The core action resolution remains the same. The grid simply provides spatial context.

- **Engage**: Move into an enemy's ZoC to enter melee.

- **Attack**: Make a combat roll as normal. Position is determined by the tactical situation (e.g., flanking an enemy might be **Controlled** for you but **Desperate** for them).

- **Take Cover**: Move behind a terrain feature to improve position (e.g., from **Desperate** to **Controlled**) against ranged attacks.

- **Flank**: By positioning on opposite sides of an enemy, allies may grant each other assistance dice on attacks.

Example Grid Combat

Valerius is battling two bandits in a ruined temple. The GM sets up a map.

- Valerius is **Engaged** with Bandit A. Bandit B is **Near** (4 squares away), behind a broken pillar.

- Valerius wants to charge Bandit B. He must first disengage from Bandit A's ZoC. The GM rules this is a **Controlled Body + Athletics** roll. He succeeds, avoids an attack of opportunity, and moves into Bandit B's ZoC.

- Now engaged with Bandit B, Valerius attacks. The GM rules his position is **Controlled** as Bandit A is now moving up behind him.

Optional Rule: Detailed Warfare

For campaigns where large-scale battles are a focus, this subsystem provides more granularity for mass combat.

The Army as a Character

Treat an army as a powerful Follower with its own attributes and clocks.

- **Scale**: The army's size and reach. Adds dice to strategic rolls (e.g., logistics, intimidation).

- **Discipline**: The army's training and morale. Used to resist routing and maintain formation.

- **Supply Clock** (6-8 segments): Tracks food, ammunition, and medical supplies. If filled, the army suffers penalties (e.g., -1 die to all rolls) and risks disintegration.

- **Morale Clock** (6-8 segments): Tracks the army's will to fight. Major defeats, poor conditions, or enemy terror tactics fill this clock. If filled, the army routs.

Battlefield Actions

Instead of individual attacks, characters leading armies make command rolls to achieve objectives. Each objective is represented by a clock.

- **Break Their Line** (6-segment clock): Use **Spirit + Command**. Success fills segments. Complications might fill the army's Morale Clock or allow an enemy counter-attack.

- **Flank the Enemy** (4-segment clock): Use **Wits + Subterfuge**. Requires a successful maneuver roll first.

- **Hold the Line** (Ongoing): Use **Body + Resolve** to withstand an enemy assault. Failure advances the enemy's objective clocks.

The Battle's Edge

Warfare uses a modified Story Beat system called **The Battle's Edge**. SB generated from command rolls can be spent by the GM to represent the fog of war and battlefield chaos:

- **1-2 SB**: A unit is out of position. A key piece of intelligence is wrong.

- **3-4 SB**: A trusted officer falls. A supply wagon is lost.

- **5+ SB**: The enemy unveils a secret weapon. The terrain turns against you (e.g., a dam breaks).

Sample NPCs

Encounters

- **Bandit Skirmisher**: Body 2, Wits 2. Melee 2, Stealth 1. Light armor, opportunistic.

- **Ykrul Rider**: Body 4, Wits 3. Riding 3, Melee 3. Mobile, brutal.

- **Street Bravo**: Presence 3, Body 2. Dueling 3. Quick to anger.

Foils & Rivals

- **Ambitious Scribe**: Wits 3, Presence 3. Intrigue 3, Lore 2. Always knows a rumor.

- **Mercenary Captain**: Body 4, Spirit 3. Command 3, Melee 4. Pragmatic, dangerous ally.

- **Flame Preacher**: Presence 4, Spirit 3. Oratory 4, Faith 3. Incites mobs.

Prestige NPCs

- **High Elf Loremaster**: Wits 5, Spirit 4. Lore 5, Arcana 4. Knows secrets older than nations.

- **Dwarven Forge-Patriarch**: Body 5, Spirit 4. Craft 5, Command 4. Commands stone and steel.

- **Ykrul Warglord**: Body 5, Presence 4. Command 4, Melee 5. Unites clans with blood and will.

Deck of Consequences Interpretation Guide

Two Deck Systems

Deck of Consequences (scene drama). *Hearts*=social fallout, *Spades*=harm/escalation, *Clubs*=material cost, *Diamonds*=magical/spiritual disturbance.

Travel Decks (regional, 52-card). *Spade*=Place, *Heart*=Actor, *Club*=Pressure, *Diamond*=Leverage.

Hearts (Emotional/Social)

- **Ace–3**: Minor offense, awkward moment.

- **4–6**: Relationship strain, public embarrassment.

- **7–9**: Betrayal, scandal, loss of trust.

- **10–King**: Heartbreak, exile, shattered alliance.

Spades (Harm/Escalation)

- **Ace–3**: Bruise, scrape, fatigue.

- **4–6**: Wound, gear damaged, position lost.

- **7–9**: Severe injury, ally down, structural collapse.

- **10–King**: Death, dismemberment, permanent loss.

Clubs (Material/Cost)

- **Ace–3**: Minor loss, delayed payment.

- **4–6**: Gear failure, debt incurred.

- **7–9**: Major asset lost, bankruptcy.

- **10–King**: Total ruin, legacy debt.

Diamonds (Magical/Spiritual)

- **Ace–3**: Omen, whisper, strange coincidence.

- **4–6**: Curse triggered, spirit appears, past returns.

- **7–9**: Arcane backlash, forbidden knowledge revealed.

- **10–King**: Reality bends, godlike force intervenes.

Campaign Clock Examples

Mandate Advancement Triggers

- Public victory in battle or debate.

- Successful resolution of a major crisis.

- Recognition by a powerful faction or ruler.

Crisis Advancement Triggers

- Rival faction gains influence or territory.

- Asset neglect or betrayal.

- Scandal or public loss of trust.

Travel Clock Sizes

- **2–5**: 4 segments (short leg, low risk).

- **6–10**: 6 segments (standard journey).

- **J/Q/K**: 8 segments (long or dangerous route).

- **Ace**: 10 segments (epic or supernatural travel).

Follower and Asset Condition States

- **Maintained**: Full capability.

- **Neglected**: -1 die penalty; narrative wear.

- **Compromised**: Unavailable until repaired or recovered.

Boon Economy Quick Guide

- **Holding cap**: You can hold at most 5 Boons.

- **Conversion**: Once per session, in downtime, you may convert 2 Boons → 1 XP (max 2 XP via conversion per session).

- **Using Boons**: Re-roll one die after seeing the pool; Activate an Off-Screen Asset.

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).

Optional Rule: Hex-Based Exploration

For a more structured exploration phase, the GM can map a region using a hex grid.

- **Hex Size**: Typically 6 miles (a half-day's travel in clear terrain).

- **Travel**: Moving into a new hex requires a **Wits + Survival** roll. The DV is set by the terrain (DV 2 for plains, DV 4 for dense forest or mountains).

- **Discovery**: On a Clean Success, the group discovers any points of interest in the hex automatically. On a Success with Cost or Partial, they might stumble upon a danger first or only get a hint of the interest. On a Miss, they become lost, wasting time and resources.

- **Points of Interest**: Each hex can have a pre-planned location or one generated on the fly using the Travel Deck (Spade=Location, Heart=Encounter, etc.).

Let the Tools Serve You

These tools and optional rules are not meant to constrain your game—they are meant to **support your vision**. Use them to keep tension high, consequences real, and the story moving forward. Choose the rules that fit your table's style, and don't be afraid to adapt them on the fly.

The ultimate goal is a collaborative, exciting story. These are just the brushes and paints.

10.1 Miniatures and Tactical Layer

10.1.1 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.

10.1.2   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.

10.1.3   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.

10.1.4   Facing and Flanking

- Choose a facing at end of movement.

- Flank: +1 die if attacked from opposite arcs; Rear: +1 die and +1 Effect.

10.1.5   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).

10.1.6   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.

10.1.7   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

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Common Rolls (GM Screen)

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Athletics   Climb rough wall (*Body+Athletics*); sprint a gap (*Body+Athletics*); time a leap to a moving cart (*Wits+Athletics*).

Stealth   Shadow a patrol (*Wits+Stealth*); cross a lit balcony silently (*Body+Stealth*); hold still under lantern sweep (*Spirit+Stealth*).

Endurance   Resist cold night march (*Spirit+Endurance*); push through pain (*Spirit+Endurance*); carry wounded comrade (*Body+Endurance*).

Craft   Blueprint a fix (*Wits+Craft*); brace a broken door (*Body+Craft*); restore a relic carefully (*Spirit+Craft*).

Melee   Break guard's stance (*Body+Melee*); bind blade to set up ally (*Wits+Melee*); press the advantage while bleeding (*Spirit+Melee*).

Ranged   Leading shot at sprinting target (*Wits+Ranged*); loose in a squall (*Spirit+Ranged*); snap throw in close quarters (*Body+Ranged*).

Brawl   Grapple and pin (*Body+Brawl*); feint to open a clinch (*Wits+Brawl*); fight on dazed (*Spirit+Brawl*).

Tactics   Set an ambush lane (*Wits+Tactics*); coordinate fighting retreat (*Presence+Tactics*); read enemy morale at a glance (*Wits+Tactics*).

Diplomacy   Formal audience etiquette (*Presence+Diplomacy*); draft terms both sides can live with (*Wits+Diplomacy*); keep decorum under insult (*Spirit+Diplomacy*).

Sway   Haggle fast for a better price (*Presence+Sway*); sell a risky plan to allies (*Presence+Sway*); change a mind mid-argument (*Wits+Sway*).

Deception   Tell a clean lie under scrutiny (*Presence+Deception*); misdirect with half-truths (*Wits+Deception*); hold a lie when cornered (*Spirit+Deception*).

Performance   Captivate a restless crowd (*Presence+Performance*); mimic accent and posture (*Wits+Performance*); steady stage nerves (*Spirit+Performance*).

Subterfuge   Talk past a checkpoint in a borrowed coat (*Presence+Subterfuge*); case staff routines over one drink (*Wits+Subterfuge*); palm/plant during a handshake (*Body+Subterfuge*); keep a cover through interrogation (*Spirit+Subterfuge*).

Streetwise   Find a fence by sundown (*Presence+Streetwise*); sift rumor from bait (*Wits+Streetwise*); walk a bad block without flashing fear (*Spirit+Streetwise*).

Arcana   Read a ward's anchor (*Wits+Arcana*); hold a rite steady in chaos (*Spirit+Arcana*); countermark a seal (*Wits+Arcana*).

Mechanics   Diagnose a jammed lock (*Wits+Mechanics*); disarm a sprung trap without firing it (*Wits+Mechanics*); field-rig a pump with scrap (*Body+Mechanics*).

Investigation   Reconstruct a scene's timeline (*Wits+Investigation*); follow a paper trail (*Wits+Investigation*); interview to fill a gap (*Presence+Investigation*).

Lore   Cite a custom that grants passage (*Presence+Lore*); recall taboo at an old shrine (*Wits+Lore*); perform a rite correctly over hours (*Spirit+Lore*).

Nature   Read tomorrow's weather from sky-signs (*Wits+Nature*); track a limping stag over stone (*Wits+Nature*); calm a spooked mount (*Presence+Nature*).

Medicine   Stabilize in the field (*Wits+Medicine*); cut out rot cleanly (*Body+Medicine*); talk a patient through the pain (*Presence+Medicine*).

Command   Rally shaken allies (*Presence+Command*); issue clear orders in chaos (*Wits+Command*); hold the line when it ought to break (*Spirit+Command*).

Fast Boundaries

- **Locks & Traps:** *Mechanical* = **Mechanics + Attribute**; *Arcane* = **Arcana + Attribute**.
- **People vs. Mechanisms: Subterfuge** gets you past *people* (papers, covers, diversions); **Stealth** keeps you unseen; **Mechanics/Arcana** open the thing.
- **Formal vs. Informal: Diplomacy** (courts, treaties, protocol) vs. **Sway** (informal persuasion, bargaining).

Subterfuge — Common Rolls Wits + Subterfuge: case venue; map guard habits.
Presence + Subterfuge: talk past checkpoint; play the official.
Body + Subterfuge: palm/plant during a handshake.

10.1.8 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 $\text{XP} = \max\left(1, XPAcquisitionCost3\right)$. *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.

10.1.9 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

10.2 Deck Usage Reference

10.2.1 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.

10.2.2 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.

10.2.3 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.

10.3 Magic System Quick Reference

10.3.1 Magic Paths Comparison

Path	Requirements	Key Feature	Risk Type
Caster (Freeform)	Caster's Gift (6 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
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 → Base DV = 2, but Tier floor raises it to 2.

10.3.2   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.

10.3.3   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.

10.4   Combat and Conflict Reference

10.4.1   Position States

Dominant Advantageous position, minor consequences.

Controlled Standard situation, moderate consequences.

Desperate Disadvantaged, severe consequences.

10.4.2   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

10.4.3   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.

10.4.4 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.

10.5 Resource Management Reference

10.5.1 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

10.5.2 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).

10.5.3 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.

10.6 Travel and Exploration Reference

10.6.1 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.

10.6.2 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.

10.7 Character Advancement Guide

10.7.1 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.

10.7.2 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.

10.8 Safety and Inclusivity

10.8.1 Content Warnings System

X-Card Implementation

Basic Functionality:

- **X-Card**: "I'm not comfortable with this content. Let's change direction."

- **O-Card**: "I'm excited about this content. Let's lean into it."

- **N-Card**: "I need a break from this content. Let's pause."

  Session Integration:

1. Introduce X-Card during Session Zero with practice scenarios

2. Keep X-Cards visible and accessible during all sessions

3. Model appropriate X-Card usage as the GM

4. Address any misuse or abuse of the system immediately

Script Change Integration

Core Questions:

- **Pause**: "Are you okay with the content right now?"

- **Rewind**: "Would you like to go back and change something?"

- **Fast Forward**: "Would you like to skip ahead to something else?"

Application Timing:

- Before potentially sensitive content is introduced

- During scenes that might trigger discomfort

- After sessions to gather feedback on content experience

10.8.2   Inclusive Worldbuilding

Representation Guidelines

Cultural Sensitivity:

- Research real-world cultures thoroughly before incorporating elements

- Avoid stereotypes and oversimplifications of cultural practices

- Consult with individuals from relevant backgrounds when possible

- Create fictional cultures inspired by but distinct from real-world sources

Diverse Character Creation:

- Provide character options that don't rely on real-world cultural markers

- Include mechanical benefits that reflect diverse backgrounds and experiences

- Create backstory elements that celebrate different life experiences

- Avoid mechanics that reinforce harmful stereotypes

Accessibility Considerations

Physical Accessibility:

- Provide digital versions of all materials for screen readers

- Use high-contrast colors and clear fonts in visual materials

- Offer alternative formats for dice-based mechanics

- Minimize requirements for fine motor skills in gameplay

Cognitive Accessibility (continued):

- Offer simplified versions of complex mechanics

- Break down rules into step-by-step processes

- Provide examples for abstract concepts

- Create quick-reference charts for common actions

10.8.3 Conflict Resolution

Preventive Measures

Clear Communication Protocols:

- Establish regular check-ins for player satisfaction
- Create anonymous feedback channels for concerns
- Define GM authority boundaries and player agency limits
- Set expectations for group decision-making processes

  Session Structure for Harmony:

- Begin sessions with brief mood check-ins
- Include structured time for character interaction
- Balance individual spotlight time with group activities
- End sessions with reflection on positive moments

Active Mediation Techniques

When Conflicts Arise:

1. **Immediate Pause**: Stop gameplay to address the issue
2. **Private Discussion**: Separate conflicting parties if necessary
3. **Neutral Facilitation**: Focus on understanding rather than determining fault
4. **Collaborative Solution**: Work together to find mutually acceptable resolutions
5. **Documentation**: Record agreements to prevent future misunderstandings

   Common Conflict Types and Solutions:

- **Rules Disputes**: Establish GM ruling as final for session, research and discuss later
- **Character Interference**: Create clear boundaries and consequences for unwanted intrusions
- **Play Style Mismatches**: Find compromise activities that satisfy different preferences
- **Narrative Control Conflicts**: Establish clear division between player agency and GM narrative authority

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