

Fate's Edge

System Reference Document

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1 Welcome to Fate's Edge

Fate's Edge is a narrative-first tabletop RPG where every action has a cost, the fiction leads the rules, and tension is managed with *Position*, *Effect*, and *Story Beats (SB)*. This quickstart gives you the complete table loop and ready-to-run tools.

2 Core Resolution

2.1 The Art of Consequence

All significant actions follow three steps:

1. Approach: Player states intent and method in the fiction.
2. Execution: Roll a pool = *Attribute* + *Skill* (d10s).
Each 6–10 = 1 success. Each die showing 1 = 1 *SB* to the GM.
3. Outcome: Compare successes vs *DV* (Difficulty Value).
GM resolves using *Position* & *Effect* and spends SB for complications.

2.2 Attributes (1–5)

- Body: Strength, exertion, taking hits
- Wits: Perception, speed of thought, timing
- Spirit: Will, intuition, focus
- Presence: Poise, command, social force

2.3 Skills (0–5)

- Melee, Ranged, Athletics
- Sway, Subterfuge, Insight
- Stealth, Survival, Command
- Arcana, Lore, Craft (Tinker)

[Subterfuge, Stealth, and Craft (Tinker)] Subterfuge = disguise, forgery, cons, planted evidence, social camouflage.

Stealth = not being seen or heard while moving or waiting.

Craft (Tinker) = devices, locks, traps, seals, wards, and tools.

Guidance: Paper and posture → Subterfuge. Avoiding notice → Stealth. Pins and gears → Craft (Tinker).

2.4 Difficulty Values (DV)

| DV | Situation |
|----|---|
| 2 | Routine: clear intent, modest stakes |
| 3 | Pressured (default): time pressure or mild resistance |
| 4 | Hard: hostile conditions or active opposition |
| 5+ | Extreme: multiple constraints, high precision |

2.5 Position & Effect

- Position: *Dominant* (safe), *Controlled* (default), *Desperate* (high stakes).
- Effect: *Limited* (small), *Standard* (expected), *Great* (big).

2.6 Shifting Position

- Improve: advantage, leverage, tools, solid prep, or spend a Boon (+1 step).
- Worsen: alarms, pressure, exposure, or GM SB spend (−1 step).

[Evolving Position] Start: Dominant (quiet corridor).

Noisy pick (1 SB) → Controlled (patrol turns).

Reinforcements (2 SB) → Desperate (crossfire).

2.7 Outcome Matrix

| Result | What Happens |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Successes \geq DV, SB=0 | Clean Success: intent achieved |
| Successes \geq DV, SB \geq 1 | Success & Cost: intent + complications |
| $0 < \text{Successes} < \text{DV}$ | Partial: progress with complication (gain 1 Boon) |
| Successes = 0 | Miss: no progress (gain 2 Boons) |

[Story Beats (SB): A Simple Spend Menu]

- 1 SB — Minor pressure: noise, trace, drop a tool, tick a 4/6 clock +1.
- 2 SB — Moderate setback: lose Position, raise alarm, harsher terms.
- 3 SB — Serious trouble: reinforcements, break an asset, split the party.
- 4+ SB — Major turn: authority arrives, environment shifts, Patron interferes.

3 Description Ladder

How you act matters:

- Basic: roll as-is (all 1s generate SB).

- Detailed: re-roll one die showing 1 (both the original 1 and any new 1s generate SB).
- Intricate: re-roll all 1s; add a flourish on success (all 1s still count for SB).

4 Boons: Reward for Risk

- On Miss (0 successes): gain **2 Boons**.
- On Partial: gain **1 Boon**.

Spending Boons

- Re-roll one die in any pool
- Activate an on-screen Asset
- Improve Position by 1 step
- Convert 2 Boons \rightarrow 1 XP (max 2 XP/session)

Limits

- Hold up to 5 Boons (trim to 2 at scene end)
- Max 2 Boons from failure per scene

5 Action Economy

Each turn:

- 1 Action: attack, cast, use a skill, or similar task.
- 1 Move: shift one Range Band (Close \leftrightarrow Near or Near \leftrightarrow Far). *Dash* (spend the Action) = move two bands.

Talents may grant bonus actions or reactions. Channeled magic may require multiple actions. Fatigue or harm can restrict options.

6 Combat System

Same core loop, now framed for danger.

6.1 Procedure

1. Declare action and approach
2. GM sets *Position* and *Effect*

3. Roll Attribute + Skill dice
4. Count successes vs DV (1s generate SB)
5. GM resolves and spends SB

[Combat Position] *Dominant*: advantage, cover, tempo *Controlled*: default exchange *Desperate*: flanked, exposed, or collapsing ground

6.2 Turn Order

No fixed initiative. Spotlight follows fiction:

- Ambushers act first; targets respond after the opening beat.
- Players may propose acting when it makes sense.
- GM shifts spotlight to maintain tension and clarity.

6.3 Fatigue

Track: Fatigue = *Body*. Mark for exertion, strain, backlash.

Effect: Each Fatigue step worsens Position by one level (Dominant → Controlled → Desperate). If already *Desperate*, take *-1 die* per additional Fatigue.

Overflow: When full, increase *Harm* by 1 step and clear all Fatigue.

Recovery: Short rest clears 1–2; full night clears all.

6.4 Harm

- Level 1: Minor (–1 die to related actions)
- Level 2: Serious (–1 die to most actions)
- Level 3: Critical (incapacitated/dying)

6.5 Tactical Clocks

- Mob Overwhelm [6]
- Fatigue Spiral [4]
- Morale Collapse [6]
- Environmental Collapse [8]

7 Magic System

7.1 Three Paths

- Caster (Freeform): *Weave* elements + *Channel* power. (Requires *Caster's Gift*.)

- Runekeeper (Rites): Patron-bound rites with *Obligation*. (Requires *Codex*; *Thaisos* shapes practice.)
- Invoker (Symbols): Patron *Seals* and rituals with time or risk.

7.2 Casting At a Glance

- Caster: *Channel* + *Weave* = 2 actions (or *Push* to compress with cost).
- Runekeeper: 1 action to *Invoke*; may *Push* for +1 Obligation.
- Invoker: Rituals take turns; *Crack the Seal* for instant cast at *Desperate*.

7.3 Interrupt & Push

- Interrupted: If harmed/silenced before resolution, spell/rite fails.
- Push: Resolve now, mark +1 Fatigue or +1 Obligation/Corruption.

[On-the-Fly Adjudication] *Barrier* for a hallway? Personal scale \Rightarrow DV 2; scene-wide \Rightarrow DV 3; sweeping area \Rightarrow DV 4+. Casting under fire \Rightarrow Controlled or Desperate.

8 Character Creation

8.1 Starting Build

- 30 XP to spend
- Attributes 1–3; Skills 0–2
- Bonds (+2 XP) and Complications (+4 XP) optional

8.2 Key Talents

- Caster's Gift (6 XP): access to freeform magic
- Familiar (2 XP): Patron features access
- Codex (4 XP): Runekeeper rites & Obligation (*Thaisos* defines style)
- Patron's Symbol (4 XP): Invoker seals/rituals

9 Range Bands & Movement

9.1 Range Bands

- Close: arm's reach
- Near: same room/space

- Far: line-of-sight distance
- Absent: off-screen (requires travel)

9.2 Movement

- 1 Move = shift one band (Close↔Near or Near↔Far)
- *Dash* (spend Action) = shift two bands
- Melee Flag: mark engaged foes in *Near* range

10 Travel Framework

10.1 Procedure

1. Break journey into legs with Travel Clock [4]
2. Assign roles: Guide, Scout, Quartermaster, Watch
3. Advance clock via actions/encounters
4. Resolve complications when the clock fills

10.2 Travel Roles

- Guide: on success, DV -1 for movement challenges
- Scout: on success, ignore the next 1 SB spend
- Quartermaster: on success, reduce Supplies Clock by 1
- Watch: on success, start next scene at *Dominant*

11 Deck of Consequences (Optional)

- Hearts — Social/emotional fallout
- Spades — Physical harm/danger
- Clubs — Resource/fatigue pressure
- Diamonds — Arcane/supernatural turns

Triggers (Draw 1; max 3/scene)

- A *Desperate* roll succeeds with cost
- GM spends 2+ SB at once
- A major clock fills (scene pivot)

12 Advancement

12.1 XP Awards

- Standard: 6–10 XP / session
- Major objectives: +2–4 XP
- Discovery: +1–2 XP
- Hard choices: +1–2 XP
- Milestones: +8–12 XP / arc

12.2 Spending XP

- Attributes: new rating \times 3 XP
- Skills: new level \times 2 XP
- Talents: as listed (2–6+ XP)
- Followers: Cap^2 XP

13 GM Quick Reference

13.1 Adjudication Loop

1. Set Position and DV
2. Roll Attribute + Skill (6+ = success; 1 = SB)
3. Check Outcome Matrix
4. Spend SB to escalate
5. Advance clocks, move the fiction

[No-Thinking SB Spend] 1 SB: minor pressure (*worsen Position or tick 4/6 +1*).

2 SB: remove cover, split the party, tick environment +2.

3 SB: reinforcements, break an asset, force a hard choice.

4+ SB: scene transformation, authority arrival, collapse/eruption.

13.2 Five-Second Position & Effect

Ask two questions: *What is the risk?* (Dominant/Controlled/Desperate). *What is the impact?* (Limited/Standard/Great). Decide, roll.

13.3 Lazy DV Table

If in doubt: $DV = 3$. Raise/lower by 1 based on pressure or precision.

13.4 Clocks: The Three-Clock Rule

Keep at most three active:

- Scene (e.g., Guards Alerted [4])
- Journey (e.g., Mist Encroaches [6])
- Campaign (e.g., Baron's Suspicion [8])

14 Worked Examples

[Lockpick Under Pressure] Situation: Picking a warded lock while guards patrol nearby.

Roll: Wits 2 + Craft (Tinker) 2 = 4d10 → 8, 6, 3, 1.

Result: 2 successes (DV 2), 1 SB.

Outcome: Lock opens; GM spends 1 SB: the last pin clicks too loud—boots turn your way. Position worsens to *Controlled*.

[False Orders, Real Panic] Situation: Planting forged orders to redirect a patrol.

Roll: Wits 3 + Subterfuge 2 = 5d10.

On Success: Patrol peels off; Effect improves if you also present matching seals (*Craft* assist).

On Partial: Rumor [2] starts against you; you gain 1 Boon.

On Miss: The captain cross-checks—GM spends SB to tighten security.

[From Dominant to Desperate] Setup: Thane fires from cover (Dominant).

Roll: 6d10 → 10, 9, 7, 6, 3, 1 (SB=1). Clean hit (Great).

SB Spend: 1 SB—return fire chips the pillar, reducing cover. Next ally acts at *Controlled*. Two more SB later, a mob arrives; the scene slips to *Desperate*.

15 Starter Scenario: The Lantern at Dusk

Premise

Escort a relic lantern across the haunted Duskway. When lit, forgotten souls stir. Patrons may contest the route.

Setup

- Party at Tier I (or use pregens).
- Relic Lantern: on loss, trigger Patron consequence.
- Prepare a Travel Clock [4] for the Duskway.

Encounter Seeds

- 1. Shattered Bridge** DV 3 (Athletics/Survival/Craft). *SB*: falling stones, time pressure. On failure: clock +1.
- 2. The Toll of Cinders** Parley (Presence+Sway) or trick (*Wits+Subterfuge*). *SB*: ambush, harsher terms.
- 3. Lantern Awakens** When Travel Clock fills, ghostlight swells: *Restless Dead Mob [6]*. *SB*: lantern leaks; terrain turns treacherous.

Scene Clocks

- Travel [4] — legs of the road
- Lantern Integrity [6] — damage/corruption
- Bandit Morale [4] — collapses on fill

Outcomes

- Success: delivered; +6 XP, Patron favor, 1 contact
- Mixed: damaged; XP + ongoing Patron Obligation
- Failure: lost; +2 XP; introduce a Patron foe next session

16 Session One Agenda (60–120 minutes)

1. Cold open: concrete stakes (5–10m).
2. Teach core loop with a short obstacle (10–15m).
3. Run one travel leg or social scene (15–25m).
4. Spotlight combat with clocks & SB (25–40m).
5. Debrief: XP, Boons, next hook (5–10m).

17 Designer's Notes

1. Fail Forward: failure is story fuel, not a stall.
2. Fiction First: description sets DV, Position, and Effect.
3. SB Economy: spend often; let tension breathe.
4. Player Agency: choices alter the map and the ledger.

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Fate's Edge Quickstart Guide

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In Fate's Edge, nothing is free — and every choice shapes the world.

18 Core Principles

18.1 Identity of Fate's Edge

Fate's Edge is a narrative-first tabletop roleplaying system where every action carries weight, every choice has consequence, and every spell risks backlash. Dice are not simply a measure of success or failure—they are instruments of fate, weaving opportunity with risk.

18.2 A World of Consequences

18.2.1 Design Goals

- **Narrative Primacy:** Mechanics exist to serve the story.
- **Risk as Drama:** Every roll carries the potential for triumph and complication.
- **Meaningful Growth:** Advancement is more than improving statistics.

18.2.2 The Central Question

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

18.2.3 Tone of Play

- Cinematic, with pacing tied to narrative beats.
- Consequential, where even small choices ripple outward.
- Collaborative, empowering both GM and players.

18.3 Key Concepts

18.3.1 Narrative Time

Time is measured by story weight:

- **A Moment** — A heartbeat, a glance, a single strike or word.

- **Some Time** — A few minutes, enough for a skirmish.
- **Significant Time** — Hours, long enough for travel or rituals.
- **Days** — Large-scale endeavors: marches, training, recovery.

18.3.2 Story Beats

Whenever a player rolls dice, each result of 1 generates a Story Beat (SB). These are narrative fuel. The GM spends them to introduce twists.

18.3.3 Affinity

Each culture provides an Affinity: a narrative edge or metaphysical bond. Affinities make certain Arts, skills, or actions more reliable.

18.3.4 Prestige Abilities

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

18.3.5 On-Screen vs. Off-Screen

- **On-Screen Resources:** Companions, hirelings, or allies who stand beside you in danger.
- **Off-Screen Resources:** Taverns, estates, titles, or networks of informants.

19 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.

19.1 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.

[colback=black!3,colframe=black!40!white,title=What Players Track (at a Glance)] 1 1 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.

19.2 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.

19.3 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).

19.4 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.

19.5 Standard Thresholds & Effects

Obligation Capacity

$$\text{Obligation Capacity} = \text{Spirit} + \text{Presence}$$

- **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 §41.

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.

19.6 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.

19.7 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.

19.8 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.

19.9 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.

20 Core Mechanic

20.1 The Art of Consequence

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

Step-by-Step Roll Resolution

1. **Declare Action & Approach:** Player states intent, Attribute + Skill.
2. **Set Difficulty Value (DV):** Based on narrative stakes, not just mechanics.
3. **Establish Position:** GM sets whether the roll is **Dominant**, **Controlled**, or **Desperate**.
4. **Roll Pool of d10s.**
5. **Count: Successes (6+) and Story Beats (1s).** Each 10 counts as two successes but does not auto-succeed if total < DV.
6. **Check Against DV:** Apply the Outcome Matrix.

7. **Spend SB:** GM spends/banks Story Beats or draws from the Deck of Consequences.

[Position Effects] IX

Position 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] IX

DV Typical Case

3 Routine: clear intent, modest stakes, stable setting

4 Pressured: time limits, mild resistance, incomplete information

5 Hard: hostile conditions, active opposition, precision required

6+ Extreme: stacked constraints, dangerous failure, high drama

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

[title=**Difficulty Values (DV) by Tier**,colback=white!97!gray, colframe=black!80!gray,sharp corners,boxrule=0.4pt] **Guideline.** The base Difficulty Value (DV) for an opposed or environmental test scales with Tier:

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

Typical DVs.

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

Positional Modifiers.

• **Desperate:** +2**Dominant:** +1**Controlled:** +0**Desperate:** −1

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

[Outcome Matrix] IX

Result GM Guidance

$S \geq DV, C = 0$ Clean Success: Grant intent, no added friction.

$S \geq DV, C > 0$ Success & Cost: Intent achieved; GM spends SB for complications.

$0 < S < DV$ Partial: Progress *proportional* to hits; intent advances but with gaps or risk. Player

gains 1 Boon.

$S = 0$ Miss: No progress. GM escalates with SB/Clocks. Player gains 2 Boons.

Fail Forward: Every Roll Matters **Partial successes are the most common form of “success.”**

They always move the fiction forward in proportion to the progress rolled.

One success on DV 4: “The lock is stubborn. You think you can get it if you keep trying.”

Three successes on DV 4: “The lock springs open with a loud clank—you’re sure the guards heard.” (Upgrade to Success & Cost; add 2 SB).

Misses fuel escalation but always generate player resources: 2 Boons and a consequence.

A roll is *meaningful* or *significant* if:

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

Important Notes

- Rolling a 1 always creates SB for the GM. Rerolls do not erase SB.
- No Boons for rehearsal, trivial probes, or repeating an identical approach without changing fiction.
- Controlled tests with no bite give positioning/info, not Boons.

20.1.1 Anti-Fishing Measures

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

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

20.1.2 Boon Sharing

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

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

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

Rule — Re-rolling 1s and SB Re-rolling 1s does not remove the Story Beats already generated by those dice. If any re-rolled dice show 1 again, they generate additional SB as normal.

Let C_0 = initial 1s, C_r = 1s on re-rolls \Rightarrow **Total SB** = $C_0 + C_r$.

Example: You roll 7d10: {9, 8, 5, 4, 3, **1**, **1**} $\Rightarrow C_0 = 2$. You re-roll both 1s (Intricate): {6, 2} $\Rightarrow C_r = 0$. Final: successes = 3, SB = 2 (the initial SB remain).

20.1.3 Story Beats

Story Beats (SB) are the engine of drama. They are not simple penalties, but narrative levers. The GM spends SB to introduce setbacks appropriate to the context:

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

20.1.4 Design Intent

This mechanic ensures that every roll changes the story. Success without risk is rare, and even failure opens new narrative avenues.

20.1.5 GM Quick Reference: Adjudicating Skill Checks

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. |

Outcome Matrix (after the roll) Let S be successes (≥ 6) and C be SB (number of 1s rolled).

| Case | 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 1 boon |
| $S = 0$ | Miss: No progress. Cash/bank SB. Award 2 boons |

20.2 Critical Success

Rolling a **10** on any die indicates a critical tier of success. Each 10 adds weight to the outcome:

- **One 10:** Strong success with a free boon, improved **Position**, or other narrative flourish.
- **Two 10s:** Exceptional success; choose two benefits or a single powerful effect.
- **Three 10s:** Legendary success; resolve the conflict dramatically and progress or clear 1 segment on a secondary clock (generally, a clock tied to the scene, not the overarching campaign).
- **Four+ 10s:** Mythic success; progress or clear 1–2 segments from a secondary clock or create a significant story development.

If no 10s are rolled, resolve the action normally by the highest die result.

10s are never re-rolled by Position effects or other mechanics. Critical hit effects always take place if the roll is successful, despite any SB rolled. Critical successes may reduce Backlash/Obligation/Corruption severity by one tier.

20.3 Position

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

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

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

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

20.3.1 Fatigue and Harm

Fatigue. Fatigue is capped by **Body**. It reflects cumulative strain from combat, travel, or channeling. Fatigue never reduces dice directly; it shifts **Position** to riskier states.

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Fatigue Position Shift Narrative Effect

1 (Winded) Dominant → Controlled (once/scene) Breathing heavy, off-balance. 2 (Strained) Controlled rolls create +1 SB on 1s Mistakes creep in. 3 (Exhausted) Controlled → Desperate (once/scene) Desperate exertion. 4 (Collapse) DV 3 Body test or Severe Harm Push past limits.

Harm and Casting. Harm not only affects physical capacity, it disrupts magical focus:

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Harm Casting Effect Notes

Minor Channel DV +1 Fatigue of concentration. Moderate Maintain channel DV 2 Focus falters. Severe Channel breaks; freeform casting +1 SB Magic slips dangerous. Critical Casting impossible Patron bargain may intervene.

GM Note: Harm and Fatigue push characters toward harsher Positions; casters feel this as *lost control*, warriors as *physical collapse*. Both create escalating drama without trivializing recovery.

SB Spend Menu (guidance)

- **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.

Assistance, Boons, & Description

- **Assists:** One helper per action; total Assist dice across sources are capped at +3 (unless a specific Talent states otherwise).
- **Boons:** A player may re-roll one die after seeing the pool. Once per session, in downtime, you may convert 2 Boons → 1 XP (max 2 XP via conversion per session). Hold cap: 5. Trim to 2 at scene end.
- **Description Ladder:** Basic (roll as-is), Detailed (re-roll one 1), Intricate (re-roll all 1s and add one flourish on success).

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

20.4 Boon Sharing

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

- **Bonded Allies:** If characters share a bond, they may gift **2 Boons per scene**.
- **Assistance:** Boons may be spent to enhance an ally's roll (counts as assistance).

- **Campaign Events:** Major victories or setbacks may generate shared Boons for the party.

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

20.5 Time Guidance Framework

20.5.1 Narrative Time Scales

Time in Fate's Edge is measured by story weight, not by clocks:

- **A Moment** — A heartbeat, a glance, a single strike or word.
- **Some Time** — A few minutes: a skirmish, a careful lockpick, a short negotiation.
- **Significant Time** — Hours: travel between locations, work a ritual, endure a siege.
- **Days** — Large-scale endeavors: marches across countryside, training a cadre, recovery.

20.5.2 Game Structure Definitions

Scene

The basic unit of narrative play (Some Time to Significant Time); resolves a specific question or conflict.

Player Turn (Beat)

Declare action → GM sets position → roll → resolve outcome → manage consequences.

Round

Simultaneous or near-simultaneous actions within a scene (primarily for combat), representing a few seconds.

Session

One complete game session (typically 3–6 hours), containing 2–4 major scenes and resolving significant narrative progress.

Campaign

Entire story arc (6–20+ sessions) with major character development and lasting consequences.

20.6 Fatigue

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

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

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

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

[Tracking NPC Mechanics] Not every meter needs to be tracked for NPCs.

- **Spotlight First:** NPCs only carry Obligation, Corruption, or similar mechanics if these traits matter to the current story.
- **Skip the Bookkeeping:** Do not track every enemy’s resource pool. If it’s not driving narrative tension, it can be abstracted away.
- **Focus on Impact:** Apply NPC Obligation or Corruption only when it changes how the party experiences them — e.g., a Patron visibly twisting a rival’s fate, or a recurring villain consumed by corruption.
- **Player-Facing First:** Keep full mechanics for PCs, since their journey is the story’s core.

This principle keeps GM effort focused where it matters: driving story beats and consequences, not filling ledgers.

20.7 Initiative and Turn Order

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

- **Narrative Fiat:** The GM frames spotlight order based on circumstances, tension, and narrative flow.
- **Player Input:** Players may suggest acting when it makes sense in the fiction.
- **Surprise:** Ambushers act first; targets respond after the opening exchange.
- **Flexibility:** Spotlight may shift mid-scene if fictionally appropriate (e.g., reacting to a falling ceiling, seizing a moment).

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

20.8 Turn Economy (Quick Rules)

Two Actions. Each character takes *two Actions* on their turn, in any order; repeating the same Action is not allowed unless noted.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

20.8.1 Magic and Ritual Time

- **Standard Casting:** Channel and Weave phases each take 1 Player Turn; resolves within a single scene.
- **Ritual Casting (Optional Rule):** Channel and Weave phases each require 1 Scene (Significant Time).
- **Rites Invocation:** Invoke takes 1 Player Turn; Weave takes 1 Player Turn. High-Power rites may require extended time by fiction.

Extended Rituals Attach long rituals to clocks:

- 4-segment clock: Significant Time (hours)
- 6-segment clock: Extended Time (days)
- 8+ segment clock: Campaign Time (weeks/months)

Advance the clock through player actions, scenes, or set intervals.

20.9 Worked Micro-Examples

- **Lockpick Under Watch (DV 2):** Roll 6 dice: 10, 8, 5, 4, 1, 1 $\Rightarrow S = 2, C = 2$. *Success & Cost.* Door opens; GM spends 1 SB for a squeal (patrol starts moving) and banks 1 SB to bring that patrol around on the next beat.
- **Charm the Captain (DV 2):** Roll 5 dice: 7, 6, 6, 2, 1 $\Rightarrow S = 3, C = 1$. *Success & Cost.* Passage granted; GM spends 1 SB: “He expects a favor on the return leg—he’ll collect.”
- **Traverse the Pass (DV 3):** Group pools to net 3 successes but produces $C = 3$. *Success & Cost.* GM spends 2 SB to add Fatigue 1 to all from cold and exposure, banks 1 SB to crack a wagon axle next scene.

Fail Forward: Every Roll Matters When you **MISS** on a *meaningful action*, you gain 2 **Boons**. When you have a **PARTIAL**, you gain 1 **Boon**. Boons can be spent immediately for re-rolls, Asset activations, Rites, and other abilities. You can hold up to 5 Boons (trim to 2 at scene end). A miss only awards Boons if all three are true:

1. Procedure followed: intent and approach declared; DV set; roll resolved.
2. Stakes stated: what changes on success; what bites on failure.
3. Consequence lands now: the GM spends or banks SB, applies a condition, or advances a thread.

Typically, failures reward boons. Rehearsal/null-risk probes and repeated identical attempts in the same scene do not award Boons. Rule of thumb, if it feels like an obvious fishing attempt, do not award a boon.

20.10 Session Loop

Off-Screen (Downtime). Clear/mark clocks, pay Upkeep, manage Obligation, craft, gather info, frame intents.

On-Screen (Adventure). Play scenes, make moves, trigger Rites/Casting, advance fronts.

Wrap-Up. Award XP, mark Story Beats (SB), resolve Harm/Fatigue conversion, advance faction clocks, note Patron Largess.

Off-Screen Hooks. Record next Downtime intents (projects, service to Patrons, upkeep needs) and any cliffhangers.

20.11 Small Folk of the Threshold (Aelaerem & Aelinnel)

The Aelaerem and Aelinnel are diminutive peoples attuned to liminal spaces and hidden ways. Their stature grants them agility and subtlety, though at the cost of bearing heavy arms or armor.

- **Restriction:** Cannot use *Heavy Armor* or *Heavy Weapons*.
- **Bonus:** Gain +1 *Position* when Dodging or Resisting Knockback, and +1 die on *Hide* or *Evasion* rolls made while in cover.

Their presence in the world is often underestimated, but their knack for slipping unseen through thresholds and enduring where others falter has earned them a quiet reverence.

20.12 War Mount Examples

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

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

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

Summary. The War Mount grants mobility and offensive momentum:

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

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

Core DV Philosophy

Difficulty Values (DV) in Fate's Edge represent **narrative weight**, not simulationist challenge. The DV system should answer: "How much does this matter to the story right now?"

21 The Standard DV Ladder

| DV | Category | When to Use |
|----|-----------|---|
| 2 | Routine | Clear intent, modest stakes, controlled environment |
| 3 | Easy | Minor challenge, familiar task, slight pressure |
| 4 | Moderate | Notable challenge, active opposition, time limits |
| 5 | Hard | Significant challenge, hostile conditions, precision required |
| 6 | Very Hard | Exceptional challenge, multiple constraints, high drama |
| 7+ | Extreme | Mythic challenge, campaign-defining, near-impossible |

22 DV Setting by Narrative Context

22.1 Character Capability Baseline

Start with the character's Tier and adjust based on the specific challenge:

| Tier | Baseline DV | Example Character |
|------|-------------|-------------------------------|
| I | 3-4 | Rookie, local threat |
| II | 4-5 | Seasoned, regional threat |
| III | 5-6 | Veteran, national threat |
| IV | 6-7 | Paragon, legendary threat |
| V | 7-8 | Mythic, world-changing threat |

22.2 Position Modifiers

| Position | DV Modifier |
|------------|-------------|
| Dominant | -1 |
| Controlled | +0 |
| Desperate | +1 |

23 Contextual DV Modifiers

23.1 Environmental Factors

- **Favorable Conditions:** -1 DV (good lighting, stable ground, clear weather)
- **Neutral Conditions:** +0 DV (typical environment)
- **Challenging Conditions:** +1 DV (dim light, uneven ground, light wind)
- **Hostile Conditions:** +2 DV (darkness, slippery surfaces, heavy rain)
- **Extreme Conditions:** +3 DV (blizzard, earthquake, magical storm)

23.2 Time Pressure

- **No Time Pressure:** -1 DV (deliberate, careful approach)
- **Standard Timing:** +0 DV (normal pace)
- **Moderate Pressure:** +1 DV (limited time, but manageable)
- **Severe Pressure:** +2 DV (countdown, immediate consequences)
- **Critical Timing:** +3 DV (split-second timing, life-or-death)

23.3 Character Condition

- **Well-rested, Focused:** -1 DV (clear mind, full attention)
- **Normal Condition:** +0 DV (typical state)
- **Fatigued (1-2):** +1 DV (minor exhaustion, distraction)
- **Fatigued (3-4):** +2 DV (significant strain, impaired focus)
- **Harm 1-2:** +1-2 DV (injury effects, pain penalties)
- **Harm 3+:** +3 DV (severe injury, near incapacity)

24 Skill and Attribute Considerations

24.1 Skill Mastery Modifiers

- **Skill 0:** +2 DV (untrained attempt)
- **Skill 1-2:** +0 DV (basic competence)
- **Skill 3-4:** -1 DV (skilled practitioner)
- **Skill 5+:** -2 DV (mastery level)

24.2 Attribute Relevance

When the primary Attribute is exceptionally high or low:

- **Attribute 5:** -1 DV (exceptional natural talent)
- **Attribute 1:** +2 DV (significant natural limitation)

25 Group Actions and Assistance

25.1 Assistance Modifiers

- **One Competent Helper:** -1 DV (relevant expertise)

- **Two Helpers:** -1 DV (combined assistance, diminishing returns)
- **Three+ Helpers:** -1 DV (maximum assistance benefit)
- **Unhelpful Environment:** +1-2 DV (crowded, chaotic, obstructive)

25.2 Group vs. Individual Challenges

- **Individual Task:** Standard DV
- **Group Coordination Required:** +1-2 DV (communication complexity)
- **Massive Scale:** +2-3 DV (beyond individual scope)
- **Specialized Roles Needed:** +1 DV per missing expertise

26 Equipment and Tools

26.1 Tool Quality Modifiers

- **Superior Tools:** -1 DV (specialized, well-maintained)
- **Adequate Tools:** +0 DV (standard equipment)
- **Poor Tools:** +1 DV (worn, improvised, inadequate)
- **Wrong Tools:** +2-3 DV (completely inappropriate)
- **Magical/Advanced Tools:** -1 to -2 DV (depending on power)

26.2 Tool Condition

- **Maintained:** +0 DV
- **Neglected:** +1 DV
- **Compromised:** +2 DV
- **Broken:** Task impossible without repair

27 Opposition and Resistance

27.1 Opposition Level

- **No Active Opposition:** -1 DV (unopposed action)
- **Passive Resistance:** +0 DV (natural resistance, no active counter)
- **Active Opposition:** +1-2 DV (opponent actively countering)
- **Skilled Opposition:** +2-3 DV (opponent with relevant expertise)
- **Superior Opposition:** +3-4 DV (opponent significantly more capable)

28 Scenario-Specific DV Guidelines

28.1 Combat DV Modifiers

- **Target Size:** -1 to +2 DV (tiny to huge)
- **Cover:** +1-2 DV (partial to full cover)
- **Range:** +0 to +2 DV (Close to Far)
- **Mobility:** +1-2 DV (moving target)
- **Illumination:** +1-2 DV (dim to darkness)

28.2 Social DV Modifiers

- **Relationship:** -2 to +2 DV (close ally to bitter enemy)
- **Social Distance:** +0 to +2 DV (intimate to formal/professional)
- **Cultural Familiarity:** -1 to +2 DV (native customs to foreign protocols)
- **Stakes Clarity:** -1 to +2 DV (clear, mutual benefit to ambiguous/harmful)
- **Time Pressure:** +0 to +2 DV (leisurely discussion to immediate deadline)

29 Calculating Final DV

To determine the final DV for any action:

1. Start with the **Base DV** from the Standard Ladder (2-7+)
2. Add the character's **Tier Modifier:** $DV = \text{Base DV} + (\text{Character Tier} - 1)$
3. Apply relevant **Contextual Modifiers** from previous sections
4. Consider **Position Effects:** Dominant (-1), Controlled (± 0), Desperate (+1)
5. Adjust for **Environmental and Circumstantial Factors**

Minimum DV: No roll can have a DV lower than 2. If modifiers would reduce it further, treat the action as automatic success with narrative description of the easy victory.

Maximum DV: For extremely challenging tasks, DV may exceed 7. Consider using clocks or extended challenges for DV 8+ tasks rather than single rolls.

30 Special DV Considerations

30.1 Group Actions

When multiple characters act together on a single goal:

- One character leads the action (sets main DV)
- Helpers provide assistance (typically -1 DV or +1 Effect)
- Each helper accepts shared risk from complications
- Complex coordination may increase DV by +1

30.2 Extended Challenges

For tasks requiring multiple successes over time:

- Set a **Challenge Clock** (4-8 segments)
- Each successful roll advances the clock
- Complications may tick the clock backward
- Partial successes may advance clock slowly

30.3 Contested Actions

When two parties oppose each other directly:

- Both parties roll against the same DV
- Higher successes win the contest
- Tie results favor the defender or status quo
- Story Beats generated by either side may be spent by the GM

31 DV Quick Reference

For rapid gameplay, use these guidelines:

| Situation | Quick DV |
|-----------------------|----------|
| Clear, no pressure | 2 |
| Standard challenge | 3 |
| Notable opposition | 4 |
| Serious danger | 5 |
| Extreme circumstances | 6 |
| Mythic challenge | 7+ |

Remember: DV represents **narrative weight**, not simulationist difficulty. Adjust based on story importance, not just mechanical challenge.

32 Combat Encounters

32.1 Core Philosophy

Combat in Fate's Edge is not a separate mini-game; it is simply conflict under sharper focus. It uses the same dice pool system and SB economy as all other actions. The rules are designed to emphasize narrative consequence, positional play, and risk management.

32.2 Structure of Combat

- **Rounds:** Each round represents a few seconds of action.
- **Turns:** Each participant takes one significant action per round.
- **Scenes:** A battle is one scene unless the fiction dictates otherwise.

32.3 Taking Action

On your turn, declare intent and method as normal:

1. **Set Position:** The GM decides if you are Dominant, Controlled, or Desperate.
2. **Build Pool:** Attribute + Skill (+ gear, + assists, +1 from Imbuement if active).
3. **Roll:** Each 6+ is a success. Each 1 generates SB.
4. **Resolve:** Successes vs DV, SB spent by GM, Position/Effect applied.

32.4 Position & Effect

Dominant

You act from safety or advantage. Failure still leaves you options.

Controlled

Standard case. Failure has teeth, but not ruin.

Desperate

High stakes. Failure is severe; success may bring extra XP (mark Desperate use).

33 Health, Fatigue, & Harm

Tracks & Caps

- **Fatigue Track:** boxes equal to **Body**.
- **Harm Levels:** as defined elsewhere in the SRD (**Harm 1**, **Harm 2**, **Harm 3**).

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 SRD.

Taking Fatigue

Mark Fatigue for strain, exertion, travel, magic costs, or §?? overflow. Fatigue can exceed remaining boxes only to *trigger* conversion; any excess is ignored after the Harm increase and Fatigue clear.

Recovering Fatigue

- **Short Rest** (quiet watch, food/water): remove **2 Fatigue**.
- **Full Night**: remove **all Fatigue**.

Fatigue recovery does not remove Harm. Recover Harm via your normal medical/ritual rules in the SRD.

Mitigation (Optional Dials)

- **Soak/Ward**: Before marking Fatigue, reduce it by 1–2 (to a minimum of 0) if protected by armor/boons/rites.
- **Convert**: Some effects may convert incoming **Harm 1** to **2 Fatigue**; if this *fills* the track, convert as normal.

Effect Effect is narrative reach:

- **Limited**: Scratch or slow progress.
- **Standard**: Expected impact (downing a guard, disabling a lock).
- **Great**: Overwhelming impact, bigger than expected.

33.1 Damage & Consequences

When you take harm:

- **Level 1 Harm**: Minor injury or hindrance. -1 die to related actions.
- **Level 2 Harm**: Serious wound. -1 die to most actions until treated.

- **Level 3 Harm:** Critical injury. You are incapacitated or dying.

Harm may be resisted (roll Attribute vs DV 3; 1s generate SB). On a hit, reduce harm by one level.

33.2 Teamwork

- **Assist:** Spend 1 Stress or Boon to add +1 die. Max +3 dice from assists.
- **Setup:** Make a roll to improve another's Position or Effect.
- **Protect:** Take harm or consequence meant for another.

33.3 GM Guidance for SB in Combat

Use SB to escalate combat fiction:

- **1 SB:** Reinforce enemy cover, minor injury, reveal new foe.
- **2 SB:** Reinforcements arrive, key gear breaks, enemy gains +1 die.
- **3 SB:** Enemy unleashes a Rite or summon, terrain shifts, ally is endangered.
- **4+ SB:** Scene twists—fires spread, the floor collapses, Patron omens manifest.

33.4 Combat and Magic

- **Casting.** Casters spend one action to *Weave* and another to *Cast*. Requires the *Caster's Gift* talent.
- **Rites.** Invoking a Rite takes one action. Players may *Push It* for +1 Obligation to gain the listed benefit.
- **Invokers.** Invokers perform Rites via Symbol. Ritual invocation takes DV + 1 rounds and always marks +1 Obligation. Alternatively, they may *Crack the Seal* to cast instantly by setting the Symbol to COMPROMISED and marking +2 Obligation (+3 if High-Power). Invoker Rites cannot use *Push It*.
- **Imbuements.** Once per scene, spend one action to activate an Imbuement. For the remainder of the scene, gain +1 to one Weapon and one Thematic Skill.

33.5 Weapons & Armor

33.5.1 Weapons by Weight Class

- **Light (4 XP)** — fast, concealable.
- **Medium (8 XP)** — balanced, battlefield standard.
- **Heavy (12 XP)** — punishing, slow.

Melee

| Weight | Close | Near | Notes |
|--------|-------|------|--|
| Light | +2d | +1d | Quick, tight quarters |
| Medium | +1d | +2d | <i>Set</i> 1/scene or -1d first attack |
| Heavy | -1d | +3d | <i>Set</i> 1/scene or -2d first attack |

Ranged & Tempo

| Weight | Tempo | Close | Near | Far |
|---------------|----------|------------|------|-----|
| Light (4 XP) | Fast | Controlled | +1d | — |
| Medium (8 XP) | Standard | Desperate | +2d | +1d |
| Heavy (12 XP) | Slow | Desperate | +1d | +3d |

Tempo: **Fast** = Move+Shoot. **Standard** = Move or Shoot, Aim +1d/Effect. **Slow** = Set/Brace, full reload, cannot Move+Shoot.

33.5.2 Weapon Tags (Optional, +4 XP each, max 2)

Reach, Close, Accurate, Brutal, Hook, Concealable, Quickdraw, Two-Handed, Off-Hand.

33.6 Shields (Optional)

| Shield | XP | Benefit | Tradeoff |
|---------|----|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| Buckler | 4 | +1d Defend vs melee or +1 DV | Off-hand |
| Heater | 8 | +1d Defend; 1 Harm→Fatigue | -1d Ranged |
| Pavise | 12 | <i>Plant</i> : heavy cover cone | Bulky, immobile |

weapon size to Light or Medium

Note: *Using a shield limits*

33.7 Armor

| Armor | XP | Conversion | Penalty |
|--------|----|------------------|-------------------------|
| Light | 4 | 1 Harm→1 Fatigue | — |
| Medium | 8 | 2 Harm→1 Fatigue | -1d physical |
| Heavy | 12 | 3 Harm→2 Fatigue | -2d physical, no sprint |

Notes: Conversion applies per Harm instance before Fatigue is marked. You may still Resist first.

33.8 Condition & Upkeep

Neglected

Weapons -1d; Armor: conversion worsens by 1 step.

Compromised

Weapons -1d first attack/round; Armor: no conversion.

Fix: Short Rest/tools remove Neglected. A scene/Smith removes Compromised.

33.9 Ranged Options (At a Glance)

- **Aim:** +1d or +1 Effect.
- **Volley:** Extra ammo +1d (max +2).
- **Suppress:** Zone fire, foes -1d/Limited Effect.
- **Overwatch:** Ready a Controlled shot on trigger.

33.10 Worked Example

Kael swings his Imbued blade at a cultist (DV 2). He rolls 5 dice: 9, 7, 5, 2, 1.

- Successes = 3 (hit), SB = 1.
- GM grants success: cultist is cut down.
- GM spends 1 SB: “Blood sprays across the sigil—energy flares, the summoning accelerates.”

33.10.1 Enchanted Equipment Conditions

Enchanted equipment follows the same maintenance rules as other assets:

Neglected:

- Minor enchantments function at -1 die penalty
- Major enchantments lose 1 benefit or become unusable

Compromised:

- All enchantments cease functioning
- Item provides no magical benefits until repaired

Repair:

- Short Rest + Tinker DV 3: Remove Neglected status
- Downtime + Tinker DV 4: Remove Compromised status
- Failed repair attempts may cause permanent enchantment degradation

34 Monk Talents

Core Concept

Monks channel inner discipline into supernatural martial prowess, combining unarmed combat mastery with spiritual focus.

Starting Talent

Disciplined Body (3 XP — Minor Talent) **Requirements:** Melee 1+, Body 2+. **Benefits:**

- +1 die to unarmed combat attacks.
- Convert 1 Harm to Fatigue once per scene.
- Once per scene, improve Position by one step.

Advanced Talents

Iron Fist Way (6 XP — Minor Talent) **Benefits:** +1 die to unarmed attacks; strikes count as enchanted.

Flowing Spirit Way (8 XP — Major Talent) **Benefits:** Convert up to 1 Harm into Fatigue per attack; +1 die against fear or charm.

Perfect Timing Way (7 XP — Major Talent) **Benefits:** Twice per scene, improve Position by +1 step; +1 die to reactions.

Untouchable Way (12 XP — Major Talent) **Prerequisites:** Iron Fist + Flowing Spirit. **Benefits:** +1 die to unarmed attacks; convert 2 Harm into Fatigue; cannot be grappled.

Inevitable Way (15 XP — Major Talent) **Prerequisites:** Iron Fist + Perfect Timing. **Benefits:** +2 dice to unarmed attacks; ignore 1 Armor; may counterattack when an enemy misses.

Transcendent Harmony (18 XP — Epic Talent) **Prerequisites:** Flowing Spirit + Perfect Timing, Spirit 4+. **Benefits:** Convert 2 Harm into Fatigue; once per session become immune to Harm; allies gain +1 defense.

Progression Path

Monks specialize early (6–8 XP), combine paths mid-tier (12–15 XP), and achieve transcendence late (18 XP). Each path represents a distinct combat philosophy and playstyle.

35 Miniatures and Tactical Layer

35.1 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.

35.2 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.

35.3 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.

35.4 Facing and Flanking

- Choose a facing at end of movement.
- Flank: +1 die if attacked from opposite arcs; Rear: +1 die and +1 Effect.

35.5 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).

35.6 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.

35.7 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.

[title=Miniatures Mode — Speed Defaults,colback=white!98!gray,colframe=black!50!gray,boxrule=0.4pt]

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.

[title=Hex Keywords,colback=white!98!gray,colframe=black!50!gray,boxrule=0.4pt] **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

[TPK Resolution Options] A Total Party Kill doesn't have to end the campaign. Choose one of the following resolutions that fits the fiction and stakes.

- **Capture & Consequences.** PCs live but are captured, bound, or indebted. Advance relevant clocks +2, strip 1–2 assets, apply a permanent Condition to 1–2 PCs.
- **Patron's Claim (Bargain).** A Patron intervenes. PCs survive, but each accepts a non-negotiable term (e.g., *Obligation +2*, lose a Gift, sworn service for a season). Record the Claim as a front.
- **Last Stand → Legacy.** Convert the TPK scene into a Last Stand: for the remainder of the scene, +1 Effect and ignore new Harm; each action creates 1 SB. When it ends, the party dies. Next session, new PCs inherit one Relationship/Tool/Lesson from the fallen.
- **Dramatic Exit & Inheritance.** Players choose meaningful deaths that save others or seal a danger. Next PCs begin with one inherited tie (bond/contact/rival), a degraded Tool, or +1 XP toward a relevant Talent.
- **Reprieve at a Price.** Buy back from death by marking +2 **Obligation** each (or one steep Patron Claim). All scene clocks advance +1; introduce a new front tied to the price paid.

- **New Torchbearers.** End the chapter cleanly. Start with new characters directly connected to the fallen (apprentices, kin, witnesses). Carry forward consequences and open clocks.

GM Notes. Name the cost before rolls at the brink; pick one option, don't stack. Tie outcomes to Patron themes, and change the world (factions/clocks) accordingly.

35.8 Persuasion Encounters

Use a **Persuasion Clock** to track progress toward agreement. If the outcome is truly binary, skip the clock and resolve with a single roll.

Clock Size. Set segments by difficulty/resolve of the target:

- Easy: 4-segment Moderate: 6-segment Hard: 8-segment

Position → DV. Set Position from fiction and map to DV (Dominant = DV 2, Controlled = DV 3, Desperate = DV 4-5+).

Actions. Each attempt must be fictionally distinct (new appeal, leverage, evidence, witness, or framing). Bonds and Boons may assist as normal.

Outcomes.

- **Strong Hit (Success):** Tick the clock +2.
- **Mixed (Partial):** Tick the clock +1 and accept a complication (GM may start/advance a small FACE LOST or REBUTTAL clock, or claim 1 SB).
- **Miss:** No progress; GM may *decrease* the clock 1 or advance an OPPOSITION clock +1-2.

Opposition. For contested scenes, add an **Opposition Clock** (4-6). When it fills first, the target hardens: Position worsens one step or the ask narrows (concession required).

Finish. When the Persuasion Clock fills, the target agrees as framed. If there are unresolved costs/clocks, pay them or renegotiate a smaller ask.

Limits. Repeat-spam of the same line of argument does not tick the clock; change the fiction.

36 Skills, Talents and Advancement

36.1 Skills

How Skills Work

An action roll pairs an **Attribute** with a **Skill** to reflect what you do and how you do it (e.g., *Wits* + *Subterfuge*, *Body* + *Athletics*). The Keeper sets **Position** and **DV** (difficulty value) from the fiction; your hits determine **Effect**, with **SB** (setback) generated on low dice as usual.

Fiction-first handles. Obstacles should present at least two plausible “handles” (different Skills/approaches) so players can choose a method that fits their build and the scene. Assistance uses the helper’s Attribute+Skill; tools, tags, Strings, and Diamonds modify Position/DV/Effect as normal.

Core Skill List (A–Z) Each entry lists what the Skill covers and common Attribute pairings. These are examples, not limits.

Arcana **What:** Magical theory, sigils, wards, occult correspondences, ritual praxis.

Pairs: *Wits* (analyze a sigil), *Spirit* (sustain a rite), *Presence* (lead a chorus).

Athletics **What:** Running, jumping, climbing, swimming, balance under strain.

Pairs: *Body* (vault a gap), *Wits* (time a leap), *Spirit* (push through fatigue).

Brawl **What:** Unarmed strikes, grapples, improvised holds, close scrums.

Pairs: *Body* (tackle), *Wits* (feint), *Spirit* (fight on while dazed).

Command **What:** Directing allies, drilling troops, battlefield orders, keeping cohesion.

Pairs: *Presence* (rally), *Wits* (issue smart orders), *Spirit* (hold the line).

Craft **What:** Making and mending—smithing, carpentry, weaving, cooking, alchemy set-up.

Pairs: *Wits* (plan), *Body* (execute heavy work), *Spirit* (long, careful work).

Deception **What:** Direct lies, misstatements, bluffing in conversation.

Pairs: *Presence* (sell a lie), *Wits* (keep stories straight), *Spirit* (lie under pressure).

Diplomacy **What:** Formal negotiation, etiquette, treaties, court protocol, “Bowl before Board.”

Pairs: *Presence* (host a parley), *Wits* (read concessions), *Spirit* (stay courteous under fire).

Endurance **What:** Marches, exposure, pain tolerance, poison, disease, holding breath.

Pairs: *Spirit* (resist), *Body* (carry load), *Wits* (ration effort).

Insight **What:** Read emotions, motives, tells; spot a con at the *person* level.
Pairs: *Wits* (parse signals), *Presence* (mirror, probe), *Spirit* (keep your center).

Investigation **What:** Structured inquiry—interviews, paper trails, scene reconstruction.
Pairs: *Wits* (deduce), *Presence* (question), *Body* (methodical canvass).

Lore **What:** History, cultures, laws, faiths, bestiaries, ancient sites.
Pairs: *Wits* (recall), *Presence* (cite), *Spirit* (keep taboo rites correctly).

Medicine **What:** First aid, surgery, leechcraft, epidemics, long-term care.
Pairs: *Wits* (diagnose), *Body* (operate), *Spirit* (steady hands under stress).

Melee **What:** Armed close combat—blades, axes, staves, shields.
Pairs: *Body* (strike), *Wits* (footwork), *Spirit* (press the advantage).

Nature **What:** Wilds knowledge—tracks, foraging, animal signs, weather sense.
Pairs: *Wits* (read terrain), *Spirit* (respect dangers), *Body* (set snares).

Notice **What:** Situational awareness—perceive, scan, spot ambushes and tells in *places*.
Pairs: *Wits* (observe), *Body* (react), *Spirit* (keep calm perceptions).

Performance **What:** Acting, music, dance, oratory, crowd-working.
Pairs: *Presence* (captivate), *Wits* (timing), *Spirit* (stage nerve).

Ranged **What:** Bows, crossbows, thrown weapons, firearms (by setting).
Pairs: *Body* (shoot), *Wits* (lead), *Spirit* (hold the shot).

Stealth **What:** Move unseen, silence, shadowing, hide-and-evade.
Pairs: *Body* (sneak), *Wits* (choose routes), *Spirit* (stay still under pressure).

Streetwise **What:** Underworld culture—contacts, fences, black markets, rumor webs.
Pairs: *Presence* (work a contact), *Wits* (vet info), *Spirit* (walk bad streets).

Subterfuge **What:** Criminal craft and social deception: casing, impersonation, forgery, palming/planting, short cons, engineered distractions. Subterfuge tricks *people and systems*, not mechanisms.
Pairs: *Wits* (case routines), *Presence* (talk past checkpoints), *Body* (sleight of hand), *Spirit* (sustain a cover).

Tactics **What:** Small-unit plans, flanking, formations, reading the field, pursuit/evasion.
Pairs: *Wits* (plan), *Presence* (coordinate), *Spirit* (execute under fire).

Tinker **What:** Mechanisms—locks, traps, engines, devices, jury-rigs, sabotage.
Pairs: *Wits* (diagnose), *Body* (delicate work), *Spirit* (keep steady during failure modes).

Locks & Wards (clarity note). Bypass *mechanical* locks/traps with **Tinker + Attribute**. Bypass *arcane* seals/wards with **Arcana/Lore + Attribute**. **Subterfuge** gets you *to* the door and past the people, not *through* the mechanism.

Optional & Mode Skills

Tables may enable additional Skills by mode:

- **Psionics** (Psionics module): psychic arts, mental strain, disciplines.
- **Technology** (Modern Noir): digital systems, intrusion software, electronics.
- **Perception/Insight merge:** Some tables collapse *Notice* and *Insight* into one *Perception*; if so, keep the above niches visible in examples.

Adding a New Skill (Guidance)

Define the gap (one line on what it does that others don't), list 3–5 common Attribute pairings, and provide 6–8 typical actions. Do *not* delete existing handles from procedures—add your Skill where the fiction justifies it, keeping niches crisp.

36.2 What are Talents?

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.

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

Talent Costs

- **2 XP** — Minor edge (e.g., Caster's Gift, +1 situational bonus, small narrative trick).
- **4 XP** — Major edge (e.g., Patron's Symbol, a strong summon upgrade, permanent +1 effect in a niche).
- **6+ XP** — Prestige abilities, rare and campaign-defining.

Gaining Talents

- Spend XP earned through play.
- XP comes from fulfilling Drives, resolving Arcs, trading Boons (2 Boons = 1 XP, max 2 XP/session), and GM awards.

- XP is spent between sessions or during downtime.

Magic Access Through Talents

Caster's Gift (2 XP):

Grants access to Weave & Cast freeform spellcasting using the Eight Elements. Without this, characters cannot freeform cast.

Familiar (2 XP):

Required to access Patron features such as *Patron's Gift*. Binds a Thiasos.

Codex (4 XP):

Required to fully join a Patron's service as a Runekeeper. Grants access to that Patron's Rites and Obligation system.

Patron's Symbol (4 XP):

Minor Asset. Allows an Invoker to access a Patron's Rites via ritual precision. Each Patron requires its own Symbol.

36.3 Imbuements

Patron's Gift (Free, Requires Thiasos)

Duration: Scene; Range: Touch; Stacking: No.

Effect: Imbue one item with temporary magical power related to your Patron's domain. The item functions as a magical weapon (+1 Melee) and specialized tool (+1 thematic Skill) for the scene.

Activation: Requires 1 Action once per scene.

Push It: The item's power persists for one additional scene but marks +1 Obligation.

Requires: Familiar (Invoke: 1 Boon).

37 Melee Combat Talents

37.1 Minor Talents

37.1.1 Defensive Survival (3 XP)

Requirements: Melee 2+

Effect: +1 die to defense rolls while engaged in melee. Once per scene, convert first Harm 1 from melee to Fatigue.

Narrative: Years of combat teaching you to read attacks and flow with them.

37.1.2 Tactical Movement (4 XP)

Requirements: Athletics 2+

Effect: Move within engagement zone as Move action (instead of full action). Once per scene, disengage from Close as Move action.

Narrative: Footwork and positioning that keeps you alive in the press.

37.1.3 Conditioning (4 XP)

Requirements: Body 3+

Effect: Body attribute counts as +1 for Fatigue track calculations. +1 die to resist Fatigue overflow effects.

Narrative: Physical conditioning that lets you endure punishment.

37.1.4 Weapon Master (5 XP)

Requirements: Melee 2+

Effect: +2 dice (instead of +1) with chosen weapon category. Once per scene, +1 Effect with signature weapon.

Narrative: Mastery of specific weapons that makes them extensions of yourself.

37.2 Major Talents

37.2.1 Flurry Strike (7 XP)

Requirements: Melee 3+, Body 3+

Effect: When engaged with multiple opponents, make 2 attacks as one action. Each attack at -1 die.

Narrative: Training that lets you fight multiple enemies simultaneously.

37.2.2 Duelist's Edge (8 XP)

Requirements: Melee 3+, Wits 3+

Effect: When engaged with single opponent: +1 die to all melee rolls. Once per scene, ignore first Harm 1 or 2 from that opponent.

Narrative: Psychological and tactical dominance in one-on-one combat.

37.2.3 Battlefield Mastery (8 XP)

Requirements: Melee 4+, Wits 4+, Command 2+

Effect: Once per scene, when engaged with 3+ opponents, declare "Battlefield Mastery." For next 3 exchanges:

- All melee attacks gain +1 Effect
- Enemies act at -1 die due to disorientation
- Your Position improves by one step
- Convert one Harm 1→Fatigue per exchange

Narrative: When surrounded, you enter a state of perfect combat flow where enemies become obstacles rather than threats.

Subtle Casting (Major Talent – 8 XP) *Prerequisite: Lore 3+, Performance 2+ or Runekeeper with Codex*

Effect: Make a **Performance** + **Lore** roll to quietly cast a spell, invoke a Rite, or sing a Cantos against DV (Tier). If successful, the casting does *not* generate Story Beats on the Channel or initial roll. Any SB generated are **banked by the GM** and applied at dramatically appropriate moments.

Limitations: Cannot be used for **Great** or **Extreme** Tier effects. The Weave phase (if applicable) still generates normal SB. **Limitations:**

- Cannot be used for *Great* or *Extreme* Tier effects.
- The *Weave* phase (if applicable) still generates normal SB.
- Obvious magical manifestations still occur (glowing sigils, strange sounds, sudden winds, etc.).

Backstab (Major Talent, 8 XP) **Req:** Stealth 2+, Melee 2+, Light weapon.

Effect: When you attack an **Unaware** or **Engaged** foe from **Stealth**, deal +1 *Harm* and ignore 1 *point of their Armor*.

Definitions:

- **Unaware:** The target is not aware of your presence or hostile intent. This typically requires being *Hidden* or having succeeded on a *Stealth* test.
- **Engaged:** The target is currently taking an *Attack* action against another character, or casting a spell/ritual that specifically targets another character.
 - In miniatures/tactical play: the target is in melee range (*Close*) with another PC/NPC and actively fighting them.

Limit: Once per scene. To use again, you must first *re-enter Stealth* (DV by narrative) and mark 1 *Fatigue* (e.g., via *Shadow Dance*).

On a Miss: You are *Exposed* — drop to *Desperate Position* or mark 1 *Harm*.

Shadow Dance (Synergy Talent, 10 XP) **Req:** Backstab, Stealth 3+, Mobility 2+.

Effect: After a successful **Backstab**, you may immediately test **Stealth** vs. DV (Tier).

- On success: You *re-enter Stealth* and may either **clear 1 Fatigue** or **improve Position +1**.
- On failure: You remain *Exposed* and must mark 1 *Fatigue*.

Limit: May only chain once per scene.

Deathblow (Capstone Talent, 12 XP) **Req:** Shadow Dance, Stealth 4+, Melee/Ranged 3+.

Effect: When you strike from **Dominant Position** or after re-entering **Stealth** via *Shadow Dance*, you may declare a **Deathblow**.

- On a hit: Deal *triple Harm*. If the attack incapacitates the target, you may immediately attempt a free **Stealth** test (DV by narrative) to vanish.
- On a miss: You are *Exposed* — drop to Desperate Position and mark 1 *Harm*.

Limit: Once per scene. You may mark 1 *Fatigue* to attempt a second time.

Light Fingers (3 XP)

Once per scene, after a successful social or stealth action that puts you within arm's reach, attempt a **Body or Presence** + **Subterfuge** palming/pick as a free follow-up. On a partial, you get the item but generate 1 **SB**.

Face Like Water (4 XP)

Gain +1 **die** to maintain disguises/aliases under questioning. Once per session, treat a failed “papers, please” check as a partial success; you pass, but start **Noticed [2]**.

Berserker Rage (Major Talent – 8 XP) *Prerequisite: Melee 3+, Spirit 3+, Body 3+*

Effect:

- Gain +3 dice to all melee attacks.
- Ignore first Harm 1 each round while raging.
- Ignore any Harm or Fatigue penalties while raging.
- Lasts 3 rounds.
- When Rage ends, mark +Spirit Fatigue.
- Cannot be ended early.
- Position becomes Desperate while raging (re-roll successes).
- While raging, you cannot benefit from Armor conversion effects.
- While raging, you may activate one additional Major, Prestige, or Epic talent by accepting one of these costs:
 - Reduce rage bonus to +2 dice, or
 - Mark +1 additional Fatigue when rage ends, or
 - Cannot ignore first Harm 1 this round, or
 - Extend rage duration by 1 round (instead of reducing it).
- Once per scene.
- After rage ends, you cannot take actions requiring combat or mental focus until your next turn (Recovery Period).

Narrative Integration:

“The battle-fury strips away all pretense of defense. You become a weapon of pure destruction, but your flesh bears the cost of such power. Armor becomes a cage that cannot contain the storm within.”

Design Intent:

Embody the classic berserker archetype where raw destructive power comes at the cost of protection. Players must choose between defensive security and unleashed fury, or accept meaningful costs to combine rage with tactical precision.

37.3 Prestige Talents

37.3.1 Battlefield Terror (12 XP)

Requirements: Melee 4+, Body 4+, Harm 2+ experience

Effect: Enemies in Close range act at -1 die due to intimidation. Once per scene, convert enemy's success to partial with cost.

Narrative: Reputation and presence that makes opponents hesitate.

37.4 Epic Talents

37.4.1 Blade Dance (18 XP)

Requirements: Melee 5+, Duelist's Edge, Flurry Strike

Effect: Engage and attack up to 3 targets in one action. Each attack at -1 die, but Position improves by one step.

Narrative: Legendary skill that makes you a whirlwind of death.

37.5 Combat Balance Notes

These talents are designed to enhance melee viability while maintaining Fate's Edge's core tension between risk and reward. Melee combat should remain **manageably deadly** - dangerous enough to require tactical skill, but with meaningful options for skilled fighters to excel.

Key Principles:

- Talents enhance existing mechanics rather than replace them
- Specialization provides clear advantages for focused builds
- High-cap opponents remain genuinely threatening
- Positioning and tactical decision-making remain crucial
- Story Beat escalation continues to compound challenges

Role Balance: Enhanced melee fighters complement rather than overshadow other roles. Ranged characters maintain mobility advantages, magic users provide battlefield control, and support characters enable team effectiveness.

37.6 Advancement

- Characters advance primarily through acquiring Talents.
- Each 8–12 XP represents significant growth.
- Characters may retrain (swap out) one Talent per arc with GM approval, if fictionally justified.
- Advancement should always reinforce narrative identity: what drives, obligations, and affinities are shaping the character?

37.7 Prestige Abilities

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

- Breaking fundamental limits of casting or rites.
- Access to forbidden summons.
- Rewriting obligations or reshaping patron bargains.

37.8 Worked Example

Sable earns 2 XP from fulfilling a Drive and 1 XP from trading in 2 Boons at session's end. He now has 4 XP. He buys the Caster's Gift (2 XP) and saves the other 2 XP toward a Patron's Symbol. Next downtime, he will be able to invoke Ikasha's rites through ritual.

37.9 Equipment Enchantments

Equipment enchantments function as Talents, using the same XP costs and mechanical principles. They represent permanent magical modifications to weapons, armor, and gear.

37.9.1 Core Principles

- Enchantments cost XP like Talents (2, 4, 6+ XP for minor, major, prestige effects)
- Each enchantment provides a specific, limited mechanical benefit
- Enchantments follow the same stacking and limitation rules as Talents
- Equipment must be maintained and can become Neglected/Compromised like other assets
- Total enchantments cannot exceed item's Tier (1-5, based on quality/rarity)

37.9.2 Enchantment Categories

Minor Enchantments (2-4 XP):

- Provide small, consistent benefits

- Often situational or single-effect modifiers
- Examples: +1 die to specific rolls, minor damage resistance, [TAG] once/session

Major Enchantments (6+ XP):

- Significant mechanical advantages
- May provide new capabilities or action options
- Examples: Ignore armor, special damage types, area effects, [TAG] with limitations

37.9.3 Sample Enchantments

Weapon Enchantments:

- **Keen Edge (2 XP):** +1 die to hit against armored targets
- **Flaming Blade (4 XP):** Deals +1 Fire damage, +1 Effect vs cold creatures
- **Soulfire Weapon (6 XP):** Ignores 1 point of armor/resistance, deals Spirit damage
- **Thunder Hammer (8 XP):** On 10+, knockback adjacent targets (Hazard +2)
- **Luckblade (4 XP):** Once/scene, re-roll 1s on damage dice

Armor Enchantments:

- **Shadowweave (2 XP):** +1 die to Stealth rolls while moving silently
- **Runed Plate (4 XP):** Reduce magical Backlash by 1 SB
- **Wraithmail (8 XP):** Once/scene, become intangible for 1 exchange
- **Spellweave Cloak (6 XP):** +2 dice to resist one chosen magical effect

Gear Enchantments:

- **Boots of Sure Step (3 XP):** Ignore difficult terrain effects
- **Lantern of Revelation (5 XP):** Reveal [VEIL] effects within Near range
- **Ring of Sustenance (4 XP):** Ignore first level of Fatigue each scene

37.9.4 Enchantment Limitations

- Maximum enchantments = Item's Tier (Light/Minor=1, Medium/Standard=2, Heavy/Major=3)
- Enchantments on same item cannot stack if they provide identical benefits
- Damaged/Neglected equipment may lose enchantment benefits temporarily (-1 die to use)
- Compromised equipment loses all enchantment benefits until repaired
- Removing enchantments requires ritual (Wits + Arcana DV 4) and costs 1 XP per enchantment level
- Enchanted items count as Assets for upkeep purposes (see §8.3)

37.9.5 Creating New Enchantments

Use existing Talents as benchmarks:

- **Minor (2-4 XP):** Equivalent to small narrative tricks or situational bonuses (+1 die, [TAG] limited)
- **Major (6-8 XP):** Comparable to significant mechanical edges or new capabilities ([WARD], [COMMAND] minor)
- **Prestige (10+ XP):** Campaign-defining effects similar to Patron Rites or Epic Talents ([BANISH], [REALITY] minor)

Price enchantments relative to their mechanical impact and campaign power level. Consider the item's base Tier as a cost modifier—higher Tier items can support more powerful enchantments at the same XP cost.

38 The Magic System

Magic in Fate's Edge is expressed through three 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.

38.1 The Many Faces of Magic

Caster (Freeform):

Requires **Talent: Caster's Gift (2 XP)**. Grants access to Weave & Cast using the Eight Elements. Flexible, creative, and risky (Backlash on 1s).

Rites User (Runekeeper):

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

Invoker (Symbol Path):

Requires one or more **Patron's Symbols (4 XP each)**. Grants access to that Patron's Rites via rituals. Safe but slow; can *Crack the Seal* to cast instantly at steep Obligation cost.

38.2 Caster (Freeform/Weave & Cast) - Balanced Mechanics

Core Concept: Flexible, improvisational magic that shapes raw elemental forces. Power comes with inherent instability and risk.

Mechanics:

- **Prerequisite:** Caster's Gift (6 XP Talent).
- **Process:** Two-Action casting loop: **Weave** (shape) → **Cast** (release).

- **Description:** Player narrates the desired effect, framing it through the **Eight Elements** (Earth, Air, Fire, Water, Fate, Luck, Life, Death/Dreams). The GM sets the **Difficulty Value (DV)** and the base **Effect** based on scope and complexity.
- **Elemental Focus:** The caster typically focuses on one or two primary elements for their Art (e.g., Fire/Destruction, Water/Healing, Air/Movement, Earth/Protection). Effects strongly aligned with these elements might gain a minor benefit (e.g., +1 Boon or reduced Backlash severity, as detailed below).

Casting Loop Details:

1. Weave (Action 1):

- **Roll:** Attribute + Arcana (or relevant skill if justified by Art).
- **Outcome:**
 - **Success:** The spell's form is stabilized. It is ready to be Cast.
 - **Partial/Miss:** The shaping fails. No effect occurs, but Backlash (see below) still applies based on this roll.
 - **Backlash:** If one or more 1s are rolled, the GM notes the number and the element(s) involved. Resolve Backlash *after* the Cast roll.

2. Cast (Action 2 - Performed only if Weave Succeeds):

- **Roll:** Attribute + Arcana (or relevant skill).
- **Outcome:**
 - **Success:** The spell is successfully channeled into the world, producing the intended Effect.
 - **Partial/Miss:** The spell partially manifests or misfires. Apply the intended Effect at a reduced level (e.g., -1 step) or with a significant drawback. The caster still suffers Backlash.
 - **Backlash:** If one or more 1s are rolled, the GM notes the number and element(s). Combine these 1s with any 1s from the Weave roll for the Backlash Severity check.

Backlash System:

- **Trigger:** Any 1 rolled on either the **Weave** or **Cast** roll. Count the total number of 1s from both rolls for the current spell.
- **Severity Check:** Based on the total number of 1s and the primary Element(s) involved.
 - **1 One (Minor Backlash):**
 - * **Effect:** Flavorful, minor inconvenience or environmental effect related to the element and its opposite.
 - * **Examples:**
 - **Fire:** Smoke, sparks, sudden heatwave, minor burn (Fatigue).
 - **Water:** Sudden dampness, minor slip, condensation forming.
 - **Earth:** Dust cloud, minor tremor, instability (Position -1 if balancing).
 - **Air:** Gust dispersing papers, sudden noise, dizziness.

- **Fate:** A nearby decision point feels “wrong” or “forced.”
- **Luck:** A nearby ally suffers a minor stroke of bad luck (tripped, dropped item).
- **Life:** Brief fatigue, minor pain, plant nearby wilts slightly.
- **Death/Dreams:** A shiver, a fleeting dark vision, silence falls for a moment.
- **2-3 Ones (Moderate Backlash):**
 - * **Effect:** Clear mechanical penalty or harmful effect related to the element and its opposite.
 - * **Options (GM Choice or Player Narrative Fit):**
 - Apply a **Condition** (Dazed, Shaken, Exposed, etc.).
 - Impose **-1d** on the caster’s next relevant roll.
 - Inflict **Harm 1** (typically Minor, e.g., a burn, bruise, shock).
 - Trigger a **Story Beat** spend by the GM (related to the element or situation).
 - Cause a **minor environmental hazard** (fire catches a curtain, water spills, earth shifts, etc.).
- **4+ Ones (Severe Backlash):**
 - * **Effect:** Significant mechanical consequence or narrative disruption.
 - * **Options:**
 - Inflict **Harm 2** (Moderate).
 - Apply a **persistent Condition** or a **severe Condition** (Impaired, Panicked, etc.).
 - Cause a **major environmental change** or hazard.
 - Trigger a **significant Story Beat** spend by the GM (major complication).
 - The spell catastrophically misfires, potentially harming allies or creating an unintended, powerful (but likely uncontrolled) magical effect related to the elements involved.
- **Art Specialization Mitigation:** If the spell’s effect is strongly aligned with the caster’s defined Magical Art (elements/themes), they may reduce the Backlash severity by one step (Severe → Moderate, Moderate → Minor, Minor → *Narrative Only* flavor). This represents mastery making the magic feel more “natural” and less likely to spiral out of control.

Key Clarifications:

- **DV Setting:** The GM sets the DV based on the scope and complexity of the intended effect, informed by the elements used. A simple Fire bolt is DV 3. A complex Fate/Luck weave to ensure victory in a tournament might be DV 5.
- **Effect Definition:** The base Effect is also set by the GM based on the description. “I blast him with fire” is different from “I create a wall of fire.” The player should be clear about the desired outcome.
- **TAGS (Optional):** For games using the TAGS system, the GM and player can agree on relevant TAGS to define the spell’s specific mechanical impacts, which can also inform DV and Backlash potential (e.g., a spell with [AREA] or [DISPEL] might have a higher DV or Backlash risk).

Free Casting at a Glance

|X|

You Can Attempt any effect you can describe with Elements and [TAGS], reshaping or directing existing forces (fire, stone, air, life, shadow, etc.).

You Cannot Create matter from nothing, truly resurrect or instant-kill, casually rewrite the setting, or bypass whole subsystems with a single roll.

Safe Scale Up to 6 [TAGS] per casting; big area, long duration, many targets, or complex tricks all push cost and risk upward.

Dangerous [TAGS] [TELEPORT], [TRANSFORM], [DOMINATE] (and similar) always add extra risk; stacking several or mixing opposing elements makes Backlash harsher.

Costs Every casting gives the GM Story Beats; strong or repeated spells can inflict Backlash, worsen Position, and cause Fatigue (especially if maintained).

Stabilizers Repeated, in-theme effects become reliable “signature” spells; you can always scale back (less area, targets, or duration) to keep costs reasonable.

Rule of thumb: if it is big, weird, or campaign-shaping, expect real cost, setup, or the GM to say “no” or “yes, but...”

38.3 Rites Users (Runekeepers and Invokers)

Rites are structured, Patron-linked magical workings. They trade flexibility for stability: each Rite has a clear cost, clear purpose, and clear consequences. Two archetypes specialize in them:

Runekeepers

Rune-binding mystics who channel their Patron through a *Thiasos* (a minor spirit) and a *Codex* of structured symbols.

Invokers

Symbol-bearers who call their Patron’s authority directly through a physical **Symbol**. Their magic is slower, safer, and highly ritualized.

Both track **Obligation**—the Patron’s claim on their actions and future.

Obligation Clock Tracks the Patron’s claim. When full, the GM resolves the debt in-fiction. Obligation is reduced through service, downtime actions, or story-appropriate acts of devotion.

38.4 Rites Difficulty Value (DV)

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

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

Obligation Cost:

The Rite's listed toll in Obligation segments.

Spirit:

Each point of Spirit reduces how heavily that toll weighs on you.

Tier:

A floor representing the Rite's inherent complexity.

Higher Obligation Rites strain the soul; higher Tier Rites strain reality.

38.4.1 Runekeepers

Runekeepers bind structured magic through carved glyphs, charms, tattoos, or inscribed Codices. They excel at *prepared*, *reliable* magic with short-term boosts and thematic utility.

Requirements To be a Runekeeper, a character needs:

- A **Patron bond**
- A **Thiasos** (Familiar spirit)
- A **Codex** (4 XP)

Invocation

- **1 Action** to invoke a Rune or Rite.
- Marks **Obligation** as listed.
- **Push It:** Increase duration or potency by +1 step; mark +1 additional Obligation.

Patron's Gift (Runekeeper Talent) Daily Magical Enhancement

Cost:

Free (requires Thiasos).

Activation:

1 Action; once per scene.

Effect:

Gain +1 die to one Skill check linked to your Patron's domain, and +1 Melee *or* Ranged for the scene.

Limitations:

Must be thematically appropriate; does not stack with other magical enhancements; usable only by the Runekeeper.

Cost:

Generates **1 SB** (Diamonds).

Using Patron's Gift Well

- **Domain Focus:** Pick uses that reinforce your Patron's themes.
- **Small but Reliable:** Designed for routine magical support.
- **Complications as Flavor:** Let the SB inform dramatic shifts in scene tone.

| Patron | Typical Applications |
|-----------------|--|
| Raéyn (Sea) | Navigation, currents, weather-sense |
| Ikasha (Shadow) | Stealth, investigation, escape artistry |
| Inaea (Webs) | Persuasion, bargaining, relationship reading |
| Oath of Flame | Honor, purification, ceremonial presence |
| Sealed Gate | Wards, construction, boundary-setting |

38.4.2 Invokers

Invokers channel power through a **Patron Symbol**: an inscribed object infused with sacred authority. Their magic is slower but safer, and their Symbol state matters greatly.

Symbol States and Repair

- **COMPROMISED:** Symbol provides no reductions; casting suffers -1 die.
- **SHATTERED:** If Cracked while already COMPROMISED, the Symbol breaks completely (Asset lost).
- **Repair (Downtime):** $1 \text{ day} + \text{Craft or Lore} + \text{Tinker}$ vs. DV 3 clears COMPROMISED. Or spend **1 XP** to auto-repair.

Backlash and Failure

- **Success:** Rite resolves normally; apply Obligation and SB from Push/conditions.
- **Partial:** Effect -1 step *or* shortened duration; mark **Fatigue 1**. If cast without a Symbol: Keeper gains **+1 SB**.
- **Failure:** No effect; mark **Fatigue 1**; Keeper gains **+1 SB**. Then roll *Spirit + Resolve* vs. DV 3:
 - Fail: **Harm 1 (Shock)** or begin **Backlash Static [4]**.
 - If Symbol was disrupted/hidden or the Seal was Cracked: **Harm 2 (Shock)**.
- **Interrupted:** Treat as Failure (Silence, injury, disruption).

Example *Magus Vex invokes the Sealed Gate's Circle of Denial. He has the Symbol, reducing DV 3 to DV 2 and avoiding Obligation. Ambushed mid-ritual, he Cracks the Seal, making the Symbol COMPROMISED but resolving instantly, marking +2 Obligation. Later, he Pushes the Rite to strengthen the barrier, marking +1 more Obligation. If he cast a Raéyn Rite next, Cross-Resonance would impose +1 DV.*

Learning New Rites

Invokers learn new Rites through structured study:

- **Cost:** 1 week of Downtime + 2 XP.
- **Access:** Teacher, text, or witnessed casting.
- **Test:** *Lore + Investigation* vs. DV 3–5.
- **Success:** Add Rite to repertoire.
- **Failure:** Cannot retry for a time; GM may introduce a Complication.

Symbols as Assets

- A Patron Symbol is a **Minor Asset (4 XP)**.
- Casting *without* the Symbol imposes:
 - +1 DV
 - +1 **Obligation** (in addition to Base)
 - +1 **SB** to the Keeper on Partial/Failure
- Symbols may be upgraded like other Assets. Examples: *Hardened* (ignore first Compromised per session), *Bright* (counts as displayed even when concealed).

Borrowed Grace (Invoker Talent) Lesser Imbuement

Cost:

1 Boon; 1 Action.

Effect:

+1 die to one combat action *or* +1 Effect for one social/stealth action.

Duration:

Single action.

Requirement:

Display Patron Symbol.

Limits:

Once per scene; cannot stack or extend.

38.5 Mixing the Paths

Characters may combine Casting, Rites, and Invoking. Each brings its own bookkeeping:

- **Casters** track Backlash.
- **Runekeepers** track Obligation.
- **Invokers** track Symbol state *and* Obligation.

Mixing grants narrative breadth but loses the efficiency and reliability gained by specialization.

Sample Patrons and Their Rites (SRD Summary)

The following Patron summaries provide *example* Rites for use by Runekeepers, Invokers, and Cantors:

- **Runekeepers** inscribe these as formal Rites (with Codex, symbols, and components).
- **Invokers** call on them through Patron Symbols and negotiated Obligation.
- **Cantors** may adapt *Low* Rites as Songs, turning effects into chanted or sung invocations.

Each Patron entry lists a brief **domain** and **three sample Rites** chosen to showcase a mix of support, control, and thematic utility, along with suggested [TAGS].

Oath of Flame & Light **Domain:** Dawn, vows, radiant justice, purifying flame.

- **Rite of Kindle Vow (Low)** [OATH] [COURAGE] [BUFF]
Bind a short, scene-long vow in faint radiance; bearer gains a small bonus when acting to fulfill it, and the Patron notices hesitation or betrayal.
- **Rite of Lay on Hands (Low)** [CLEANSE] [HEAL] [LIGHT]
Channel dawnfire through a touch to cleanse an affliction, ease Fatigue, or reduce Harm by one step; on a strong result, the target also gains resolve against future strain.
- **Rite of Radiant Smite (Standard)** [FIRE] [FOLLOW_UP] [SMITE]
Wreath a weapon in dawn-light so the next strike hits harder, burning undead, oath-breakers, or outsiders and driving back nearby foes.

The Sealed Gate **Domain:** Thresholds, wards, containment, lawful passage.

- **Rite of the Sealed Threshold (Low)** [WARD] [LINE] [DENY]
Mark a doorway or passage so that unauthorized creatures hesitate or struggle to cross, often facing Position penalties or a saving test.
- **Rite of the Circle of Denial (Standard)** [WARD] [CIRCLE] [BAN]
Establish a protective circle that resists intrusion, especially from spirits and otherworldly beings; allies inside gain better defense, intruders suffer penalties.

- **Rite of the Banishment Knot (High)** [BANISH] [EXILE] [SPIRIT]

Cast out a hostile supernatural entity from the scene or even from the local region, at the risk of backlash if the attempt fails.

Raéyn, Mistress of the Sea Domain: Tides, currents, sea-journeys, storms, change.

- **Rite of the Tidemark's Blessing (Low)** [WATER] [BALANCE] [MOBILITY]

Steady footing on slick decks, shifting stones, or wave-tossed surfaces; gain a small bonus to boarding, climbing, and shipboard maneuvers.

- **Rite of the Whispering Currents (Low)** [WATER] [GUIDE] [SENSE]

Listen to shell and wind to learn the safest or most efficient route across water or coastline; often grants bonuses to navigation or route-finding.

- **Rite of the Wave-Road Blessing (Standard)** [WARD] [ROUTE] [TRAVEL]

Consecrate a “wave-road” between two points at sea; allies traveling along it gain improved travel, evasion, or pursuit, while named foes struggle to intercept.

Ikasha, She Who Sleeps Domain: Shadow, latent potential, secrets, crossroads, ravens.

- **Touch the Umbral Veil (Low)** [SHADOW] [STEALTH] [VEIL]

Draw a thin layer of shadow around yourself, granting advantage on a single Stealth or quiet movement attempt and softening one obvious noise or tell.

- **Rite of the Crossroads Raven (Low)** [OMEN] [GUIDE] [DELAY]

Call an omen-raven to tilt fate: gain a small bonus to navigation or pursuit *or* force an enemy to hesitate at a key moment.

- **Become the Shadow at the Crossroads (High)** [PHASE] [ESCAPE] [ZONE]

For a scene, step partially out of phase: nearly intangible to mundane harm, able to slip through gaps and thresholds, and extremely hard to detect—at the cost of not handling normal objects.

Grimmir, the Wild Speaker Domain: Primal wisdom, seasonal cycles, growth and decay, verdant speech.

- **Rite of the Speaking Seed (Low)** [NATURE] [SENSE] [GUIDE]

Commune with local plants; gain a small bonus to track, scout, or investigate, while foliage quietly aids concealment or passage.

- **Rite of the Thornveil (Standard)** [WARD] [NATURE] [BARRIER]

Raise a living thicket or briar-barrier that protects allies, hinders hostile approach, and grants bonuses to stealth or defense in the area.

- **Rite of the World's Wound (High)** [HEAL] [PURIFY] [ZONE]

Heal or restore a damaged place: cleanse blight, rekindle fertility, and strengthen the local ecosystem, often tracked by a restoration clock.

These examples are intentionally compact: each gives a clear *theme*, *baseline effect*, and suggested [TAGS] so tables can:

- reskin or extend Patrons easily,
- attach full mechanical details (DV, Obligation, casting time) to taste,
- and adapt Low Rites into Songs or subtle Invocations without changing core identity.

These examples show a range of Patron themes and Rite expressions suitable for open-licensed, SRD-safe play. Each may be expanded with:

- detailed Obligation profiles,
- casting notes and complications,
- expanded TAG lists or Signature Rites.

39 Elemental Backlash (Condensed)

Magic unsettles the weave. Each element (and its counterpart) carries a distinct backlash pattern. When a roll shows a 1 (generating a (SB)), or when a player accepts a (SB) to escalate, apply a **Minor** backlash. Players may opt to escalate to **Major** by taking +1 (SB).

Table 1: Backlash at a Glance

| | >1 | >X | >X |
|--|--|--|---|
| Element | Minor Backlash | Major Backlash | |
| Earth / Fate | Slips, binds, encumbrance • –1 Position or ENCUMBERED. | Fissure, entrapment • Clock +1 (Collapse) or PINNED. | Fire / Life |
| Smoke, sparks, heat • –1 Effect or SINGED. | Blaze, fever, ignition • Clock +1 (Fire) or 1 Harm. | Air / Luck | Scatter, misheard words • –1 Position or Clock +1/2 (Attention). |
| Unlikely mishap • Lose a tool/use or (SB) +1. | Water / Dreams (Obishaal) | Slippery tide, slow gear • –1 Effect or WATERLOGGED. | Undertow, veering path • Clock +1 (Flood) or intrusion from Ways Between. |
| Fate / Earth | Probability resists • –1 Effect or Clock +1/2 (Inevitable). | Demand arrives • Immediate sacrifice or (SB) +1 | mark OMEN. |
| Life / Fire | Growth surge, vines tether • –1 Effect or OVERGROWTH. | Riot of life • Clock +1 (Biohazard) or convert healing to (SB) +1. | Luck / Air |
| Odds flip • –1 Position or Clock +1/2 (Coincidence). | Catastrophic fluke • Force re-roll; if any 1, (SB) +1 and Minor repeats. | Death / Water (Obishaal) | Whispers, chill • SHAKEN or Clock +1/2 (Haunting). |
| Threshold opens • Clock +1 (Crossing Due) or revenant intrusion. | | | |

[title=Cheatsheet,colback=gray!5,colframe=black] Minor = wobble; Major = lurch. Apply once per cast. Offer players the option to escalate to Major by taking (SB) +1.

Earth/Fate binds; Fire/Life burns or grows; Air/Luck scatters or flips; Water/Obishaal pulls or opens.

40 Universal Rituals (Quick-Start)

These table-ready rituals are system-agnostic and available to any chassis that can perform rituals. Each lists **Cast Time**, **Setup/Components**, **Effect**, and explicit **Costs/(SB) hooks**. GMs should reskin names freely to match patrons, runes, symbols, or tag-sets.

[title=Ritual Casting Basics,colback=gray!5,colframe=black] **Triggering Risk.** On any ritual roll showing a 1, gain a (SB) and apply elemental Backlash (§39). Players may accept +1 (SB) to push an effect one step (position/effect/scale) if fictionally supported.

Table 2: Rituals at a Glance

| >1 c 1 X X | | | | | | |
|--------------------|------|-----------|--|--|--------------------------------|-----------------|
| Name | Tier | Cast Time | Setup | Components | Effect (with Costs/(SB) Hooks) | |
| Wayfinder's Thread | Low | 1 minute | Red cord knotted thrice; whisper a destination. | Create a faint tether toward the nearest safe path. <i>Cost:</i> mark FATIGUE if used more than once/scene. <i>Push:</i> +1 (SB) to reveal a hidden shortcut (Clock -1/2 on Travel). | Oath-Ward | Low 5 minutes |
| | | | Chalk circle; sworn phrase all participants repeat. | Ward a small area vs. intrusion (mundane/lesser). <i>Cost:</i> requires sincere oath; breaking it triggers (SB) +1 and ends ward. | Ember-Glass | Low 1 minute |
| | | | Hold an ember behind smoked glass. | Sense nearby heat sources/life signs through cover. <i>Cost:</i> lose one use of a tinder/torch. <i>Push:</i> +1 (SB) to pierce thin walls. | Salt-Cut | Low 1 minute |
| | | | Salt line and bronze knife. | Sever a simple ongoing effect (rope-binds, minor charm). <i>Cost:</i> consume 1 use of salt. <i>Push:</i> +1 (SB) to cut a tougher link (Clock -1/2 on Restraint/Hex). | River's Memory | Med 10 minutes |
| | | | Bowl of water and a personal token. | Scry a recent passage/event tied to the token, brief and blurry. <i>Cost:</i> token is waterlogged/ruined. <i>Push:</i> +1 (SB) for a clearer second image. | Bargain-Bead | Med 10 minutes |
| | | | Two carved beads; one is offered openly. | Invite a nearby power/spirit to parley. <i>Cost:</i> give up a valuable concession now or take (SB) +1 when you refuse. | Quiet Veil | Med 5 minutes |
| | | | Ash across lips; bell muted in cloth. | Muffle a group's sound and scent for a scene. <i>Cost:</i> MUTED Condition (social checks -1) until scene ends. <i>Backlash:</i> Air/Luck. | Shadow-Loom | Med 5 minutes |
| | | | Three pins; weave ambient shadow between them. | Create light-obscuring cover or misdirection in a small zone. <i>Cost:</i> dim your own vision (-1 precision) while maintained. <i>Push:</i> +1 (SB) to mirror a decoy image briefly. | Dream-Way Marker | Med 10 minutes |
| | | | Sleep mask inked with a circle; water drip cadence. | Mark a safe entrance to the Ways Between; next sleep at site allows short transit. <i>Cost:</i> all participants mark SHAKEN on waking. <i>Backlash:</i> Death/Obishaal. | Purge | Med 10 minutes |
| | | | Smoke of bitter herbs; clean blade drawn across incense. | Cleanse taint/disease/curse one step. <i>Cost:</i> cleanse passes a lesser echo to the caster (-1 to a related action next scene). <i>Push:</i> +1 (SB) to remove two steps but take WEAKENED. | Fortune-Braid | High 15 minutes |
| | | | Three strands (hair, thread, wire) braided tight. | Bank a single lucky break: replace one die with its highest result this scene. <i>Cost:</i> immediately take (SB) +1 if used offensively. <i>Backlash:</i> Air/Luck. | Fate-Splice | High 15 minutes |
| | | | Knot two names written on vellum. | Temporarily link two fates: transfer a single consequence/boon between them. <i>Cost:</i> both bear a subtle mark until dawn; <i>Push:</i> +1 (SB) to redirect a Major consequence. <i>Backlash:</i> Fate/Earth. | Summoner's Gate | High 20 minutes |
| | | | Circle inscribed with true-name sigil or emblem. | Call a known entity safely; on success it arrives bound by a simple charge. <i>Cost:</i> occupies one concurrency slot; breaking terms creates (SB) +1 and Disruption. <i>Backlash:</i> varies by entity. | | |

Usage Notes

- **Scaling.** Effects scale by position/effect/area via explicit (SB) offers or extra time/components.
- **Elements.** Choose the dominant element by fiction (Fire for Ember-Glass; Water/Obishaal for Dream-Way) and apply the condensed backlash table (§39).
- **Teamwork.** Extra participants can donate narrative components to reduce cast time *or* to

accept (SB) on the caster's behalf once per ritual.

[title=Design Intent,colback=gray!5,colframe=black] Each ritual bakes in a crisp *cost*, a tempting *push*, and a likely *backlash*. Keep it fiction-first: components are story handles the GM can threaten, not bookkeeping chores.

41 Talent: Cantor's Path — “Songs of the Low Rites”

[colback=black!3,colframe=black!40!white,title=Cantor's Path] You echo the liturgies of Patrons through breath and string. Not a sworn celebrant but a perilous mimic, you weave Low Rites into song. It is slower, riskier, and beautiful—but never free.

Type Major Talent (8 XP)

Prerequisites Lore 1+, Performance 2+, Presence 2+

Access Any character (does not require Thiasos membership).

Effect

You may learn and perform **Low Rites as Songs**. Each Song counts as knowing the associated Low Rite for performance purposes only.

- **Casting Test:** *Lore + Performance vs. DV* (default DV = 2–3).
- **Action Economy:** *1 action to begin*; the Song *resolves at the start of your next turn* unless accelerated.
- **Scope:** *Low Rites only*. Standard/High Rites remain exclusive to Patrons and Thiasos initiates.
- **Costs:** Pay any *materials* listed. On success you do *not* mark Obligation.

Performance Integration

Songs are most effective when performed as part of social performances:

- **Audience Awareness:** Perform in front of 5+ observers for +1 die but +1 Corruption risk.
- **Cultural Context:** Appropriate venues/occasions grant +1 Effect.
- **Social Momentum:** Successful performances create opportunities for additional Songs in the same scene.

Song Repertoire Progression

Develop a **Repertoire Clock [6]** to track learned Songs:

- Mark a segment for each *unique* Song learned through practice or exposure.
- At 2 segments: Reduce base DV of Songs by 1 (minimum 2).
- At 4 segments: Gain +1 die to Song performances.
- At 6 segments: Learn one *Standard Rite as a Song* (temporary, requires ongoing practice).

Corruption Clock

- You gain a personal **Corruption Clock** with segments equal to your **Body** rating.
- **Mark Corruption when:**
 - You **Push It** (Song resolves immediately).
 - You perform a **Resonant Rite**.
 - The Keeper spends a Story Beat involving your psionic/occult activities.
- **Corruption Accumulation:** Multiple triggers may be required to mark a 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
- When the Clock fills:
 - You immediately gain a **thematic benefit** and **drawback** from the last Patron whose Rite you performed.
 - All of your followers, retainers, or familiars also gain a trait of the same corruption.
 - Reset the Clock, but it cannot go below your character's **Tier** (minimum corruption).
- Corruption traits can be **Embraced** for permanent thematic advantages.

Thematic Corruption Benefits

Instead of purely punitive effects, Corruption creates character-defining traits:

Ikasha (Shadow):

+1 die to Stealth in shadows, but –1 die in bright light; always noticed by shadow-dwellers.

Inaea (Mercy):

+1 die to social manipulation, but –1 die when alone; compelled to offer aid to the helpless.

Isoka (Change):

+1 die to escape/transform actions, but –1 die to maintain consistency; physical changes become visible.

Raéyn (Sea):

+1 die to water/navigational tasks, but –1 die on land; attracts sea creatures.

Aveh (Freedom):

+1 die to escape/avoidance, but –1 die to commitments; leaves traces of passage.

Resonant Rites

Some powerful or thematically significant Low Rites carry the weight of the Patron's direct influence. Performing these Rites is a conscious act of drawing deep power.

- When learning a Song that mimics such a Rite, the GM or the rules text will designate it as **Resonant**.
- Performing a **Resonant Rite Song** successfully allows you to mark +1 segment on your Corruption Clock. This represents the lingering echo of power.
- **Choosing to Resonate** is optional. You can perform the Rite normally without marking Corruption.
- This choice adds a layer of strategy: is the Rite's power worth the potential long-term cost?

Song Synergy System

Create combinations and interactions between Songs:

- **Harmony:** Performing two compatible Songs grants +1 Effect to both.
- **Counterpoint:** Using opposing Songs can cancel negative effects.
- **Chorus:** With allies, combine Songs for amplified effects (+1 Effect per participant).

Outcomes

Success:

The Low Rite takes effect as written.

Partial:

The Rite manifests with reduced effect (one step) or shortened duration. Mark **Fatigue 1**.

Failure:

No effect; mark **Fatigue 1** and the Keeper gains +1 **SB (Hearts)**.

Interrupted:

Harm, Silence, or disruption before resolution = treat as Failure.

Push It

When you Push:

- The Song resolves immediately instead of next round.
- Mark **Fatigue 1**.
- **Mark toward Corruption accumulation** (see Corruption Clock).
- The Keeper immediately triggers a **Story Beat**, representing fallout from a Patron, the Road, or social attention.

Enhanced Departure Options

- **Graceful Coda:** End a Song early to gain +1 Boon and reduce Corruption accumulation progress by 1 (if any progress exists).
- **Lingering Verse:** Song effect continues for one round after ending, but mark +1 Fatigue.
- **Audience Impact:** A successful Song performance improves social Position +1 for the next interaction.

Limits & Interactions

- **Stacking:** Cannot benefit from the same Rite twice.
- **Visibility:** Songs are inherently noticeable. On Failure or Push, assume observers take note.
- **Silence/Disruption:** Impose -1 to -3 dice at the Keeper's discretion.
- **Obligation Transference:** Whenever a Rite would normally increase Obligation, it instead increases Corruption accumulation progress.

Downtime Activities

- **Song Composition:** Practice and refine Songs, potentially reducing their DV or Corruption risk.
- **Performance Practice:** Improve Performance skill and social reputation.
- **Patron Study:** Research new Rites to add to your Repertoire.
- **Audience Building:** Cultivate followers who provide +1 die to future performances.

Talents

Talent: Resonant Performance (3 XP)

Requirements: Cantor's Path, Performance 2+

Effect: When performing a Song in front of an audience of 5+ people, reduce Corruption generation requirements by 1 (minimum 1 trigger) and gain +1 die to the performance.

Talent: Song Weaver (4 XP)

Requirements: Cantor's Path, Repertoire Clock at 4+ segments

Effect: Combine two compatible Songs for +1 Effect to both. Once per scene, create Harmony between Songs for all participants.

Talent: Siren's Call (Major Talent - 8 XP)

Requirements: Cantor's Path, Performance 3+, Repertoire 4+

Effect: Your Songs can compel supernatural beings.

- [COMMAND] effects work on Outsiders (Cap 3 or less)
- Resistance is Spirit + Resolve vs. your Performance + Lore
- On success: outsider acts as commanded for one exchange
- On failure: generate 2 SB, outsider becomes hostile

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.

Corruption Fading

Corruption does not fade easily. It requires deliberate action and often, a price.

Natural Fading

At the beginning of each Downtime, reduce a character's current **Corruption accumulation progress** by 1 step, and reduce the total **Corruption segments** by 1 (to a minimum of the character's Tier). Lingering effects persist until actively addressed.

Act of Contrition

Perform a genuine act that contradicts the Patron's influence or repairs its harm (GM/Player agreement on suitability). **Effect:** Remove 1 Corruption segment and clear one persistent effect. Costs the character time during Downtime.

Ritual Purification

Undertake a significant act of cleansing (pilgrimage, service, seeking rival absolution). **Effect:** Remove 2 Corruption segments and clear all persistent effects. Likely requires marking Fatigue or temporary Obligation.

Embrace Corruption

Type: Major Talent (6 XP) **Prerequisite:** 2+ levels of Corruption.

You accept the creeping decay, transforming it into a permanent Talent. **Embracing locks your Corruption at its current level—it reshapes it.** The deeper the corruption, the greater the power and the cost.

- Gain a **Minor** permanent thematic boon/condition related to the Patron (e.g., +1 die to Stealth in shadows for Ikasha, but −1 die in bright light).
- Your Corruption cannot naturally fade below the level at which you Embraced it.
- The Keeper gains +1 SB to spend against you related to that Patron's themes.

Narrative Integration: This Talent represents the Faustian bargain. Players gain agency over their corruption, ensuring that it always carries meaningful consequences.

Patron Bargain

Negotiate directly with the Patron. **Effect:** Remove 1–3 Corruption segments based on the exchange's gravity. Always comes with a narrative cost or condition set by the Keeper.

Persistence

Corruption effects do not clear through rest. They require deliberate narrative resolution or specific actions listed above. Every method is an opportunity for character development.

High Cantor (18 XP Prestige Talent) *Prerequisite: Tier II+, Cantor's Path, Performance 3+*

You have learned to weave the sacred tongue through breath and pulse rather than word or gesture. You may now learn and cast **Standard Rites**, as a **High Cant**.

- The Rite resolves instantly.
- Gain +1 die to its primary effect.
- **Mark toward Corruption accumulation** (1 High Cantor Standard Rite = 1 Corruption trigger).

Special: Each Patron's resonance colors the manifestation differently—flame halos for the Oath, rippling silence for the Choir, tolling harmonics for the Confessor. High Canting is recognizable to other adepts; it draws attention. Repeated use within a single scene risks moral fatigue: add +1 DV to all subsequent *Resolve* rolls against fear, charm, or social pressure in that scene.

Divine Resonance (Major Talent - 15 XP)

Prerequisite: High Cantor, Performance 4+, Tier III+

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.

“The louder the hymn, the nearer the flame.”

Bookkeeping Light (Table Guidance)

To keep play fast, track at most *two* clocks for a Cantor:

1. **Corruption Clock** (segments = Body).
2. **Repertoire Clock [6]** (optional; advances only when a new Song is learned).

No per-Song timers are required beyond *Push* and *Outcome* handling. Harmony/Counterpoint/Chorus provide situational modifiers and never introduce new clocks.

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→Desperate). 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 +1 segment on the Cantor’s Corruption Clock**.
- **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] IX

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 \approx 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.

41.1 Paths of Magic: Complete Comparison

Five distinct paths define supernatural power in FATE'S EDGE. Each carries a unique risk, cadence, and narrative flavor. These paths are intentionally *asymmetric*—balanced through story consequences and tactical tradeoffs, not identical mechanics.

@| Y Y Y Y Y @

| Feature | Summoner (Pact-Whisperer) | Cantor's Path | Caster (Freeform) | Runekeeper (Rites) | Invoker (Symbols) |
|---------|---------------------------|---------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
|---------|---------------------------|---------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------------|

Core Identity The *Conjurer*: calls and commands spirits as allies The *Bootlegger*: steals magic through song The *Artist*: improvises magic via elemental will The *Devotee*: channels a Patron's power The *Ritualist*: works slow, precise magic via Symbols

Access *Pact-Whisperer* (2 XP), then Pactwright Talents *Cantor's Path* (15 XP) *Caster's Gift* (6 XP) *Codex* (4 XP) + Familiar (2 XP) *Patron's Symbol* (4 XP each)

How It Works Call (1 action) \rightarrow Bind (Boon/Fatigue) \rightarrow Command. Spirit acts each round, tied to a **Leash** clock Perform Song (1 action) \rightarrow effect next beat. Mimics Low Rites Weave + Cast (2 actions). Highly flexible element magic Invoke Rite (1 action). Immediate supernatural effect Ritual Invocation (multiple rounds). **Crack the Seal** for instant power

Primary Risk **Loss of Control**: fill the Leash, spirit acts independently **Corruption**: personal decay and aura effects **Backlash**: volatile elemental consequences **Obligation**: narrative debt owed to Patron **Ritual Cost**: Symbol damage or Obligation

Power Source Bound spirits and Outsiders Stolen resonance, no pact Personal discipline + elements Formal pact with a Patron Consecrated Symbol + precise lore

Flexibility **Extreme (via proxy)**: flight, phasing, stealth, combat, etc. Structured: mimic known Low Rites **Very high**: any describable effect Moderate: Patron Rite list Moderate: Symbols owned

Speed Fast: Spirit acts each round, but commands cost actions Moderate: 1 action to begin, effect next beat Moderate: 2 actions per spell **Very fast**: 1 action **Very slow**: multi-round rituals

Key Mechanic **The Leash** + Boon Finesse (clear ticks with Boons) Corruption Clock & Push It GM-set DV & Element choice Push It (gain Obligation) Crack the Seal (instant cast at high cost)

Player Fantasy *The Tactician*: minion control, economy, versatility *The Gambler*: risk-for-power, stolen magic *The Improviser*: creative problem-solving *The Dramatist*: pact, faith, narrative consequences *The Planner*: preparation and precision

Balance by Asymmetry. These paths do not share identical mechanics. They are balanced narratively:

- **Summoners** gain sustained power and versatility, but risk catastrophic loss of control.

- **Cantors** enjoy quick access to magic without a Patron, but corruption erodes them over time.
- **Casters** can attempt nearly anything, but risk explosive elemental backlash.
- **Runekeepers** unleash powerful effects instantly, but every use deepens Patron obligations.
- **Invokers** can safely reshape the world through ritual, but rarely in the heat of battle.

Collectively, they form a complete **pentarchy of power**—distinct, dramatic, and tactically meaningful. No path is universally superior; each shines in different challenges and story arcs.

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.
- **Strengthen:** 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.

42 Summoning (Pact-Whisperer)

Summoning is the disciplined art of calling and binding Outsiders for temporary aid. This path requires the **Pact-Whisperer** Talent (2 XP). Each summoned being is restrained by a metaphysical tether called a *Leash*, representing the summoner's control and the strain of sustaining the bond.

Talents & Access.

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

[Summoning Core Mechanics] IX

Mechanic Description and Requirements

Call 1 *Action* to manifest the spirit at *Near* range; choose a Spirit Template aligned to fiction or Patron domain.

Bind Spend 1 Boon *or* mark 1 Fatigue to establish initial control.

Leash Capacity Set Leash Capacity = **Cap** + **Spirit segments**.

(*Cap* is the Outsider's tier: Cap 1 for Lesser, Cap 3 for Greater.)

Tick Leash Whenever the spirit takes Harm; you command it against its nature; you perform a separate concentration-requiring action while commanding it; a rival contests its actions; or it crosses a [WARD] successfully (DV = Cap).

Departure When the Leash fills, the spirit acts to its nature once, then departs (or turns hostile at GM discretion).

Spirit Bond Progression. Each spirit you summon regularly can develop a **Spirit Bond Clock** [4]:

- Mark segments for successful commands, shared victories, or acts of mutual aid.
- At 2 segments: +1 die to communicate with this spirit type.
- At 4 segments: Spirit grants +1 Boon when departing naturally and becomes **Favored** (Leash reduced by 1).
- Reset: Spirit departs as ally and may return in future scenes with +1 Effect.

Near-Miss Progress. If a *Call/Bind* fails or a spirit departs immediately after manifesting, mark +1 on that spirit type's **Spirit Bond Clock** once per session (per spirit type), provided a meaningful attempt was made in-scene.

Spirit Specialization Paths. Spirits can develop specialized capabilities through repeated summoning:

- **Combat Specialist:** +1 Harm in melee; ignore first Harm when attacking.
- **Scout Form:** Extended range, stealth bonuses, can carry small items. *Carry limits:* Cap 1 up to **2 kg** (5 lb); Cap 3 up to **10 kg** (22 lb). Dragging (not lifting) allows up to **3×** these amounts across smooth ground. Overburdening immediately ticks the Leash.
- **Utility Spirit:** Perform simple tasks (lockpicking, carrying, environmental interaction).
- **Shield Guardian:** Interpose to protect allies; convert Harm to Fatigue.
- **Scholar Spirit:** Gather information, [REVEAL] hidden knowledge, store/cast one Rite/Lore spell through spirit bond.
- **Battle Spirit:** Enhanced combat abilities, Spirit Shield Wall (+1d Defense for allies in Near), tactical coordination.

Procedure.

1. **Call (1 Action):** A spirit manifests at *Near*. Choose a Spirit Template appropriate to the scene or Patron.
2. **Bind:** Spend 1 Boon *or* mark 1 Fatigue to anchor the connection.
3. **Leash Capacity:** Record Leash Capacity = **Cap** + **Spirit segments**. Draw a clock to track strain (the Leash).
4. **Command:** Each round, issuing a meaningful order uses your Action. Commands contrary to the spirit's nature tick the Leash.
5. **Maintain:** If you perform a separate action requiring concentration (e.g., casting a spell, picking a lock) while actively directing the spirit's complex actions, tick the Leash.
6. **Departure:** When the Leash fills, the spirit acts to its nature once, then departs. Use this to escalate or reveal consequences.

Enhanced Action Economy.

- **Spirit Assist:** Once per scene, the spirit can grant +2 dice to an ally's roll instead of acting.
- **Quick Command:** Simple commands (attack, move, defend) do not require a full Action for the summoner.
- **Spirit Resonance:** When commanding multiple spirits of the same type, +1 Effect.
- **Honorable Departure:** Voluntarily end a summon early to gain +1 Boon and reduce Leash by 2.
- **Spirit Link (Major Talent - 10 XP):** Your spirits act on your turn, not their own initiative. Issue commands as free actions (not full Actions). Spirits move/act immediately when commanded. Reduce Leash ticking for natural behaviors by 1.

Quick Command Examples. The following orders qualify as *Quick Command* and do not consume the summoner's full Action:

- **Strike Nearest:** Attack the closest hostile.
- **Hold the Line:** Defend a doorway/ally; intercept the next entrant.
- **Relocate:** Move to that ledge/cover/marker within *Near*.
- **Retrieve:** Fetch a dropped item within *Near* and return.
- **Screen:** Impose disadvantage on the next hostile advance (tick Leash if against nature).
- **Scout Peek:** Look into the next room/corridor and report (no lingering).

Economy & Limits.

- **Boon Finesse:** Once per round, spend 1 Boon to clear 1 Leash tick (before it fills). Represents appeasement or renewed focus.
- **Action Economy:** Issuing commands uses your Action; most spirits act immediately after the command is given. Quick Commands do not use your Action.
- **Concurrency:** Only one active summoned spirit at a time unless a Talent states otherwise. Exceeding this limit inflicts 1 Fatigue per extra Cap point.
- **Downtime:** All summons end at Downtime unless explicitly sustained by a Rite or Asset.

New Talents.

Spirit Synergy (4 XP). **Requirements:** Pact-Whisperer, Lesser Pactwright.

Effect: When commanding two or more spirits simultaneously, reduce each Leash by 1 segment and gain +1 die to Command rolls.

Bonded Summoner (3 XP). **Requirements:** Pact-Whisperer, Spirit Bond Clock at 2+ segments with any spirit type.

Effect: Favored spirits reduce their Leash cost by 2 (minimum 3). Once per session, recall a departed Favored spirit by spending 2 Boons.

True Name Keeper (Prestige Talent - 15 XP). **Requirements:** Tier III+, Bonded Summoner, 6+ different spirit types.

Effect: You know the true names of Outsiders.

- Call any previously encountered spirit by true name
- Reduce Leash Capacity by 2 for known spirits
- Banish Effect: When a spirit's Leash fills, you may instead:
 - Permanently bind it as a Familiar (lose other familiar slot)
 - Negotiate terms for continued service (+1 Obligation but no departure)
 - Sacrifice the binding to gain major boon from Patron

Legion Master (Prestige Talent - 18 XP). **Requirements:** Tier III+, Spirit Synergy, 4+ different spirit types bonded.

Effect: You become a true commander of otherworldly forces.

- Maintain up to (Presence) spirits simultaneously
- Issue tactical commands as free actions to all spirits
- Legion's Will: Spirits gain +1 Effect when acting in coordinated groups
- Ultimate Ability: Call to Arms - summon one spirit of each bonded type (once/session)

Example. *Kestra calls a Cap 3 fire elemental to aid in battle. She spends 1 Boon to Bind it. The elemental's Leash Capacity is 7 segments (Cap 3 + Spirit 4). When it takes Harm, the GM ticks the Leash. Later, Kestra casts a spell while directing the elemental, ticking the Leash again for splitting focus. Careful management and Boon Finesse keep the bond stable—until the elemental's fury tests her will. After the battle, she marks her Spirit Bond Clock +1 for the shared victory.*

43 Story Beats and Boons

43.1 Story Beats (SB)

Story Beats are the core dramatic currency of Fate's Edge. They represent the risks, twists, and unintended consequences that emerge from every action.

43.1.1 Generating SB

- Each die result of 1 generates 1 SB for the GM.

- Re-rolling a 1 does not remove its SB; if the re-rolled die also shows 1, it generates additional SB.
- Certain Harm effects or narrative triggers may also generate SB on future rolls.

43.1.2 Spending SB

The GM spends SB to introduce complications:

Escalation:

Draw more enemies, raise the stakes.

Exhaustion:

Drain time, resources, or positioning.

Exposure:

Reveal hidden actions, alert foes.

Collateral:

Harm or danger spills onto allies, innocents, or surroundings.

Menu of SB Spends (Guideline):

- 1 SB: Minor pressure (noise, trace, +1 Supply segment).
- 2 SB: Moderate setback (alarm raised, lose cover, lesser foe arrives).
- 3 SB: Serious trouble (reinforcements, broken gear, major twist).
- 4+ SB: Scene-shaping turn (trap springs, authority arrives, narrative shift).

43.1.3 Limits on SB

- **Base SB Budget:** $4 + \text{Character Tier}$ (e.g. Tier I = 5, Tier II = 6).
- **Scene Limits:** 12 SB max for standard scenes, 16 SB max for climactic scenes.
- **Session Limit:** 20 SB total per session.
- **Threads:** Max concurrent complication threads = Tier + 1.

43.2 Boons

Boons are the player-facing reward for meaningful failure or bond-driven actions. They represent insight, opportunity, or a sudden edge.

43.2.1 Earning Boons

- On a **Miss** (0 successes), if the stakes are meaningful and SB is spent/banked, the player gains 2 Boons, on a **Partial** success (1 or more successes < DV) award 1 Boon.

- On a bond-driven assist with an **Intricate Description**, the player may gain 1 Boon (once per bond per session).
- Other narrative rewards: The GM may award Boons for spotlighting bonds, sacrifices, or creative solutions.

43.2.2 Spending Boons

- Re-roll a single die in a pool.
- Activate an on-screen Asset.
- Power a Rite or magical ability.
- Improve Position by 1 step.
- Convert into XP: Once per session, during downtime, convert 2 Boons \rightarrow 1 XP (max 2 XP).

43.2.3 Limits on Boons

- Hold up to 5 Boons at a time.
- At the end of a scene, reduce held Boons to 2 (excess are lost).
- Max 2 Boons earned from failure per scene per character.

43.3 Interplay: SB and Boons

- SB fuels the GM's complications; Boons fuel the players' resilience.
- Every roll potentially adds to both sides: Successes drive story, 1s feed the GM, and misses feed the players.
- This dual economy ensures narrative momentum—every result matters.

43.4 Example

Kael rolls 6 dice to pick a lock under watch. Results: {9, 7, 5, 3, 1, 1}. Successes = 2, SB = 2. He succeeds, but the GM spends 1 SB for a squealing hinge and banks 1 SB for guards incoming. Because it was a Success & Cost, no Boon is awarded. If Kael had missed entirely, he would have gained 2 Boon or 1 on a partial success.

43.5 Fear Effects Table

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

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

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

44 Purpose

Coordination turns individual actions into decisive outcomes. This chapter defines how allies combine moves, share resources, and sequence actions to overcome threats without slowing play.

45 Core Principles

- **Fiction First.** Describe how you help. Mechanics follow the fiction.
- **Clear Stakes.** State Position → DV, what help changes, and what risk the helper accepts.
- **One Spotlight at a Time.** Resolve one acting character's roll; fold assistance into that action.
- **Visible Costs.** Story Beats (SB), Obligation, Fatigue, and asset states are tracked openly.

46 Shared Vocabulary

Acting Character

The PC whose roll resolves the team's immediate goal.

Assistant

A PC who contributes fictionally; they don't roll unless the move calls for it.

Exchange

A short beat of simultaneous activity (often 1 round of table time).

Range Bands

Close, *Near*, *Far*—coordination options often require *Near*.

47 Assistance (Baseline)

- **Declare Help.** An assistant states a concrete contribution (tools, opening, lure, cover).
- **Benefit.** Acting character gains +1d (up to the table's assist cap). The GM may instead allow +1 **Position** or +1 **Effect** if the fiction fits.
- **Limits.** One assistant per PC per exchange by default; followers can assist per their stat block.
- **Cost.** The assistant accepts any oncoming risk named by the GM (SB, Fatigue, collateral).

48 Position → DV

The GM sets Position from fiction; Position maps to DV for the acting roll (typical ladder):

- **Dominant** ⇒ **DV 2** (time, tools, clear access)
- **Controlled** ⇒ **DV 3** (pressure, partial access)
- **Desperate** ⇒ **DV 4–5+** (hostile field, countdown)

49 Bonds & Boon Sharing (Summary)

Bonds signal trusted ties; Boons are the table's spotlight currency.

- **Hybrid Sharing.** PCs may gift 1 **Boon**/scene to an ally with a brief justification; 2 **Boons** if Bonded (see §??).
- **Assistance via Boons.** A gifted Boon may count as help on the ally's next roll.
- **Tracking.** Record shared Boons openly to avoid double-counting.

50 Stacking Limits

To prevent “one true combo,” a PC may benefit from at most **two** cooperative effects on the same action (choose which apply). *Inspire*, *Tactical Relay*, and similar talents each count as one.

51 Timing & Sequencing

- **Declare Order.** GM frames the exchange; players state intent in any order; resolve the acting roll, then apply assists/boons that were declared for it.
- **Ready/Overwatch.** Players may hold an action with a clear trigger; if triggered, resolve before the next exchange starts.
- **Refresh Windows.** “Once/scene” effects reset at scene end; “once/exchange” refresh at the next beat.

52 Followers in Coordination (Brief)

A follower may assist for up to +3d (or +4d with *Exceptional Coordination+*); they can't receive PC-only benefits (e.g., Inspire) unless a talent states otherwise.

53 Invoker & Caster Notes (Brief)

- **Invokers.** Ritual via Symbol takes DV + 1 rounds and marks +1 Obligation; *Crack the Seal* is instant at the stated costs. Invoker Rites cannot use *Push It*.
- **Casters.** Weave (action) then Cast (action). Allies can assist either step if the fiction allows (lenses, spotters, cover).

54 GM Guidance (One Page)

- **Ask for the Beat.** Require one sentence of how help changes the fiction.
- **Name the Risk.** Before rolling, say what the helper risks (SB, collateral, position flip).
- **Favor Position Shifts.** When in doubt, let excellent help improve Position rather than stack dice.
- **Spread the Love.** Rotate who can meaningfully help each exchange; spotlight bonds and distinct roles.

54.1 Cooperative Talents (Options)

Inspire (3 XP) Once/scene, spend 1 Boon and provide a brief narrative justification. Choose one:

- **Bonded Ally (Near):** That ally gains +1 Boon and +1d on their next roll this scene.
- **Self:** You gain +1d on your next roll this scene.
- **Rally (Near Allies):** Each other PC in **Near** gains +1d on their next roll this exchange.
- **Tactical Coordination (Near Allies):** All allies currently acting gain +1 Position on their next action this exchange.

Limits: Followers cannot benefit. Each PC can benefit from *Inspire* at most once per scene. Requires *Near* unless targeting *Self*. Not usable during Downtime or purely non-conflict social scenes. *Inspire* counts toward the stacking limit of cooperative effects (see §50).

Tactical Relay (3 XP) Once/scene, spend 1 Boon: all allies currently acting in **Near** gain +1 Position on their next action this exchange. Followers excluded.

Shield Wall (4 XP) If you and at least one ally each wield a shield and are adjacent: as a *Defend* action, grant +1d **Defend** to all in the Wall and convert the first incoming Harm (any one) to Fatigue. Ends if formation breaks.

Spotter's Mark (3 XP) *Aim* a target (1 action). Until end of scene or until target breaks line of sight, each **PC in Near** may claim +1d or +1 **Effect** once vs. that target. Once/scene you may spend 1 Boon to refresh the mark.

Battle Cant (2 XP) Once/scene, establish silent signals. On the next coordinated action where at least two PCs act on the same beat, those PCs gain +1 **Position**. Spend 1 Boon to include a third PC.

Medic's Hand (3 XP) When you *Stabilize* an ally mid-scene, also **clear 1 Fatigue** or **downgrade Harm 2→1**. Spend 1 Boon to do both. Not usable in Downtime healing.

Anchor Sigil (Runekeeper, 4 XP) Bank 1 Boon on a prepared sigil. Once this scene, when an ally *Casts* or *Invokes a Rite*, discharge: -1 **DV** for that action *or* redirect minor backlash to you as **Fatigue +1**.

Exceptional Coordination+ (8 XP) Your follower assist cap increases to +4d. If **Bonded** with that follower, you may split as +2d to two different allies on the same exchange.

55 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.

56 Rites, Invokers, and Symbols

Magic in **Fate's Edge** expresses through three intertwined practices: **Rites** (oathbound authority), **Invocations** (symbolic ritual), and **Patron Pacts** (gifts and obligations). The rules below emphasize fiction-first play: consequences are Story Beats (SB) that prompt twists; numbers follow the story.

56.1 Rites and Patrons (Runekeepers)

Characters who bind themselves to a *single* Patron and study that Patron's **Codex** are **Runekeepers**. Their magic is structured, immediate, and tied to service.

- **One-Patron Rule.** A Runekeeper may be bound to *only one* Patron at a time. This sharpens identity and keeps Obligation on a single ledger.
- **Thiasos (Familiar).** A circle, retinue, or emissary that grounds the pact in fiction. Required to access *Patron's Gift*.
- **Codex.** The Patron's corpus of rites and precedents. Grants access to the Patron's Rites.
- **Invoke Rites.** A Runekeeper may Invoke a known Rite from their Patron as a **1 action** effect. On completion, mark **+1 Obligation** to that Patron. You may *Push It* once per scene to amplify the effect, marking **+1 additional Obligation**.

Rites Difficulty Value (DV)

The DV to cast a Rite is:

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

- **Obligation Cost:** The Rite's listed cost in Obligation segments.
- **Spirit:** The caster's Spirit attribute, reducing the effective cost.
- **Tier:** The Rite's minimum difficulty based on its scope or level.

Interpretation. The Obligation burden sets the baseline challenge, but personal Spirit mitigates it. No Rite can be easier than its Tier.

57 Obligation Capacity

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

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

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

Table 3: 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.

57.1 Invokers and Symbols

Invokers relate to Patrons through consecrated **Symbols**: physical tokens that anchor names and permissions.

- **Symbols (Minor Asset).** Each Symbol is keyed to one Patron; cost **4 XP**. You may own Symbols of different Patrons (one Symbol per Patron).
- **Ritual Invocation.** Display the Symbol and perform the Rite as a *ritual* (DV + 1 rounds). Completion always marks **+1 Obligation** on that Rite's ledger.
- **Crack the Seal.** As part of an Invoker Rite, you may resolve the effect instantly by setting the Symbol to *Compromised* and marking **+2 Obligation** (+3 if High-Power). The Keeper may spend 1 on-theme SB immediately. The asset remains but is inert until restored.
- **Restore a Symbol.** 1 downtime action and a fitting test (DV 3 or by fiction). Success: *Maintained*; shaky: returns *Neglected*. Or spend **1 XP** to fully restore.
- **Display Requirement.** Symbols must be openly displayed for rituals. Hidden Symbols do not function.

57.2 Casting and Free-Form Magic

Improvised casting is possible with the **Caster's Gift** Talent (6 XP). It is a *backup toolkit*:

- Small, local effects (typ. DV 2–3), fiction-first, colored by Elements and locus.
- Heavy control effects such as [WARD], [BANISH], or [UNWARD] require a printed Talent, Rite, or Spell result.

57.3 Patron's Gift (Imbuements)

The pact may mark a devotee's tools with a short-lived boon aligned to the Patron's domain.

Requirements. **Thiasos (Familiar)** is required. Invoking the Gift costs **1 Boon**. A Codex is *not* required for the Gift.

Activation and Duration.

- **Action:** 1 action to activate; **1/scene**.
- **Duration:** Scene. *Push It*: extend for one additional scene by marking **+1 Obligation** to that Patron (max one Push per scene).
- **Range:** Touch (you must handle the item).
- **Stacking:** Gifts from the *same Patron* do not stack; take the best active version. Dice bonuses respect the table's **+3 dice cap**.

Effect. Choose one held item you or an ally carries. Until scene end it grants:

- **+1 Melee** (the item counts as a magical weapon), and
- **+1 Thematic** (a *+1 die* to a fixed Skill tied to your Patron; see Table 4). Apply only when the fiction clearly fits the Patron's sphere and how the item is used.

58 Clearing Obligation Segments (Condensed)

Obligation tracks the narrative weight of a Patron's attention. To reduce it, characters must act in ways that reaffirm their relevance.

Off-Screen Clearing (Primary)

- **Act of Service.** Clear 1 segment by performing a thematically resonant act of service to the Patron.
- **Requirement.** The player provides an *Intricate Description* of the act.
- **Scope.** Not arduous, but meaningful and aligned to the Patron's sphere.

On-Screen Clearing (Optional)

Talent: Focused Devotion (3–5 XP). Once per scene, spend 1 Boon to clear 1 segment of Obligation for a Patron. Cannot be used on segments accrued in the same scene.

Narrative Implications

- **Agency.** Players choose how service manifests.
- **Collaboration.** GM approves sufficiency of the act.
- **Dynamics.** Patron bonds remain active and evolving.
- **Capping.** Prevents snowball clearing during a scene; off-screen remains the main method.

Runekeeper Clarification. A Runekeeper (one Patron + Codex) may Invoke Rites on-screen and use Patron’s Gift if they also possess **Thiasos (Familiar)**. Codex alone does not grant the Gift. Symbols are optional for parley or omens and do not gate Runekeeper Invocation or the Gift.

Borrowed Grace

Type: Invoker Talent — *Lesser Imbuement*

Use

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

Fictional Framing

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

Table Guidance (1-liners)

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

Balance Notes

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

GM Hooks (quick picks)

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

58.1 Specialization vs. Mixing

Characters can mix paths (Summoner, Caster, Invoker, Runekeeper), but specialization is usually stronger and cleaner. Mixing increases upkeep (Obligation, Symbol state, Leash) and action congestion without guaranteed power gains. Let fiction guide choices: Story Beats are prompts to advance the scene, not punishments.

| Patron | +1 Thematic Skill | Gift / Lore Bestowal |
|---|--------------------------|--|
| Ikasha (Shadow, Penumbra) | Stealth | Grants the hush between footsteps and the raven’s omen at every threshold. |
| Mykkiel (Judgment, Writ) | Command | Grants the authority of seal and sentence, words that bind like iron. |
| The Witness (Truth, Revelation) | Notice | Grants the unblinking gaze that unmask deceit and remembers every oath. |
| Sealed Gate (Boundaries, Closure) | Tinker | Grants mastery of thresholds—doors that yield or bar at your command. |
| Raéyn (Storm, Tides) | Skirmish | Grants the sailor’s fortune: winds that shift, storms that answer to will. |
| Khemesh (Abyss, Pressure) | Skirmish | Grants the crushing silence of the deep, where strength is drowned in weight. |
| Mab (Glamour, Courts) | Persuade | Grants the mask of favor, a voice that bends courtiers and kindles desire. |
| Sacred Geometry (Perfect Forms) | Tinker | Grants the compass of perfection, every shape reduced to its true measure. |
| Clockwork (Mechanism, Process) | Monad Tinker | Grants the certainty of repetition: a cycle that never falters, a gear that never slips. |
| Varnek Karn (Ossuary, Dominion of the Dead) | Command | Grants the silence of the archive, where the dead obey and records speak. |
| Nidhoggr (Deep Earth, Rot) | Skirmish | Grants the weight of ages, the strength of stone and the hunger of roots. |
| The Traveler (Ways, Roads) | Notice | Grants the open way, a compass that never rests, and roads where none are marked. |
| Oath of Flame & Light (Dawn, Vows) | Command | Grants the fire of dawn, a vow that shields the faithful and sears the faithless. |
| Carrion King (Carrion, Renewal) | Survival | Grants the feast of decay, where what is dead becomes seed for what lives. |
| Gallows Bell (Doom, Last Rites) | Command | Grants the toll of ending, a voice that closes stories and calls debts due. |
| Old Man of the Black Forest (Primal Humanity, Instinct) | Survival | Grants the wild memory: fang, fire, and the path of instinct through the dark wood. |
| Isoka (Serpents, Shedding) | Skirmish | Grants the serpent’s coil, strength in sudden strike and wisdom in renewal. |
| Inaea (Mercy, Hearth) | Persuade | Grants the hearth’s warmth, shelter to the weary and mercy for the lost. |
| Maelstraeus (Infernal Bargainer) | Persuade | Grants the contract’s weight, every deal sealed in fire and shadow. |
| Livaea (Temptation, Desire) | Persuade | Grants the lure of longing, beauty sharpened into power over hearts. |
| Aliyah, the Chained Angel (Curses, Corruption) | Command | Grants cursed blessings—boons that shine bright yet seed hunger, power that demands a price. |

Table 4: Patron’s Gift: fixed Thematic Skill and lore of their bestowed blessing. Thematic bonuses apply only when the fiction matches the Patron’s domain.

59 Patron Rivalries

Rivalries set expectations for tone and friction. Use them to color rulings, nudge Position, and guide how Story Beats (SB) land. In their home domains, a Patron's work tends to start a step better in Position; in a rival's, a step worse (Keeper's call).

| Patron | Primary Rival | Friction in Play (one-line read) |
|---|---|---|
| Raéyn (Sea, Tides, Travel) | Khemesh (Abyssal Maw) | Tides vs. trench: navigation and passage thrive against dread and crushing depths. |
| Khemesh (Abyssal Maw) | Raéyn (Sea, Tides, Travel) | Abyss unmoors charts: silence, pressure, and alien geometry devour routes. |
| Sealed Gate (Boundaries, Closure) | The Traveler (Ways, Roads) | Keys vs. roads: jurisdiction and permits against detours and desire lines. |
| The Traveler (Ways, Roads) | Sealed Gate (Boundaries, Closure) | Paths want to open; gates insist on form—who defines the threshold? |
| The Witness (Truth, Revelation) | Mab (Glamour, Courts) | Revelation strips glamour; courtly masks fight to endure the gaze. |
| Mab (Glamour, Courts) | The Witness (Truth, Revelation) | Mask and merriment contest the straight line of testimony. |
| Ikasha (Shadow, Latent Potential) | The Witness (Truth, Revelation) | Hiding and hush vs. the unblinking eye. |
| Mykkiel (Judgment, Writ) | Varnek Karn (Necromantic Archives) | Lawful writ and living order against bone-kept precedent and unfinished business. |
| Varnek Karn (Necromantic Archives) | Oath of Light & Flame (Dawn, Vows) | Memory of the dead resists purgation by vow and light. |
| Oath of Light & Flame (Dawn, Vows) | Khemesh (Abyssal Maw) | Consecrated dawn opposes abyssal hunger and despair. |
| Sacred Geometry (Order, Pattern) | The Traveler (Ways, Fortune) | Perfect forms vs. opportunistic routes; measure vs. happenstance. |
| Clockwork Monad (Iteration, Process) | Old Man of the Black Forest (Primal Humanity, Instinct) | Procedure and refinement clash with instinct and feral chaos. |
| Nidhoggr (Dreaming Antiquity) | Sacred Geometry (Order, Pattern) | Ancient, slumbering memory resists imposed, modern measures. |
| Carrion King (Carrion, Renewal) | Inaea (Mercy, Hearth) | Rot and renewal against hearth and mercy—life reborn from death or sheltered from it. |
| Gallows Bell (Doom, Last Rites) | Oath of Light & Flame (Dawn, Vows) | Doom and execution test the endurance of dawn’s hope and sworn vows. |
| Old Man of the Black Forest (Primal Humanity, Instinct) | Mab (Glamour, Courts) | The primal face of humanity strips away courtly veneer. |
| Isoka (Serpents, Shedding) | Sacred Geometry (Order, Pattern) | Serpent coils disrupt the straight line; shedding resists imposed pattern. |
| Inaea (Mercy, Hearth) | Carrion King (Carrion, Renewal) | Mercy preserves what rot would recycle. |
| Maelstræus (Infernal Bargainer) | The Witness (Truth, Revelation) | The bargain lies veiled until truth unmasks it. |
| Livæa (Temptation, Desire) | Inaea (Mercy, Hearth) | Temptation corrodes hospitality; desire tests sanctuary’s mercy. |
| Aliyah, the Chained Angel (Curses, Corruption) | Oath of Light & Flame (Dawn, Vows) | Fallen benedictions twist vows; dawn seeks to burn corruption from blessing. |

Table 5: Primary Patron Rivalries and how they tend to color scenes.

59.1 Embracing Corruption

A character with **2+ levels of Corruption** may choose to **Embrace** it, transforming creeping decay into a permanent **Talent**. Embracing never reduces Corruption — it reshapes it. The deeper the corruption, the greater the power and the cost.

| Corruption Level | Talent Tier | Cost |
|------------------|---------------------|--|
| 2 (Early) | Minor Talent | +1 Permanent Corruption (cannot Fade below 1) |
| 3 (Deepening) | Major Talent | +2 Permanent Corruption, constant visible tell |
| 4+ (Severe) | Transcendent Talent | Permanently altered, locked at Stage 3+ |

Embraced Talents always reflect the Patron’s themes (e.g., shadow, indulgence, empathy, paranoia). They grant great power, but mark the character irrevocably as claimed.

60 Tags & Effects Library

60.1 Using Tags

Tags only function when *printed on a Talent, an Ability, or as the result of a Spell/Rite*. They do nothing on their own. Unless specified otherwise, **DV is set by fiction**, and duration defaults to **Scene**. When a Tag affects an **Outsider**, use the unified rules in §60.7.

Example: Disabling a Magical Trap (). A magical trap is represented by the tag. Its Difficulty Value (DV) to disable is usually the same DV used to cast or sustain the ward.

Approaches (examples).

- **Wits + Arcana**: analyze and unravel the binding.
- **Wits + Tinker**: mechanically bypass the trigger/anchor.
- **Body + Agility**: carefully avoid or physically disarm the trigger.

Position sets DV (Ladder).

- **Dominant** (ample time, proper tools, safe access): **DV 2**.
- **Controlled** (under pressure, limited time, partial access): **DV 3**.
- **Desperate** (activating/compromised access): **DV 4–5+** (GM sets by threat).

Talents & Tools. A relevant Talent or Tool may unlock an alternate approach or grant +1d / +1 Effect; proper tools may improve Position at the GM’s discretion.

Outcomes.

- **Success**: the is suppressed, bypassed, or its trigger safely disarmed.
- **Partial**: the is affected but *unstable* or a new complication appears (GM may start/advance a related clock or spend SB for an intrusion).

- **Miss:** the remains and may trigger; generate SB as complications (backlash, mechanism damage, alarm to the creator, etc.).

60.2 Control & Countermagic

[DISPEL] End an ongoing magical effect/construct. DV by fiction. **Hit:** dismiss/suppress per source text. **Partial:** suppress briefly or shrink scope. **Miss:** no effect.

[COUNTER] Interrupt a cast/rite in progress. Window: during the listed casting/rite window. DV by fiction. **Hit:** cancel. **Partial:** degrade Position/Effect or impose a cost. **Miss:** no effect.

[BARRIER] Create cover/obstruction. DV by fiction. **Hit:** place barrier with integrity [2/4/6]. **Partial:** narrow/fragile lane. Counters: [DISPEL], brute force, clever route.

[SEAL]/[UNSEAL] Lock or unlock a container/door/portal (not a spirit). DV by fiction. **Hit:** locked/unlocked; state allowed bypasses. **Partial:** short-lived/leaky seal.

60.3 Concealment & Revelation

[VEIL] Obscure a person/thing/zone. DV by fiction. **Hit:** impose disadvantage on scans/Notice vs. subject; specify limits (angle, distance, scent). **Partial:** works only at range or under dim. Counters: [REVEAL], strong light, proof.

[REVEAL] Expose illusions, disguises, hidden clauses. DV by fiction. **Hit:** surface the truth/sign; say how it shows. **Partial:** a tell/clue, not the full picture.

[MARK] Tag a target for tracking or leverage. DV by fiction. **Hit:** place a visible/invisible mark; once/scene you or an ally gain +1 die when acting directly against the Marked target. **Partial:** noisy/short-lived. Counters: [CLEANSE], [DISPEL], or listed materials (salt/iron) if text allows.

60.4 Boons & Burdens

[CURSE] Inflict a sticky hindrance with a clear release. DV by fiction. **Hit:** apply a named condition. **Partial:** milder/intermittent. Counters: [CLEANSE] or listed keys.

[CLEANSE] Remove/suppress a condition (poison, disease, [CURSE], fear). DV by fiction. **Hit:** remove one named affliction. **Partial:** suppress/reduce for the scene.

[FORTIFY] Harden a person/place/object against a vector (fire, blades, fear, sway). DV by fiction. **Hit:** raise Position or reduce consequence severity vs. that vector this scene. **Partial:** limited scope (one ally/doorway).

60.5 Influence & Oaths

[COMMAND] Issue a clear order to a sapient target. DV by fiction (authority, leverage, fear, ritual standing). **Hit:** comply now or suffer an immediate cost (GM states). **Partial:** hesitate/bargain/partial. **Miss:** refusal/blowback.

[OATH] Bind parties to terms; breaking has teeth. DV by fiction (witnesses, sanctity, stakes). **Hit:** enforceable pact with stated boon and breach consequence. **Partial:** loophole exists. Counters: release clause, [CLEANSE] if text allows.

[SANCTIFY] Consecrate a zone to a code/patron. DV by fiction. **Hit:** specify allowed/prohibited acts; violations start Controlled or impose a soft consequence. **Partial:** patchy coverage. Counters: opposing rite, profanation, time.

60.6 Movement & Making

[PASSAGE] Declare a route as permitted/easy. DV by fiction. **Hit:** allies on that path gain improved flow (Position/Effect bump or ignore 1 level of difficult terrain). **Partial:** one ally/segment only.

[TRANSPORT] Move a target across an obstacle (blink, lift, pull). DV by fiction (mass, range, warding). **Hit:** relocate within listed range; state tells/costs. **Partial:** arrive off-balance, drop gear, or worse Position.

[CONJURE] Create a useful object/cover/hazard. DV by fiction. **Hit:** conjure item/zone with integrity [2/4/6] or a ticking hazard (burn/freeze/haze). **Partial:** fragile/short-lived. Counters: [DISPEL], force, time.

60.7 Outsider-Specific Tags

[WARD] Challenge Outsiders crossing a warded edge/zone.

- **DV = target Cap.**
- **Hit:** crosses; add +*DV* segments to its Leash (or Exit Tally).
- **Partial:** crosses; add +1 segment.
- **Miss:** fails to cross this beat.

The ability must explicitly state it affects Outsiders (or other targets).

[BANISH] Drive a visible Outsider toward departure.

- **DV = target Cap.**
- **Hit:** add +*DV* to its Leash/Tally.

- **Partial:** add +1.
- **Miss:** no effect.

[UNWARD] Unmake/suppress a [WARD] created by a Talent/Ability or Spell result. DV by fiction. **Hit:** dismiss/suppress per text. **Partial:** weaken/suppress briefly (about one beat). **Miss:** no effect.

60.8 Elemental Backlash Coloring (Reference)

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

- | | |
|--|--|
| • Earth → rubble, pin, heavy footing; vs. Air → sound carries, exposure. | • Fate → options close, only-one-way; vs. Luck → mischance hits ally. |
| • Fire → burns, flares; vs. Water → slick, sputter, dim. | • Luck → side-effect elsewhere, fragile success; vs. Fate → harsher fixed outcome. |
| • Air → scatter, drop, vertigo; vs. Earth → stuck, dust choke. | • Life → overgrowth, fever; vs. Death/Dreams → numbness, sleep-tug. |
| • Water → leak, flood, cold drag; vs. Fire → smoke, shorted gear. | • Death/Dreams → fade, threshold opens/closes; vs. Life → pain returns, rot. |

60.9 Stacking & Duration Rules (Global)

- **No Same-Source Stacking:** Multiple scene-long effects from the same source do not stack; take the best instance.
- **Identical Tag Collision:** If two abilities would grant the same Tag in the same window, use the stronger; the weaker is suppressed while it lasts.
- **Default Duration:** Scene, unless a source states otherwise.
- **DV by Fiction:** Potency, preparation, place, materials, and opposition set DV (typ. 2–4; 5+ for set-pieces).

61 Backlash, Obligation, and Ritual Consequences

This section codifies how magical risks bite and how Patron debts accrue. It unifies the fallout for **Casting (freeform)**, **Rites (warlock path)**, and **Invocations (symbol path)** in a way that is fully consistent with the core SB/Boon economy.

61.1 Backlash (Casting: Weave & Cast)

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

- **Trigger Windows:**

- *Primary*: On a **Partial/Miss** on either the *Weave* or *Cast* roll.
- *Also*: On a *Hit* that shows **two or more 1s**, minor backlash may ride alongside success.
- **Expression**: Choose a consequence flavored by the spell’s Element (see §60, Elemental Backlash). Options include: worsen Position by 1; impose a condition or brief Harm; drain time/resources; alert foes; create a fragile side-effect.
- **SB Integration**: Backlash does *not* generate extra SB by itself; it is one way the GM spends the SB created by rolled 1s (see §2). The color (Fire, Fate, etc.) guides *how* that SB spend lands.
- **Scale**: Small/local effects (DV 2) prefer small backlash; bigger spans (DV 4–5+) invite larger, more persistent fallout.

Backlash Menu (guideline) Pick one on *Partial*; pick two on *Miss*. Always color by Element.

- **Position Shift** (–1 step) for your current or next action.
- **Fleeting Harm/Condition** (e.g., sear, vertigo, chill) that matters for this scene.
- **Exposure/Noise** draws notice or complicates stealth.
- **Resource Drain** (time, focus, a component damaged).
- **Collateral Spark** threatens an ally or fragile thing nearby.

61.2 Obligation (Rites: Runekeeper Path)

Rites bind you to a Patron through **Obligation**. Each Patron has its own clock.

- **Marking Segments**: Invoking a Rite marks its listed Obligation (typically +1 segment). *Push It* adds +1 more.
- **Cross-Patron Interference**: If you Invoke Rites from two different Patrons in the same scene, immediately mark +1 Obligation to the *second* Patron (jealous attention).
- **Resolution**: When a clock fills, the GM resolves debt in-fiction (audits, omens, service, seizure of a boon). Reduce/clear by fitting service or downtime actions.

Patron’s Gift (Imbuements) and Obligation

- **Activation**: 1 Action once/scene to empower an item with +1 Weapon (Melee) and +1 Thematic Skill for the scene.
- **Push It**: Extend for *one* additional scene; mark +1 Obligation to that Patron.

61.3 Invocation via Symbols (Invoker Path)

Symbols allow ritual access to a Patron’s Rites without a bond.

- **Access**: Each **Patron’s Symbol (Minor Asset, 4 XP)** grants ritual access to that Patron’s Rite list.

- **Ritual Completion:** Completing an Invoker ritual *always* marks +1 Obligation on that Rite's clock, even outside scene context (attention cost).
- **No Push:** Invoker rituals cannot use *Push It*.
- **Environment:** Requires a suitable ritual space; the Symbol must be openly displayed during the rite.

Crack the Seal (Instant Cast) Convert a ritual into a one-action cast by compromising the Symbol.

- **Cost:** Set the Symbol to *Compromised* and mark +2 segments on that Rite's Obligation clock (+3 if *High-Power*).
- **Instability:** The GM may immediately spend **1 SB** on-theme to reflect ritual instability.
- **Aftermath:** Restore during downtime with a fitting test (DV 3 or by fiction). *Success:* Maintained. *Shaky:* Neglected (future rituals add +1 Obligation until properly restored).

Rival Symbols and Mixed Use

- **Rival Symbol Penalty:** Displaying or carrying a rival Patron's Symbol while Invoking another Patron's Rite worsens Position by 1 for that action and immediately marks +1 Obligation to the current Patron; on any rolled **1**, the GM may also trigger a Patron omen/glitch.
- **Multi-Symbol Overload:** Carrying 4+ different Symbols causes choir effects: the first Invoker ritual completed each scene marks +1 additional Obligation.
- **Concurrency:** An Invoker may sustain at most **Spirit** ongoing Invoker rituals. Starting a new one either ends the oldest or marks +1 Obligation on it.

61.4 Interruption & Counterplay

- **[COUNTER]** can interrupt *Weave*, *Cast*, or a *Rite* within its casting window (DV by fiction).
- **[DISPEL]** ends or suppresses ongoing effects (DV by fiction).
- **[UNWARD]** suppresses/dismisses **[WARD]**s; **[BANISH]** and **[WARD]** interact with Outsiders per §60.7.

61.5 GM Budget Dials (Practical Limits)

Keep pressure high but readable.

- **SB Budgets:** Use scene/session limits in §7.
- **Obligation Pace:** A typical session sees 2–4 segments marked for an active warlock; spikes occur on set-pieces or heavy *Push* use.
- **Backlash Visibility:** Favor big, legible consequences over many minor pinpricks.

61.6 Micro-Examples

Fire Cast, Partial You *Weave* flame to blind a squad (DV 3). Partial with two 1s. GM spends SB to *Position -1* (flare blinds you too) and colors backlash as singed lashes; patrol is alerted (*Exposure*).

Runekeeper Push and Debt You Invoke *Circle of Denial [WARD]* and *Push It* to harden the ring. Mark +1 Obligation for the Rite plus +1 for the push. When a demon tests the ring, use [WARD] vs Cap; on its Hit, add +*DV* to its Leash.

Crack the Seal Under Fire You present Ikasha's Symbol and *Crack the Seal* to lay an instant shadow lane. Symbol → Compromised; mark +2 Obligation. GM immediately spends 1 SB to dim all lights (panic), then the lane forms. During downtime, you restore the Symbol (Arcana DV 3): a shaky hit leaves it *Neglected* until you perform the full rite of cleaning.

62 Character Creation & Starting Build

62.1 Starting Build Points

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

62.2 Enhanced Starting Builds

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

- **Bonds:** Up to two player-defined mutual bonds may be taken for **+2 XP total**. (See bonds and bond-driven play in the core rules.)
- **Complications:** Up to two initial complications may be accepted for **+4 XP total**. *Note:* Scenes start with **+1 banked SB per complication per character** until those complications have cleared.

This allows for a maximum starting build of **34 XP**. Players are encouraged to aim for 30 XP and use bonds/complications to mitigate slight overages while maintaining narrative balance.

62.3 Recommended Approach

GMs should encourage players to:

- Target 30 XP for balanced starting characters.
- Use bonds and complications to enhance characterization rather than pure mechanical optimization.
- Consider the narrative implications of any starting advantages.

62.4 Initial Complications (Reminder)

For each *initial complication* taken at character creation:

- Start each scene with **+1 banked SB** *per character with initial complications* until those complications have cleared in play.

62.5 Early Talent Choices (Magic Access)

- **Caster's Gift (2 XP):** Required for Weave & Cast freeform magic. Provides flexible but limited effects with Element-colored backlash.
- **Familiar / Thiasos (2 XP):** Required for Patron features such as *Patron's Gift* (Imbuements).
- **Codex (4 XP):** Required to fully join a Patron's service as a Runekeeper (Rites access, Obligation). A Runekeeper may serve only one Patron.
- **Patron's Symbol (4 XP):** Minor Asset. Grants ritual access to a Patron's Rites via the Invoker path. One Symbol per Patron; Invokers may carry Symbols of multiple Patrons.

62.6 Quick Build Guides

Caster (Freeform) Buy *Caster's Gift (2 XP)*. Invest in Arcana-adjacent attributes/skills. Expect backlash; leverage aligned loci, tools, and prep for DV/Effect nudges. Casting is flexible but less reliable than Rites.

Runekeeper (Rites User) Acquire *Thiasos (Familiar)* and *Codex (4 XP)* tied to a single Patron. You can Push Rites for +1 Obligation. Use *Patron's Gift (Imbuement)* once per scene (activation: 1 action). The Gift provides exactly **+1 Melee** and **+1 Thematic Skill**, fixed by Patron (see Patron table).

Invoker (Symbol Path) An Invoker purchases one or more *Patron's Symbols* (4 XP each). Each Symbol grants ritual access to that Patron's Rites.

- **Ritual Invocation.** Performing a Rite via Symbol takes DV + 1 rounds and always marks +1 Obligation.
- **Crack the Seal.** Cast instantly by setting the Symbol to COMPROMISED and marking +2 Obligation (+3 if High-Power).
- **Multiple Symbols.** Invokers may hold Symbols from multiple Patrons; each Symbol tracks its own state (Normal, Wary, Compromised, Shattered).

Summoner (Pact-Whisperer) You call spirits fast and manage their timer. *Call* a spirit (1 action) → *Bind* it by spending **1 Boon** or marking **1 Fatigue** → track its **Leash = Cap + Command** segments. The Leash ticks when the spirit takes harm, you split focus (you act meaningfully while it acts), you order it against its nature, rivals contest it, or it rushes *Close* to *Far*. Once per round you may spend **1 Boon** to clear **1 Leash** tick (Boon Finesse). Limit **one active**

spirit at a time; issuing a meaningful command uses your action. Spirits depart at downtime unless an ability states otherwise.

62.7 Session Zero Tips

- Establish the table's tone and stakes; tie Drives to setting fronts.
- Map Bonds among PCs; mark possible bond-driven Boon triggers.
- Seed 1–2 personal Complications per PC for early spotlight.
- Discuss Patron choices, Gifts, and what their omens look like.

63 Advancement & XP

Advancement in Fate's Edge reflects meaningful growth in capability and standing. XP is awarded for table-facing accomplishments, hard choices, and the dramatic friction that defines your story. Boons can be converted sparingly to accelerate growth.

63.1 Awarding XP

Choose a session pacing dial and stick to it for a campaign arc.

Gritty:

4–6 XP per session (slow burn).

Standard:

6–10 XP per session (default pace).

Heroic:

10–14 XP per session (fast growth).

63.1.1 Session Awards (Guidelines)

- **Table Attendance:** +2 XP
- **Major Objective Reached:** +2–4 XP
- **Discovery or Lore Unlocked:** +1–2 XP
- **Hard Choice Embraced:** +1–2 XP
- **Complication Spotlight:** +1–3 XP
- **Bond/Flag Driven Play:** +1–2 XP
- **GM Curveball Award:** +0–3 XP

63.1.2 Milestones

- At the conclusion of a major story arc, award **+8–12 XP to all players**.
- Grant **+2 XP** to one player for a signature moment of the arc.

63.1.3 Boon Conversion

Once per session, during downtime, a character may convert **2 Boons** → **1 XP** (max **2 XP** via conversion per session). All normal Boon limits apply (hold 5; trim to 2 at scene end).

63.2 Spending XP

Attributes:

Cost = *new rating* × 3. Downtime = *new rating* in days.

Skills:

Cost = *new level* × 2. Downtime = *new level* in days.

On-Screen Followers:

Cost = *Cap*². Downtime = 1–3 days to recruit and brief.

Off-Screen Assets:

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

Talents/Minor Assets:

As listed (e.g., Caster's Gift 6 XP; Patron's Symbol 4 XP).

Upkeep

Frequency: Upkeep is paid once per Downtime period per asset.

- **Option 1 — Efficient (Higher XP, Less Time)** *Cost:* Pay Upkeep XP = $\max(1, \frac{\text{XP Acquisition Cost}}{3})$
Time: Minimal effort (e.g., sending a retainer, a quick inspection).
- **Option 2 — Intensive (Lower XP, More Time)** *Cost:* Pay 1 XP *Time:* A dedicated Downtime action of significant personal involvement (e.g., training a follower, repairing an asset).

Failure: If upkeep is not paid, the resource degrades:

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

63.3 Rush Rule

You may *skip downtime* when buying or upgrading, but the GM creates a **Haste clock [4]**. If the clock fills, the new ability or asset carries flaws or narrative complications.

63.4 Tiers of Reputation

Reputation tiers reflect how the world responds to you.

Tier I — Rookie (0–40 XP):

Local reputation; prestige locked.

Tier II — Seasoned (41–90 XP):

Regional notice; prestige abilities may unlock.

Tier III — Veteran (91–150 XP):

National influence; second follower slot suggested.

Tier IV — Paragon (151–220 XP):

Movers and shakers; rivals emerge to challenge.

Tier V — Mythic (221+ XP):

Legendary status; kingdoms and cults respond.

63.5 Advancement Notes

- Attribute cost scaling encourages diversification over single-stat spikes.
- Skill mastery yields tangible, fiction-first benefits.
- Prestige abilities (6+ XP) should be gated by narrative milestones or patron bargains.

64 Range & Position Quick Reference

This section condenses the guidance from §8 into table form for fast table use.

64.1 Range Bands

| Band | Default | Notes |
|--------|------------|--|
| Close | Touching | Grapples, knives; polearms from Near at Limited Effect. |
| Near | Assumed | Same room/street segment; quick step away. |
| Far | Distant | Same site but not in reach; needs time/route/long implement. |
| Absent | Off-screen | Outside scene frame; needs cut/travel to interact. |

64.2 Movement (beats, not meters)

- **1 Move** shifts one band: Close↔Near or Near↔Far.
- **Dash (Action)** shifts two bands: Close→Far or Far→Close.
- **Terrain/Obstacles** may add +1 Move or require a test first.

- **Absent↔Scene** use a Travel clock [2–4] or a quick cut; under pressure treat as Controlled.

64.3 Melee Flag

Mark two parties **in Melee** when they are in Near and directly engaged.

- **Enter:** 1 Move from Near (Controlled if under fire).
- **Leave:** 1 Move to break off; if threatened, test *Disengage* at Controlled. On Partial/Miss: soft consequence, remain in Melee.

64.4 Targeting & Tools (defaults)

| Type | Default Reach / Off-band Rules |
|------------------------------------|---|
| Melee/Touch | Close only (Near on long polearms at Limited Effect). |
| Thrown / Short magic | Near; at Far impose Limited Effect or +1 DV unless source says otherwise. |
| Firearms / Long bows / Line spells | Near and Far if stated; at off-band, reduce Effect or +1 DV. |
| Social | Near by default; at Far need voice/signal/proxy; at Absent need message/oath/setup. |
| No line of sight | Raise DV by +1, drop Effect one step, or require [REVEAL]/[MARK]. |

64.5 Perception, Stealth, Cover

- **Notice:** Near normal; Far harder (DV +1 or Limited Effect) especially with noise/cover.
- **Hide:** Break LoS or move to Far; at Absent you're off-frame unless tracked.
- **Cover:** Improves Position or reduces consequence severity; quality/angle sets bump.

64.6 Position (Controlled / Controlled / Desperate)

Position affects consequence severity on Partial/Miss (not DV).

- **GM Spend (1 SB):** Shift Position one step worse for current action or apply a brief environmental shove.
- **Player Spend (1 Boon):** Shift Position one step better for current action or cancel a single 1-step GM shift.
- **Narrative Triggers (free):** Flanking, reinforcements, collapsing cover, superior leverage can move Position one step (say why).

Limits: One Boon shift per action. Multiple forces don't stack beyond one step each way—resolve in order declared.

64.7 GM Quick Cues

- Default to **Near** and **Controlled/Standard**. Ask: “Do you need a beat to get there?” If yes, spend a Move.
- Call **Melee** when knives are actually in play; don’t track hexes.
- Prefer one strong twist over nickel-and-diming with many petty penalties.

65 Travel Framework

Adventuring often means crossing dangerous or unknown lands. The travel framework provides pacing tools to turn journeys into dramatic scenes without micromanaging miles.

65.1 Legs and Clocks

- Break long journeys into **legs**, each representing a significant change in terrain, danger, or political region.
- Each leg is tracked with a **Travel Clock [4]** by default.
- A leg completes when the clock fills through **progress actions, encounters, or scene resolution**.

65.2 Roles on the Road

Assign roles each travel leg (rotate or repeat as desired):

Guide:

Sets course, reads signs, rolls navigation.

Scout:

Moves ahead; first contact with hazards, ambushes, or terrain.

Quartermaster:

Manages food, supplies, and encumbrance.

Watch:

Maintains vigilance; first line against ambush or mishap.

65.3 Encounters & Events

When advancing the Travel Clock, the GM may also introduce:

- **Discovery:** Ruins, strange omen, hidden site.
- **Hazard:** Terrain challenge, illness, weather.
- **Encounter:** Bandits, emissaries, beasts.
- **Complication:** Bond tested, supplies strained, rival pursuit.

65.4 Encounter Frequency

- For every 1–2 segments filled, insert one encounter or hazard scene.
- Each leg should include **at least one meaningful encounter**.

65.5 Resolution

- When a Travel Clock fills, narrate arrival at the new region, with fallout from any hazards or complications unresolved.
- If complications remain, they carry forward into the next leg until resolved.

65.6 Deck of Consequences Integration

- Draw from the **Deck of Consequences** when rolling travel hazards or unexpected encounters.
- Crown Spread or Campaign Clock can foreshadow upcoming travel-related events.

65.7 GM Quick Cues

- Travel should **advance story stakes**, not pause them. Use it to foreshadow threats, deepen bonds, or reveal patron omens.
- Let players showcase talents in their assigned roles.
- Mix discovery and hardship to keep legs tense but rewarding.

66 Deck of Consequences

The **Deck of Consequences** is a narrative tool for injecting drama, setbacks, and twists. It replaces or supplements GM fiat with randomized complications that remain thematically consistent.

66.1 Deck Structure

- Use a standard 52-card deck (jokers optional).
- Divide into four suits, each tied to a **theme of complication**.

| Suit | Theme | Examples |
|----------|-------------------------|---|
| Hearts | Social / Emotional | Betrayal, love triangle, family drama, ally under strain. |
| Clubs | Physical / Violent | Ambush, wound, fatigue, weapon break. |
| Diamonds | Resources / Wealth | Supplies run low, theft, loss of funding, gear breaks. |
| Spades | Mystical / Supernatural | Omen, curse, patron demand, haunting. |

66.2 Card Ranks & Severity

Ace:

Scene-altering twist; compels immediate response.

King/Queen/Jack:

Major complication with lasting effects.

10–8:

Moderate complication that reshapes current scene.

7–5:

Minor complication; nuisance, but creates tension.

4–2:

Subtle complication or foreshadowing omen.

66.3 Jokers (Optional)

- **Red Joker:** Catastrophic event (environmental collapse, patron intervention).
- **Black Joker:** Dark boon (immediate help, but with lasting cost or debt).

66.4 Usage in Play

- **Trigger:** GM may draw when a roll shows multiple 1s, when SB overflows, or during travel (see §65).
- **Cadence:** Aim for 1–2 draws per session, more if the tone skews chaotic.
- **Integration:** Complications should align with fiction already present; do not derail core arcs.

66.5 Crown Spread Integration

Use the Crown Spread (see §18) to seed campaign-scale twists. Draw 5–7 cards in Session 0 to foreshadow long-term arcs.

66.6 Campaign Clock Tie-In

When the Campaign Clock advances, the GM may flip a card face-up from the Deck of Consequences to signal how pressure is mounting.

66.7 GM Quick Cues

- Translate raw card results into fiction, not mechanical penalties alone.
- Complications should build on what’s already happening, not restart the story.
- Respect player agency: allow clever mitigation, but ensure consequences land.

67 Player Archetypes at the Table

Fate's Edge gameplay flexes to different player archetypes. These roles are not strict classes but rather **approaches to play** that help a group balance spotlight and tone.

67.1 The Solo

- **Focus:** Mastery of self, independence, one-on-one drama.
- **Strengths:** Quick spotlight scenes, duelists, scouts, specialists.
- **Risks:** Can drift into isolation or hog solo arcs. Needs explicit ties to group goals.
- **GM Tools:** Use Bonds, rival duels, and one-on-one omens to keep engagement tethered to the group.

67.2 The Mixed

- **Focus:** Hybrid adaptability—both support and lead.
- **Strengths:** Bridges gaps in group dynamics; excels in team tactics.
- **Risks:** May feel overshadowed by extreme specialists.
- **GM Tools:** Spotlight them when versatility matters: flexible magic, leadership, negotiation, or sudden pivots.

67.3 The Mastermind

- **Focus:** Schemes, plans, and command over the long arc.
- **Strengths:** Drives strategic play, coordinates others, excels in intrigue.
- **Risks:** May over-plan or dominate spotlight with metagame thinking.
- **GM Tools:** Challenge them with shifting information, patron demands, and rivals who anticipate their moves.

67.4 Balancing Archetypes

- A healthy table mixes all three archetypes, ensuring solo tension, group cohesion, and strategic play coexist.
- Encourage players to flex between archetypes scene by scene; they are fluid, not fixed.
- Spotlight balance: in a 3-hour session, each archetype should anchor at least one major scene.

67.5 GM Quick Cues

- Use archetypes as a lens for framing scenes: duel for Solos, shifting tactics for Mixed, grand reveals for Masterminds.

- When spotlight imbalances arise, rotate complications or bonds to another archetype’s strength.
- Archetypes inform how patrons and factions court PCs: Solos as champions, Mixed as envoys, Masterminds as plotters.

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.

68 Campaign Frame: The Crown Spread

The **Crown Spread** is a campaign-framing tool that uses a spread of cards to establish the long arc of a story. It provides seeds for GMs and players alike to weave motifs, omens, and foreshadowed events.

68.1 Setup

- In Session 0, lay out 5–7 cards in a semicircle (the “Crown”). Use either the **Deck of Consequences** or a standard card deck.
- Each card anchors a motif, omen, or looming event.
- Record the spread openly on a Campaign Sheet or digital log.

68.2 Interpreting the Spread

Position 1 (Root):

The underlying tension or theme of the campaign.

Position 2 (Crest):

A key faction or patron influence that will rise.

Position 3 (Crown):

The climax image or major confrontation the arc builds toward.

Position 4 (Left Hand):

A bond, ally, or relationship that anchors play.

Position 5 (Right Hand):

A rival, betrayer, or challenger who pressures the party.

Optional 6+7:

Expansions for setting-wide twists (environmental, mystical, or political).

68.3 Using the Spread in Play

- Each drawn card becomes a **Foreshadow Clock [4]** attached to its motif. Advance the clock when events lean toward that omen.
- When a Foreshadow Clock fills, the motif manifests concretely in play (e.g., a faction rises, a betrayer reveals themselves).
- Tie Spread cards to **Campaign Clocks** for pacing (see below).

68.4 Campaign Clock

The **Campaign Clock** tracks rising stakes across the arc.

- Default size: [8].
- Advance the Campaign Clock when: multiple SB overflows in a session, when travel legs resolve with major cost, or when Spread omens manifest.
- On fill: the Crown confrontation arrives. Play through its fallout as campaign climax.

68.5 Ending & Legacy

- After the Crown confrontation resolves, hold an epilogue session.
- Resolve any remaining Foreshadow Clocks as epilogue vignettes.
- Players may mark **Legacy Bonds**—new anchors for future campaigns or descendants.

68.6 GM Quick Cues

- The Spread is not a railroad—it foreshadows, not dictates.
- Reinterpret cards liberally as play evolves; symbols matter more than literal events.
- Remind players of their omens between arcs to build tension and payoff.

69 Tags & Outcomes Cheat Sheet

This section condenses common tags, outcomes, and modifiers into a one-glance reference. It supplements the full explanations in §10.

2pt

69.1 Core Action Outcomes

| Result | Meaning | GM/Player Guidance |
|----------------|----------------|---|
| Hit (6) | Full success | Effect as stated, no new cost. |
| Partial (4–5) | Success + cost | Complication, worse Position, reduced Effect. |
| Miss (1–3) | Failure + cost | GM spends SB, introduces backlash/complication. |
| Critical (2x6) | Strong hit | Upgrade Effect or create new advantage. |

69.2 Common Tags

| Tag | Quick Reference Effect |
|-------------|--|
| [AREA] | Hits all in zone; collateral risk. |
| [ARMOR] | Grants +1 Resistance against matching Harm. |
| [BANISH] | Expel Outsider; vs. Cap. On hit, it departs or weakens. |
| [BOUND] | Immobilizes target until broken. |
| [COUNTER] | Interrupt cast/ability in progress (DV by fiction). |
| [DISPEL] | End/suppress ongoing effect. |
| [FOLLOW-UP] | Trigger additional linked action; usually free if fiction permits. |
| [HEAL] | Remove or downgrade Harm/Condition. |
| [ILLUSION] | Fictional effect; resisted by disbelief or disruption. |
| [MARK] | Target acquires tracer; next action gains +1 die. |
| [REVEAL] | Expose hidden or cloaked subject. |
| [TETHER] | Bind two entities; strain if separated. |
| [WARD] | Block specific entity/domain; test Cap to cross. |

69.3 Position & Effect Shorthands

- **Position:** Controlled (safe), Controlled (default), Desperate (big payoffs, big costs).
- **Effect:** Limited (weak), Standard (expected), Great (strong, extra reach).
- GM can spend 1 SB to worsen Position one step; Player can spend 1 Boon to improve Position one step.

69.4 Backlash Reminders

- On Partial/Miss with Weave & Cast, expect backlash colored by Element (fire burns, fate twists, etc.).
- Backlash does not add SB directly—it is a GM SB spend colored by the roll's Element.

69.5 Obligation Reminders

- Runekeeper Rite: +1 Obligation on completion, +1 more if Pushed.
- Invoker Ritual: Always +1 Obligation, even out of scene. Crack the Seal: +2/+3.
- Multi-symbol overload: carrying 4+ Symbols = +1 Obligation on first ritual each scene.

69.6 Quick Costs

- **Caster's Gift:** 2 XP. Required for Weave & Cast.
- **Familiar/Thiasos:** 2 XP. Required for Patron's Gift.
- **Codex:** 4 XP. Full Rite access; Obligations apply.
- **Patron's Symbol:** 4 XP Minor Asset. Invoker ritual access.

69.7 GM Quick Cues

- Default to Near + Controlled + Standard.
- Use tags as handles for rulings—if a move fits the tag, apply its shorthand.
- Complications escalate campaigns; use Clocks and the Deck of Consequences for follow-through.

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70 The Director Mindset

You are not a rules engine. You are a director choosing the next shot:

- **Clean win** - Character succeeds, story progresses
- **Costly win** - Success with complications

- **Partial success** - Progress made, but with gaps
- **Spiraling disaster** - Situation escalates dramatically

Recommendation: Embrace Imperfection

Perfect mechanical resolution is less important than maintaining story momentum. A quick, clear call that keeps the session moving is better than a precise ruling that derails the flow.

71 Core Quick Tools

71.1 1. Five-Second Position & Effect

Risk Assessment: What is the Risk?

- **Dominant:** Safe, prepared, low threat
- **Controlled (default):** Pressure, danger, uncertainty
- **Desperate:** Immediate danger, overmatched, exposed

Impact Assessment: What is the Impact?

- **Limited:** Partial progress or minor effect
- **Standard (default):** Normal success
- **Great:** Powerful, overwhelming, high-impact

Example Usage

Player charges tougher foe in melee. Risk = Controlled, Impact = Standard. "Controlled / Standard, DV 3. Roll!"

71.2 2. The Lazy DV Table

| cIX | | |
|-----|--------------------------|--------------------------------|
| DV | Use When | Example |
| 2 | Routine, low stakes | Pick a lock in a safe house |
| 3 | Pressured (default) | Pick a lock with guards nearby |
| 4 | Hard, hostile conditions | Pick a trapped arcane chest |
| 5+ | Extreme, dramatic risk | Pick a magical lock underwater |

Recommendation: Default to DV 3

When in doubt, DV 3 provides appropriate challenge for most meaningful actions without overcomplicating resolution.

71.3 3. No-Thinking SB Spending

When players roll 1s, react instantly. Pick one option and move on:

SB Complication Type Examples

- | | | |
|----|----------|--|
| 1 | Minor | Noise, track, small loss, clock +1 |
| 2 | Moderate | Alarm, lose Position, broken tool, clock +2 |
| 3+ | Major | Reinforcements, terrain shift, ally endangered |
-

Recommendation: Never Overthink SB Spends

One strong spend is better than multiple minor taxes. Bank sparingly and resolve quickly to maintain momentum.

71.4 4. The Three-Clock Rule

Only three active clocks at once:

- **Scene Clock:** e.g., Guards Alerted [4]
- **Journey Clock:** e.g., Mist Encroaches [6]
- **Campaign Clock:** e.g., Baron's Suspicion [8]

Recommendation: Fold New Complications

When new complications arise, integrate them into existing clocks rather than creating new ones. This keeps focus tight and prevents clock sprawl.

71.5 5. Magic Adjudication Shortcut

If a player invents a spell on the fly:

1. Hear the intent
2. Assign a fitting TAG (Veil, Ward, Barrier, Glamour, etc.)
3. Pick DV based on scale:
 - Personal / Subtle = DV 2
 - Scene-wide / Strong = DV 3
 - Area / Devastating = DV 4+
4. Choose Position based on danger while casting

Example

Creating force wall under fire: TAG = Barrier, scale = Scene ⇒ DV 3. Casting in melee ⇒ Controlled. "Controlled / Standard, DV 3. Roll."

72 Preparation Workflow

72.1 Pre-Session (15 minutes)

1. Use Five-Second Position/Effect for major scenes

2. Apply Lazy DV Table to key challenges
3. Set up Three-Clock framework
4. Bank 2-3 SB spends per major scene
5. Prep 1-2 magic adjudications

Recommendation: Prep as Story Beats

Focus on "What happens if..." rather than mechanical stats. Prepare compelling complications and interesting outcomes.

73 Session Management

73.1 Core Principles

- Keep mechanical resolution under 10 seconds
- Always spend SB immediately, don't hoard
- Never exceed three active clocks
- Reassess Position every major beat

Recommendation: Trust the Framework

The Quick-Kit tools aren't training wheels—they're professional equipment that experienced directors use to keep focus on story.

74 Character Integration

74.1 New Player Approach

1. Ask "What story role do you want to play?"
2. Help build mechanics to support that role
3. Focus on narrative contributions over mechanical optimization
4. Introduce complexity gradually as player comfort grows

74.2 Veteran Player Integration

1. Leverage existing system knowledge
2. Encourage creative mechanical combinations
3. Challenge with complex multi-domain scenarios
4. Support high-tier mythic storytelling

75 Domain Management

75.1 Multi-Domain Adventures

- Each character's specialties should have moments to shine
- Integrate assets naturally as story elements, not just bonuses
- Use followers for support roles that enhance scenes
- Let clocks interact and influence each other naturally

Recommendation: Domain Integration

Set 2-3 domain-appropriate clocks, ask "Who can contribute their specialty here?" each scene, and let mechanical elements serve narrative advancement.

76 High-Tier Play

76.1 Tier V Considerations

- Scale fiction, not mechanics
- Treat assets as enablers for realm-level actions
- Ensure consequences match mythic stakes
- Make follower management strategic rather than tactical
- Use clocks to represent ongoing sagas, not temporary complications

Recommendation: Mythic Scope

Tier V adventures should create legends that define the world. Focus on permanent changes to setting and character transformation rather than bigger numbers.

77 Continuity Management

77.1 New Character Integration

1. Position new characters as essential support roles
2. Establish immediate bonds with existing characters
3. Connect new character skills to ongoing campaign threads
4. Provide meaningful contributions without overshadowing veterans

Recommendation: Supporting Cast Approach

New characters don't need to be mythic heroes—essential specialists, trusted allies, or community anchors can be equally engaging and easier to integrate.

78 Troubleshooting Guide

78.1 Common Issues and Solutions

Analysis Paralysis:

Use the Lazy DV Table and default to DV 3. Make quick decisions and maintain momentum.

Mechanical Overload:

Apply the Three-Clock Rule. Simplify asset states to Maintained/Neglected/Compromised.

Player Disengagement:

Ensure each character has spotlight moments. Rotate complications and bonds to different strengths.

Session Lag:

Trust the fail-forward system. Every roll should change the story, even misses through Boons.

78.2 Emergency Reset

When sessions lose focus:

1. Identify the core story question
2. Strip down to Three-Clock framework
3. Give each player one clear action to take
4. Resolve with quick Position/DV calls
5. Escalate through SB spends until momentum returns

79 Final Wisdom

Remember Your Role

You are not the rules expert—you are the story facilitator. The players will help you remember details. Focus on pacing, tension, and narrative flow.

Embrace the Economy

Story Beats and Boons are your storytelling tools, not bookkeeping. They represent the world responding to character actions, not mechanical penalties.

Trust Your Players

Players want the story to succeed as much as you do. When in doubt, ask for their input or go with the interpretation that makes the story more interesting.

80 Design Philosophy Guardrails (Flow-First GMing)

Fate's Edge is built to **keep play flowing**. If you remember nothing else: **The Narrative is primary**. Mechanics exist to shape *how* the story changes, not *whether* it moves. This section translates the rules into plain, table-ready guidance—especially for new GMs.

80.1 Simple Translations

Story Beats (SB) ⇒ Story Beats:

1s on dice give you *beats* to spend. Spend them on twists, escalations, or new information. One strong beat is better than three tiny ones.

Clocks ⇒ Checkboxes/Lists:

A Clock is just a short checklist that tracks progress or rising danger. When it fills, the listed thing *happens*. Name it and tick it when fiction leans that way.

[TAGS] ⇒ Gates with a Cost:

Tags are labels that unlock specific effects (e.g. [WARD], [BANISH]). They don't do anything alone. They appear on Talents, Rites, or Spells to say, "Yes, you can do this—*here's the price and limits.*"

80.2 The 30-Second Adjudication Loop

Use this loop to resolve almost anything without breaking flow.

1. **Clarify intent and approach.** "What do you want, and how?"
2. **Set stakes and Position.** "If it works, what changes? If it fails, what bites?" Start *Dominant/Standard* unless fiction says otherwise.
3. **Roll & read.** Count 6+ as successes; each 1 gives you SB (beats). Compare successes to DV.
4. **Spend one beat well.** Cash SB on one memorable twist or tick a relevant Clock.
5. **Push forward.** Describe how the fiction is now different; ask, "Who moves next?"

80.3 When to Reach for Mechanics (and When Not To)

- **Roll** when uncertainty + meaningful stakes exist *now*. Otherwise, say "Yes" or offer a choice/cost.
- **Use a Clock** when danger or progress builds over time (guard alert, ritual, chase, social sway).
- **Draw from the Deck** when you want an oracular twist consistent with the current tone.
- **Skip subsystems** if they slow the table. You can always tick a Clock and move on.

80.4 Defaults That Keep Things Moving

- **Range/Position:** Assume *Near* and *Dominant/Standard*. Ask: "Do you need a beat to get there?"
- **DV:** 2 for small/local, 3 for scene-scale, 4 for big swings, 5+ for set-pieces/rituals.
- **Boons:** Misses on meaningful actions grant Boons (player fuel). Trim to 2 at scene end.
- **SB Budget:** Prefer one strong spend over many petty taxes. Bank sparingly and pay off soon.

80.5 Rookie GM Comfort Dials

You can use these dials to simplify play, then loosen them later.

Soft SB:

For your first 2 sessions, cap each roll's SB spend to **1–2** unless it's a set-piece.

Visible Clocks:

Put Clocks on the table. Name them aloud: “*Guards Incoming [4]*”. Tick them in ink.

Tag Cards:

Print a one-liner for frequently used Tags ([WARD], [BANISH], [COUNTER]). Hand them out when a power is active.

One Move, One Sentence:

Every ruling should end with one sentence that states the new situation.

80.6 Narrative-First Rulings (with Examples)

Example 1: The Locked Gate Player: “I pick the lock fast before the patrol rounds the corner.” GM: “Dominant/Standard, DV 3. If it works, you’re through; if it fails, the patrol clocks closer.” Roll shows 1 SB. GM spends 1 SB to tick *Guards Incoming [4]*. “You’re through, but boots echo—two ticks left.” *Flow continues.*

Example 2: The Shadow Rite Player Invokes a [WARD]. “You’re safe unless Outsiders test the edge: DV = Cap. If one hits, its Leash gains +DV. Your Push would add +1 Obligation—do you Push?” The scene stays in motion; costs and gates are clear.

Example 3: Fire Cast Backlash Caster hits but shows two 1s. GM picks one strong backlash: “Flare blinds you; Position -1 for the next action.” No rules dive; *one beat lands*, story moves.

80.7 Let the Fiction Lead

- Say what the world does next. If a rule is unclear, follow the fiction and note a ruling; refine between sessions.
- If you forget a tag nuance, ask: “What is the effect trying to *gate*?” Charge a cost (time, risk, Obligation, or a tick), then go.
- Tie SB spends to **visible** outcomes: a new foe appears, a path closes, a clock advances.

80.8 Common Pitfalls and Fixes

Over-cranking SB:

If scenes feel punitive, halve your SB spends for a while or cash them into visible Clocks instead of immediate penalties.

Clock Sprawl:

Merge redundant Clocks. Each active scene rarely needs more than **2–3**.

Tag Paralysis:

If a player stalls waiting for a perfect tag, paraphrase: “Sounds like [VEIL]. DV 3. Want to roll?”

Rules Drift:

If table memory conflicts with text, pick the ruling that keeps flow, then sticky-note a TODO to reconcile after play.

80.9 The Four Questions (Cheat Prompts)

When stuck, ask out loud:

1. If this goes right, what changes? (*Intent*)
2. If this goes wrong, what bites back? (*Stakes*)
3. What single twist will make this memorable? (*SB spend*)
4. Who moves next? (*Momentum*)

80.10 Design Guardrails (for Consistency)

- **Narrative Primacy:** Mechanics serve story, not replace it.
- **Risk as Drama:** Every roll carries potential for triumph+complication.
- **Meaningful Growth:** XP changes characters and the world.
- **Consequence Weight:** Choices ripple outward; nothing is free.
- **Fail Forward:** Misses fuel Boons; 1s become SB (beats).

80.11 Session Checklist (One Page)

Before play: set tone, stakes, and clocks in plain sight.

During play: adjudicate with the 30-second loop; spend one strong beat; move on.

After play: award XP, clear/advance Clocks, note rulings to revisit.

If you keep the flow, the game will carry you. The rules are rails you lay just ahead of the train.